

The area leased during the year on all tenures totals 265,701 acres, which brings the total area held under lease at the end of the year to 1,118,604 acres.

The revenue received (£20,107) constitutes a record for the district, and exceeds the estimate by upwards of £3,200, the excess to a very large extent being accounted for by the revenue received from the purchase of the freehold of lease in perpetuity, from which no revenue was anticipated, as the question of whether the right to acquire the freehold extended to lessees in a mining district was undecided at the date of framing the estimate. It is, however, anticipated that even a larger revenue will be received during the coming year.

The improvement in the timber trade anticipated in last year's report has been fully realized, the whole of the sawmills being at present in full work, while the prospects for the coming year are decidedly bright. Large orders for shipment to Australian ports have been placed locally, and inquiries for areas of bush are being received from sawmillers in other districts. The bush situated adjacent to the existing lines of railway is being rapidly worked out, and millers are being forced to go further afield for their timber. The effect is that the land adjacent to the railways, formerly covered with bush, will shortly be available for subdivision for settlement, while the outlying districts will be opened up by the sawmillers, who will thus prepare the way for settlement. The removal of the timber suitable for sawmilling, while providing a source of revenue to the Crown, lightens the task of settlers in clearing their land for grass, as it relieves them from the felling of the large trees, which, if felled in clearing cannot be burned for some years, and are an obstacle to stock, while the area covered by the trunks reduces to a very appreciable extent the area that can be grassed.

Proposals for the reservation of some 29,100 acres for scenic purposes have been approved, but these reservations have as far as possible been restricted to lands of little value for agricultural or pastoral purposes. It is, however, recognized that the scenic beauty of the district should be preserved, especially in view of the increasing popularity of certain portions of the district, notably Kanieri Lake, Mahinapua Lake, and the Franz Josef Glacier, as tourist resorts, and these particular localities, together with their roads of access, are being well provided for in this direction.

The policy of leasing lands known to be infested with noxious weeds is being continued, as by this means a certain amount of revenue is obtained, while the Crown is relieved of the responsibility of clearing the weeds. The total expenditure on clearing of noxious weeds on Crown lands during the year amounted to £8 1s. 9d.

Splendid progress is being made by tenants in the leasehold township of Runanga, at the State coal-mine. Practically the whole of the sections are held by employees in the mine, and the present appearance of the township reflects great credit on the energy and enterprise of the workers. It is only some seven years since this township was laid out, the land at that time being wholly covered with bush, while the latest report shows that improvements to the value of £29,764 have been effected by the lessees. Government assistance in the way of cheap money has been very much appreciated by the workers, as those who were without sufficient capital to erect dwellings have thus been enabled to provide comfortable homes for their families. The population has increased to such an extent that, by including the adjoining small private township of Dunollie, it is now sufficient to entitle them to constitute a borough, and a proposal to follow this course is now receiving serious and favourable consideration by the inhabitants.

As a result of the progress of settlement the work of administration and office routine connected therewith has been very materially increased, and I take this opportunity of voicing my appreciation of the assistance afforded me by a staff of capable and zealous officers.

G. H. M. McCURE,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

#### ROAD AND OTHER WORKS IN RUNANGA TOWNSHIP.

The District Surveyor reports as follows:—

“A large outfall drain was cut to straighten the course of Raleigh Creek and relieve the low-lying portions of the township of flood-water. This has been a great improvement, and several houses have been built on the low sections since the completion of the drain. A foot-track was formed and corduroyed between the railway at Ward Street and the roadway between Nos. 1 and 2 mines, for access by the miners going to and from work. A dray-road was formed and metalled between Runanga Township and Dunollie, so that coal could be carted from the mine to Runanga, and this has been much used since completion. Owing to the high cost and delay in railing gravel from Stillwater, it was thought best to metal this road with the waste stone and clinkers from the mine, and a tramway 55 chains in length was made for this purpose. The road has stood very well so far, but will require repairs during the winter months. Fifteen chains of dray-road was made and also metalled with mine-debris, to give access to sections in the north-eastern corner of Runanga *via* Ross Street. The section-holders formerly used the railway for access, but, owing to the constant coal traffic, were barred by the Railway Department.

“The general work for the year includes the maintenance of five miles of streets; clearing out and improving three miles of side drains; eradication of noxious weeds; repairs and alterations to culverts, &c.—in fact, the general functions of a Town Board. These works, as in the past, have been carried out under the supervision of the overseer, who has performed his duties very satisfactorily. The position is at present that metalled dray-road access has been given to every house in the township, and the residents seem to be very well satisfied with the results. No attempt has been made to put down footpaths; but, considering the few years that the township has been in existence, I consider it is in a very forward state.