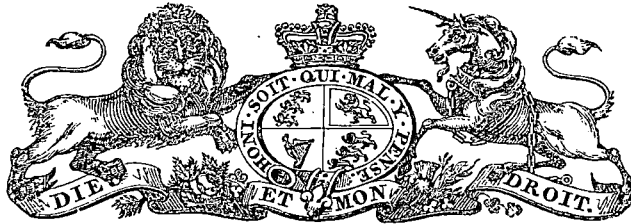


(No. 56.)



1898.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEYS:

REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL AND SECRETARY
FOR LANDS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—£27 14s.

TASMANIA.

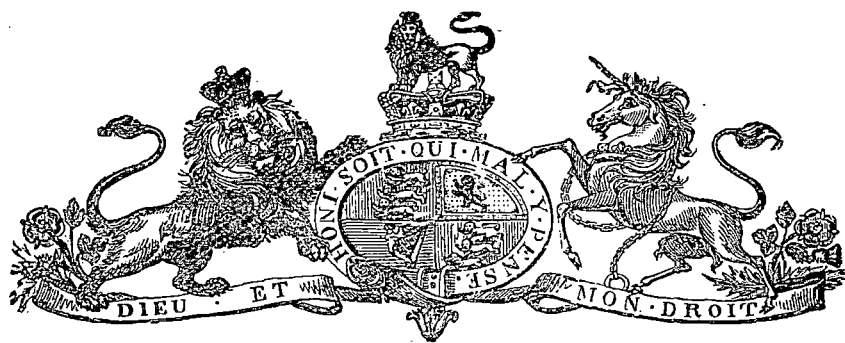
R E P O R T

OF THE

SURVEYOR-GENERAL AND SECRETARY
FOR LANDS

FOR

1897-1898.



Tasmania:

WILLIAM GRAHAME, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, HOBART.

1898,



Department of Lands and Surveys,
Hobart, July 10th, 1898.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to make the following Report on the Department of Lands and Surveys for the twelve months ending June 30th, 1898.

REVENUE.

It was estimated by me in June, 1897, that the Land Revenue for that year would reach the sum of £48,250. The sum collected during the first six months of that year was £23,411, and the total receipts for the year ending December 31st, 1897, was £53,533, being an increase over the estimate of £5283, and an increase over the sum collected during the year 1896 of £6324. This is the highest total reached for the last five years. The sum collected during the six months ending June 30th, 1898, is £31,932, as compared with £23,411 for the same period of the year 1897, being an increase for the half-year just closed of £8521. (*Vide* Appendix A., Return No. 1.) The increases in revenue herein recorded are especially encouraging when viewed in connection with the extra concessions granted to land purchasers who had suffered from this year's bush fires throughout the Island.

LAND SELECTION.

The price of Crown lands under the selection clauses of the Crown Lands Act, 1890, (51 Vict. No. 8), is £1 per acre, to which one-third is added for credit extending over a period of 14 years. The price of land purchased under the Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894, is the same as under the principal Act, but the period of credit is extended to 18 years, of which the first three years are free. The Crown Lands Amendment Act of 1895 provides for the selection of second-class land for auction at 10s. per acre.

The number of selections made under the Act of 1890 during the 12 months ending June 30th, 1898, (*Vide* Appendix A., Return No. 2), is 238, comprising an area of 14,678 acres, and the number of selections made under the Amendment Acts of 1893 and 1894 is 161, comprising an area of 5919 acres, as compared with 177 selections, comprising 8370 acres, and 100 selections, comprising 3499 acres, respectively, during the preceding 12 months, showing a total increase of 122 lots, and 8728 acres.

The grand total area of Country Lands sold during the year 1897 is 24,519 acres, which realized £30,486, being an average price per acre of £1 4s. 8½d. The area sold during 1896 was 16,026 acres, and the sum realised thereon was £29,223, being an average price per acre of £1 6s. 2¼d. (*Vide* Appendix A., Return No. 5). The falling off in price of 1s. 5¼d. per acre last year is accounted for by the inclusion in the total of the extra area of second-class land sold at 10s. per acre. The figures quoted, of which those indicating the annual comparative increase in selection under Section 31 of the Crown Lands Act, 1890, form the most important factor, bear practical testimony to the consistent progress that is being made in *bonâ fide* settlement throughout the agricultural districts. They also furnish unmistakable evidence in support of the altered policy of the Lands Department which was initiated in the year 1894. It is now apparent that had such a policy been entered upon 25 years earlier, the farming industry, and therefore the country, would be in a much more prosperous condition than it is at the present time.

