

The following figures give particulars at 31st March, 1908 :—

Number of houses erected, 20 ; number occupied, 18.

	<i>Receipts.</i>	£	s.	d.
Rents	359	17	6
Rents for grazing of vacant sections	1	0	0
Fire-insurance premiums	12	14	8
Total	£373	12	2
Arrears of rent	£21	15	3

GENERAL REVIEW.

In reviewing the year's transactions and the progress of settlement generally throughout the district, much the same features present themselves as those that characterised the remarks made in last year's report. The continuance of steady and solid progress, the same unsatisfied demand for land of a suitable quality for close-settlement purposes, the same buoyancy of revenue, the same conditions as to rents outstanding with still hopeful prospects as to the future, constitute what may be regarded as a thoroughly satisfactory outlook in the matter of land-settlement in this district. One of the chief features of the year's transactions was the inauguration of the renewable-lease system under the provisions of "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907," but it is yet too early to comment on the success or otherwise of this new method of leasing. The fact, however, remains, that, whatever system of leasing be adopted, there is likely to be a constant demand for the land. Upon the whole there is every reason to be satisfied with the general progress made throughout Otago during the past year.

DEPARTMENTAL.

There is a constantly increasing amount of administrative work in connection with the business now intrusted to this Department. The rapid growth of the land-for-settlements scheme, with its numerous estates or settlements necessitating so many separate accounts, the negotiations and oversight in regard to scenery-preservation, irrigation, National Endowments, and various other matters, involve a great amount of time and attention. The volume of correspondence and general clerical work in this office is now very large, and entails a great amount of work and care on the whole staff. I have great pleasure in again testifying to the efficient services of all officers in both the lands and survey branches of the office.

Through the coming into force of the Civil Service Superannuation Act, Messrs. Reade, McKenzie, Harlow, and MacGoun have been advised of their retirement. All these officers have done good work during the many years they have been in the service, and their loss will be severely felt in this district. Mr. Reade has been Receiver of Land Revenue for, I understand, nearly forty years, a great part of the time being spent in this office. The duties carried out by him have been exceedingly onerous and responsible. The methods adopted by him have been so systematic and complete that the work has been done to the satisfaction of all concerned. Ranger McKenzie, who also retires, has been a valued and trusted officer in the goldfields portion of this district. His intimate knowledge of the requirements of settlement has been of great assistance to the Land Board and myself. Messrs. MacGoun and Harlow have also been diligent and painstaking in the work intrusted to them.

D. BARRON.

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

SOUTHLAND.

Before entering upon my report of the transactions of the past financial year it is fitting that I should refer to the somewhat sudden and unexpected death of my predecessor, the late Mr. John Hay.

After an illness which extended over two months, and was not for some time considered serious, he passed away on the 1st August, 1907, deeply lamented by his family and friends. His loss was keenly felt by all his officers, and very numerous expressions of sympathy and regret came from all over the district and from many parts of the Dominion. By his kindness, his goodness of heart, and his genial manner he endeared himself to all with whom he came in contact, and he gained their respect by his conscientious and straightforward administration. Throughout the district I find that the Crown tenants used to look to him for advice, and feel his loss to be that of a personal friend.

LANDS DISPOSED OF.

The following tabulated summary of the lands disposed of, and other transactions during the financial year ended 31st March, 1908, shows a falling-off in the number of selections made, which is partly attributable to unavoidable delay in opening lands to selection which it was hoped would be offered before the end of the year under review, and to the withdrawal from selection of lands previously open, in consequence of the passing of "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907." Nevertheless, the total results for the year are eminently satisfactory, the gross revenue being £32,073 8s. 8d.,