

## SCENERY-PRESERVATION.

In my last report reference was made to the acquisition of an area of 52 acres 2 roods 39 perches, known as Kennedy's Bush, on the summit of the Port Hills, near Christchurch, comprising one of the best of the few remaining areas of native bush in this vicinity. The reserve so made has recently been extended by the purchase of an additional adjoining area of 44 acres 1 rood 1 perch, the funds being provided jointly by the Government and the citizens. Steps are now being taken for the improvement of the road which leads along the summit of the hills to the bush.

An area of 480 acres 2 roods of excellent native bush situated at Peel Forest has also been acquired from the owners, the trustees of the late Messrs. Tripp and Acland, who were granted Crown lands of equal value by way of exchange, under the powers obtained by section 73 of "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907." This locality has for many years been a favourite picnic and holiday resort, and it is hoped that its acquisition will secure its preservation for popular enjoyment.

## TIMBER, FORESTS, ETC.

Notwithstanding the exceedingly dry season experienced during the past year, it is satisfactory to report that no serious bush-fires have occurred on Crown lands in the district.

The number of splitting and sawmilling licenses in existence at the close of the year was twenty-two, covering an area of 3,730 acres 1 rood 8 perches, from which a revenue of £216 5s. 6d. in fees and royalties has been received.

The Mackenzie County Council continues to carry on planting operations on reserves in the treeless Mackenzie country, the revenue being derived from the occupation of reserves set apart for this purpose.

## MINERAL LEASES.

There are now in existence in the district eight mineral leases for coal-mining on Crown lands; the area occupied is 1,527 acres 3 roods 9 perches, and the revenue received £78 8s. One of these leases is situated in the Malvern Hills, near Whitecliffs; two at Broken River, near the Midland Railway line, but these are not yet worked, pending the completion of the railway to a point at which the coal can be brought out to a market; four near Mount Somers; and one recently opened up at the Waitohi Hills, near Geraldine.

## WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

Thirteen workers' dwellings, situated at Sydenham, are now in occupation, and the sum of £300 17s. 1d. has been collected in rents during the year. The rents are regularly paid, and the properties are maintained in neat condition by the tenants.

The erection of eleven more dwellings of four, five, and six rooms on the same block is now in hand.

## RANGERS' INSPECTIONS, AND CONDITIONS OF SETTLEMENT.

Exclusive of the land-for-settlements holdings, which are dealt with in a separate report, the majority of the Crown lands occupied under settlement conditions in the district have been held for extended periods, and statutory residence and improvements are no longer compulsory. The Ranger for North Canterbury reports that the only recently selected lands were the five small grazing-runs in the Hororata District, and these holders have fulfilled requirements for the first year of occupation. Amongst the holdings of the low-lying lands around Lake Ellesmere, a few lessees are deficient in value of improvements effected, owing to the damage periodically caused to fences and other improvements by the rising of the lake-waters; stock, however, thrive well on the native vegetation which grows when the water subsides, and with the advantage of creameries in the vicinity most of the tenants are doing well. In the Oxford District the settlers on the plains suffered from the dry season, which killed out the cultivated grasses; some damage also resulted by grass-fires, but fortunately not to any serious extent. In the Ashburton County the Ranger reports that most of the tenants appear to be in a prosperous condition; the farmers devote more attention to growing turnips and sheep, and less to grain-crops, whereby the land is kept in better order. In South Canterbury the tenants on the lighter plain lands have suffered from the dry season, and will experience a shortage of winter feed, accentuated by partial failure of root-crops. On the hill lands between Geraldine and Fairlie, and from Burke's Pass to Waimate, which are occupied under the lease-in-perpetuity and small-grazing-run tenures in fair-sized blocks, the tenants have not felt the effects of the season so severely; the holdings are well kept, and, although in some cases the improvements fall short of the rather large amounts required by law, still the lessees have generally effected as much as can reasonably and profitably be placed on the land. The holdings are kept in good order, and surface-sowing has been done to some extent, with satisfactory results.

The reports on the village settlements in all parts of the district show that the conditions of occupation are satisfactorily fulfilled; the holdings are well kept, and the tenants are in fairly comfortable circumstances, being generally able to obtain a reasonable amount of employment near their homes.

## DEPARTMENTAL.

Owing to the very limited area of land that has been available for selection during the year, only thirty-nine statutory applications for land have been received, but the Land Board has dealt with large numbers of applications for transfer of Crown leases, besides the very numerous other questions arising out of the occupation of Crown lands under the 3,194 leases and licenses existing within the district. The inward and outward correspondence has totalled over 23,000 letters, and