

LAND TRANSACTIONS AND TENURE.

Apart from the new selections that have taken place during the year, a review of the older forms of tenure shows that very few changes have taken place. Amongst the holders who have the right to acquire the freehold, one each under the perpetual-lease, occupation-with-right-of-purchase, and lease-in-perpetuity systems have exercised this right, the total area so alienated being 611 acres 3 roods.

Two exchanges of tenure from perpetual lease to renewable lease, in respect of an area of 26 acres 2 roods 6 perches, have been effected, and two similar exchanges from lease in perpetuity to renewable lease under the Land for Settlements Act have also taken place.

PAYMENT AND ARREARS OF RENT.

The total annual rental payable by the 3,249 tenants, who occupy an area of 4,137,296 acres 1 rood 39 perches, is £148,334 17s. 2d. The actual gross revenue received from all sources was £141,145 9s. 4d., of which rents represented £135,529 6s. 11d., the balance being miscellaneous payments.

The gross total of arrears owing on all classes of tenure on the 31st March, 1909 (excluding payments due in respect of current periods not yet expired) was £4,332 10s. 9d., owing by 139 tenants. These represent, as regards the number of tenants, just over 4 per cent., and, as regards amount, slightly under 3 per cent. The arrears are, for the reason explained in the land for settlements report, heavier than usual, but if the postponed payments in the Kinloch Settlement be deducted the remaining ordinary arrears only represent about 1 per cent. of the total.

TRANSFERS.

The total number of holdings under settlement tenures that were transferred during the year was 169, covering an area of 38,717 acres 1 rood 27 perches, made up as follows:—

	Leases.	A.	R.	P.
Leases in perpetuity, all classes	116	19,835	0	11
Village homesteads, all classes	38	1,160	1	30
Small grazing-runs and grazing-farms	9	17,179	0	7
Perpetual and farm homestead leases, and occupation-with-right-of-purchase licenses	6	542	3	19
	169	38,717	1	27

These figures show a small decrease from the preceding year's dealings, which in their turn were less than those of the previous period. On the whole, however, the number of transactions has been normal, and the amount of consideration money that passes in most cases shows that Crown leaseholds maintain a good position in favour of those desiring land for *bonâ fide* occupation and cultivation.

TIMBER AND FORESTS.

It is satisfactory to report that no serious fires have occurred during the year affecting the forests on Crown lands. The amount of available milling-timber remaining on such lands is now very limited, the only localities where regular milling operations are now carried on being the Oxford district (principally on Crown lands) and near Alford Forest, on freehold lands. The other areas of forest in the district are generally too remote, and the quantities of suitable milling-timber in them too limited, to be capable of being worked; but any destruction of them would be a matter for regret, owing to the effect that such destruction would have on the sources of water-supply and the configuration of the country.

There are now in existence in the Oxford district four sawmilling licenses, covering an area of 840½ acres, and nine splitting licenses, covering an area of 1,931 acres 2 roods, the total revenue received during the year by way of royalties and license fees being £199 2s. 7d.

SCENERY-PRESERVATION.

No fresh areas have been acquired for scenery-preservation during the year. The Kennedy's Bush Scenery Reserve, near Christchurch, is now being administered by a nominated Board of local representatives, which has made arrangements for fencing-in portions of the reserve, and for replanting native trees. The road access to the reserve has also been improved by the formation of part of the Summit Road.

The Peel Forest Scenery Reserve has been placed in charge of a caretaker residing on a small property immediately adjoining, who has enlarged his premises, and provides accommodation for visitors. With the exception of local picnic parties, however, the number of visitors to the forest has been limited this season, and it is to be regretted that the beauties of Peel Forest, and its advantages as a holiday resort, are not more widely known.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

Eleven new workers' dwellings in the Camelot Settlement, Sydenham, were opened for application on the 6th October, 1908. Thirty-five applications were received, and, after examination by the Land Board, all but one of the applicants were admitted to the ballot, at which the whole of the dwellings were allotted. The new dwellings, as well as those previously disposed of, are being satisfactorily occupied, and the premises and gardens generally are neatly kept. The number of dwellings occupied at the close of the year was twenty-four, the total area being 5 acres 1 rood 32½ perches, at a rental of £623 17s. per annum. The arrears of rent at the close of the year are larger than those for the previous period, a fluctuation that is inevitable where tenants are completely dependent upon outside employment.