

"The proposed work for the coming year consists of general maintenance; the excavation and timbering of a main drain down McGowan Street; the clearing-out of portion of Raleigh Creek; and some improvements to culverts and bridges. It is not proposed to make any more roads, and the residents are now considering the advisability of forming themselves into a borough or Town Board, and consequently undertaking their own affairs.

"The following is a detailed list of works: Main drain, averaging 6 ft. by 6 ft., 27 chains; cleaning and improving side drains, three miles; completion of foot-track for miners, 12 chains; dray-road formed and metalled to Dunollie, 27 chains; tramway to bring metal to same, 55 chains; dray-road, Ross Street, &c., 15 chains; tramway, Ross Street, &c., 22 chains; Road to Section 5, Block XXXIII, 3 chains; necessary culverts, pipes, &c.; maintenance and repairs of streets, five miles. The cost of above was £1,645 3s. 7d.

"The estimate of amounts required for coming year is: Drain, McGowan Street, 27 chains, £112; boarding same, £74; culverts, entrances, &c., £52; clearing other drains and creek, £48; maintenance, £205; overseer's salary, £195; possible contingencies, £114: total, £800."

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

CANTERBURY.

LANDS OFFERED FOR DISPOSAL.

Exclusive of the eight settlements offered under the Land for Settlement Act, which will be dealt with in the separate report under that Act, and the pastoral-run disposal, to which special reference will be made, the Crown lands offered during the year have not been of any large area or importance. Sixty sections of town and rural land were offered for cash sale at auction, at a total upset of £499, and all were sold, the total price realized being £638. Twenty-six blocks of land, totalling 331 acres, were offered for lease by public auction or tender, the aggregate upset rentals being £57 12s.; all but one were disposed of, the total annual rental realized being £68 16s. One small grazing-run of 988 acres, one block of 11 acres at Cheviot, and two workers' dwellings, completed the year's offerings.

PASTORAL-RUNS DISPOSAL.

The outstanding feature of the year's work has been the redistribution of the leases of a number of pastoral runs lying within the Waimate, Mackenzie, Ashburton, Selwyn, and Amuri Counties. Most of these were last disposed of in 1889 on twenty-one-years leases, which are now about to expire. The Classification Commissioners appointed by His Excellency the Governor had made an exhaustive examination and report on the runs, and had recommended that the thirty-three runs which were available for disposal, and which were under occupation by twenty-three different licensees, should be reoffered as forty-six separate runs, a good many of them being deemed suitable for occupation in smaller areas than heretofore. A further review of some of the cases resulted in additional subdivision being effected, giving a total of fifty-one separate runs for disposal. Under clause 91 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1910, power was obtained to offer pastoral runs under Part VI of the Land Act by application and ballot, and out of the forty-five runs, comprising a total area of 1,365,209 acres, which were offered for disposal in February, twenty-four, aggregating 742,800 acres, or more than half of the total, were thus disposed of. For these twenty-four runs there were in all 373 applicants, of whom 313 were, after examination by the Land Board, admitted to the ballot. In dealing with the applications the Board laid down three principal requirements: that applicants (1) must be not less than twenty-one years of age; (2) must prove the command of capital equal to approximately seven years' rent of the runs applied for; and (3) must not be already the holders of more than 1,000 acres of land, that being the limitation imposed under the nearest similar tenure, the small-grazing-run system. The Board's decision, as was inevitable whatever the course of action adopted, evoked considerable criticism not only from those who forgot that the Board was perfectly within its rights in imposing conditions which were not necessarily expressly provided for by the Legislature, but also from those who ignored the fact that high pastoral country with its attendant risks is in no sense poor-man's country, but must necessarily be held, both in the interests of the tenant and the State, by persons able to stand the occasional heavy losses of severe winters without financial ruin.

Of the twenty-one runs, comprising an area of 622,409 acres, which were offered by auction at an aggregate upset rental of £4,412 per annum, all but one were sold, the total annual rental realized being £7,612. In the majority of cases there was very keen competition, although circumstances indicated that the competition was not in all cases measured by the actual value of the country.

The annual rental payable under the new licenses of the runs already disposed of will be £14,492 as from the 1st March, 1912, and in addition to these there are six blocks, totalling 82,100 acres, which have been set apart for disposal under the small-grazing-run tenure, and which will be offered during the ensuing year. The total annual rental payable under the expiring licenses of all the runs dealt with was £9,365.