

The settlements in the vicinity of Wellington are utilized as residential sites principally, but some of the tenants follow poultry-farming, market-gardening, &c.

With the exception of Normandale and Hawtrey Settlements, the latter of which is, however, coming more into favour, the whole of the settlers on settlement lands are in a more or less prosperous condition.

The season throughout has been very changeable and much later than usual, but there has been abundance of feed and, as record prices have been reached for dairy-produce, the settlers have, on the whole, had a good year. All settlers are of a desirable class and utilize their holdings to the best advantage. Roads throughout are in good order, consequently settlers can reach the markets and railway with every convenience, which is a great factor towards successful settlement.

G. WRIGHT,
Acting Commissioner of Crown Lands.

NELSON.

Wangapeka Settlement: This settlement, opened in 1907, is to-day one of the most prosperous parts of the district. It contains an area of 6,149 acres, occupied by fifteen hardworking desirable tenants. The requirements of the Act in the way of improvements amount to £956, and those effected have reached a value of £7,776, or an excess of £6,820. This estate is nearly all open land, and when first settled was in a neglected state, but after several years' careful ploughing and working the land is now in good heart, and is an object-lesson to those who predicted its failure. Where formerly one man was only obtaining an indifferent living, fifteen men are now doing well. The improvements consist chiefly of fencing, ploughing and cropping, and buildings; the stock now amounts to 3,625 sheep, 39 horses, 257 cows, and 35 pigs. A fair amount of ground has been ploughed and cropped, and some fine crops of oats have been harvested for chaff. There is a creamery on the settlement, supplied by nine of the settlers milking 200 cows. The settlers are all hardworking, practical farmers, and are well satisfied with their conditions and prospects.

Braeburn Settlement: The area of this settlement is 17,674 acres, of which 15,825 acres is held by nineteen tenants, an increase of two since last year; there are still two selections unoccupied, but I have no doubt these will soon be taken up. This place is advancing steadily, and at the present time is supplying cream to the Murchison factory. The improvements required are £4,474 and £9,984 effected, showing a great increase since last year. Grazing is the chief industry, very little in the way of agriculture being done owing to distance from market and a heavy rainfall; the small amount of crops grown for local consumption were very good. The bulk of this settlement is hilly bush land, and consequently the progress is somewhat slow; 1,025 acres were felled this year, but owing to the wet season the burns have not been good. The stock now number 9,076 head of sheep, cattle, horses, and pigs, a large increase on last year.

ROBT. T. SADD,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

MARLBOROUGH.

The total area acquired and offered under the Land for Settlements Act in this district is 116,334 acres, and the area leased 109,912 acres. The total population residing on the holdings is 1,048—a slight decrease from last year. The number of sheep shows a falling-off from 121,121 to 117,814, but the number of cattle has increased from 1,166 to 1,217 head; the number of horses remains practically the same as last year. The total area in white crops was 1,825 acres, and in green crops 6,385 acres. The improvements effected are valued at £192,394 6s. 5d., as against the amount required by the Act, £89,509 7s. 7d. The lessees, especially on Starborough, Richmond Brook, and Blind River, are all doing remarkably well; the original selectors who are still holding their leaseholds are nearly all independent. The increased value of the leaseholds is shown by the prices paid for the goodwill. Several sections have changed hands at sums, exclusive of improvements, considerably more than the original price of the land.

Seddon Township, now no longer the terminus of the railway, is at a standstill as far as population goes, but has greatly improved during the past year. A post-office has been built, a telephone exchange opened with forty subscribers, also a Coronation Library and another church erected. Although Seddon will probably never have a much larger population than at present, it will always be the centre for the traffic for the Upper Awatere, which, as the larger properties are subdivided, will support a much greater population than at present.

The climatic conditions have been very variable and broken; the spring and early summer being wet and cold seriously interfered with the harvest operations and caused a large mortality among sheep. For the last three months very little rain has fallen north of the Ure, and now that frost has set in there seems a likelihood of the sheep-farmer having a shortage of winter feed. The caterpillar pest has not caused the same damage to crops this year as it has done in past years.

The settlers, with very few exceptions, are making headway, and are assured of future success.

W. H. SKINNER,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.