

Mataroa; and a large number of town allotments for cash or lease in Ninia, Waitangi, Rangataua, Ohakune, Horopito West, Erua, Waimarino, Raurimu, Owango, Kakahi, Manunui, Mangaweka South, Pohonui, Rewa, Pongaroa, Ngaturi, and Mawaihakona. Seven improved farms, comprising 1,220 acres, were also disposed of. Practically all the land offered was taken up.

The lands taken up during the year amounted to 33,426 acres, in 292 lots, inclusive of improved-farm sections, lands allotted without competition, &c.

Milling licenses have been granted over an area of 3,859 acres, a great part of which comprises land already occupied in the North Waimarino Improved-farm Settlement. Under agreements made with the occupants of these lands, a share of the royalty accruing will be credited towards the advances made to them by the Crown.

IMPROVED-FARM-SETTLEMENT LANDS.

The steward of the North Waimarino Improved-farm Settlement reports that the progress of the settlement during the year has been most satisfactory from results obtained. The comparatively small amount done by the settlers without assistance from the Government looks at first sight an unfavourable feature, but this is fully accounted for when it is remembered that only men without capital were allowed to participate in the ballot for sections. The returns from land brought into cultivation were somewhat poor; but this is not discouraging, as land in this locality requires a full season's sweetening in order to secure successful yields. The area felled is 2,570 acres, and 2,871 acres have been grassed, while there are 1,122 head of stock of various kinds on the settlement. The value of improvements effected is £8,970, of which £2,334 worth were effected by the settlers without assistance during the current year. The number of souls on the settlement is 323.

RANGERS' REPORTS AND INSPECTIONS.

The Rangers in the west coast district made 692 inspections during the year, covering an area of 216,223 acres. These figures show a decrease in number of inspections from last year's statistics, but an increase of 57,336 acres in area inspected. The amount of improvements required to be done by the tenants was £54,110, whereas the Rangers value the improvements actually effected at £201,150, being improvements to the value of £147,040 in excess of requirements.

In the east coast division the Rangers made 1,005 inspections, over an area of 180,308 acres. This year's figures show an increase over last year's both as to number and area. On this side of the district, too, the settlers show a keen desire to have their holdings highly improved, and they have put on improvements to the value of £136,325 in excess of what was wanted by the terms of their leases and licenses, the value of improvements actually made being £192,056, and the requirements £55,731.

PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

The Crown Lands Ranger for the northern part of the west coast division reports that settlement in his district is progressing in a satisfactory manner. The long spell of dry weather last winter was detrimental to stock, and the percentage of lambs was exceptionally low; but good prices are ruling for produce, and, on the whole, the settlers are doing well.

In the recently opened blocks in the Waimarino district good progress has been made, and the Department was fortunate in obtaining an exceptionally good class of settlers, several of whom have their wives and families on their holdings. Good progress has been made with roading these blocks, and most of the sections have bridle-track access.

In the Rangitatau Block good work has been done, and the settlers are doing well. The grass sown by the Government looks well, and the settlers are quite satisfied with it. A dray-road has been formed from Waitotara Township well into the back, and is still being pushed on.

The settlers in the various village settlements have made marked progress. Some of the sections along the Main Trunk line have had to be forfeited, but these have been readily taken up again. The settlers for the most part work at sawmills in the vicinities of the settlements. At Manunui good progress has been made, and this settlement is an undoubted success.

The settlers on the land-for-settlements estates are making good progress. All the settlements are now so well established and developed that little can be added to reports of previous years. No damage has been done to scenic reserves by bush-fires this year.

The Crown Lands Ranger for the central district reports that the whole of the tenants in his district have experienced a favourable year. Stock have done well, and good prices for fat sheep have been realized. Shearing was protracted owing to continuous rains, and the wool-clip was on the light side, but good paying prices have been netted on the average. A considerable area of bush has been felled during the year, but the burns have not been very successful. The grass-seed sown, however, has come away first rate.

In the Awarua 1B Block, disposed of at Taihape on the 31st October last, about 75 acres have been felled, and it is expected that the bulk of the bush on these sections will be felled during the coming winter.

Great improvements have been made in the roads throughout the district, especially so in the Rangitikei County. Bridle-tracks are also much improved, there being now only a few bad places. There is no loss to scenic reserves to record this year, the bush on all the reserves having been fairly well preserved.

The Crown Lands Ranger for the eastern portion of the district reports that in his division settlement still continues to make steady progress, and the selectors generally seem prosperous and contented. The season just passed has been a good one for grass, although there has not been a very