The localities most favoured by selectors are the new and prosperous settlement on King Island, which claims 3707 acres, Devon, 3334 acres, and Cumberland, 3084 acres, of the total recorded.

RETURN of Applications under 31st Section of the Crown Lands Act, 1890, and the Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894, from 30th June, 1897, to 30th June, 1898.

	Crown Lands Act, 1890, (31st Section).					Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894.				
	No. of Applications received.	Total Area applied for.	No. of Applications on which Survey Fee paid.	Area on which Survey Fee paid.	Amount of Survey Fees paid by Applicants.	No. of Applications received.	Total Area applied for.	No. of Applications on which Survey Fee paid.	Area on which Survey Fee paid.	Amount of Survey Fees paid by Applicants.
	No.	Acres.	No.	Acres.	£ s. d.	No.	Acres.	No.	Acres.	£ s. d.
Buckingham.....	91	4449	46	1878	258 0 0	90	2978	41	1337	195 10 0
Cornwall.....	16	1426	7	292	44 5 0	15	625	11	425	57 10 0
Cumberland.....	4	132	2	55	10 5 0	5	249	1	50	6 5 0
Devon.....	139	12,839	49	4464	423 15 0	100	4306	31	1304	175 15 0
Dorset.....	35	1764	17	1060	115 10 0	26	1116	17	733	97 5 0
Glamorgan.....	4	705	2	45	10 5 0	2	100	2	100	12 10 0
Kent.....	21	932	12	519	71 0 0	19	794	6	225	33 0 0
Lincoln.....	1	320	1	320	17 5 0	2	75	1	50	6 5 0
Monmouth.....	3	96	Nil	Nil	Nil	7	277	3	93	14 5 0
Pembroke.....	26	1805	14	507	73 10 0	49	1707	33	1228	170 5 0
Somerset.....	3	90	2	45	10 5 0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Wellington.....	90	8090	39	2990	304 0 0	102	4372	41	1725	231 10 0
Flinders Island..	6	1141	1	150	12 10 0	3	55	Nil	Nil	Nil
King Island.....	107	13,450	59	6330	542 10 0	13	700	7	275	37 0 0
Westmorland....	12	717	6	315	40 0 0	4	225	2	75	10 5 0
TOTAL.....	568	47,956	257	18,970	1933 0 0	437	17,579	196	7620	1047 5 0

RETURN of Applications under Section 4 Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895, from 30th June, 1897, to 30th June, 1898.

SECOND-CLASS LAND.

	No. of Applications received.	Total Area applied for.	No. of Applications on which Survey Fee has been paid.	Area on which Survey Fee paid.	Amount of Survey Fee.
	No.	Acres.	No.	Acres.	£ s. d.
Buckingham.....	11	932	8	540	59 10 0
Cornwall.....	3	400	2	250	22 10 0
Cumberland.....	8	830	4	675	50 0 0
Devon.....	25	1779	13	1070	112 10 0
Dorset.....	19	1823	8	802	76 10 0
Glamorgan.....	2	298	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kent.....	2	80	1	50	6 5 0
Monmouth.....	3	170	2	130	17 5 0
Pembroke.....	12	916	8	620	64 0 0
Wellington.....	16	1363	7	438	53 5 0
Westmorland.....	14	1029	9	460	61 0 0
Flinders.....	4	400	Nil	Nil	Nil
Somerset.....	1	116	Nil	Nil	Nil
	120	10,145	62	5035	£522 15 0

RETURN of Applications under Section 49 Crown Lands Act, 1890, from 30th June, 1897, to 30th June, 1898.

MINING AREAS.

	No. of Applications received.	Total Area applied for.	No. of Applications on which Survey Fee has been paid.	Area on which Survey Fee paid.	Amount of Survey Fee.
	No.	Acres.	No.	Acres.	£ s. d.
Buckingham.....	4	300	2	150	17 5 0
Cornwall.....	3	100	3	100	14 5 0
Devon.....	9	300	2	60	10 5 0
Dorset.....	45	3090	20	960	125 15 0
Monmouth.....	1	25	Nil	Nil	Nil
Montagu.....	49	2275	11	180	51 0 0
Franklin.....	2	400	Nil	Nil	Nil
	113	6490	38	1450	£218 10 0

TOWN LANDS.

The total area of Town lands sold during the year 1897 was 592 acres, in 848 allotments, which realised the sum of £22,719, being an average price per lot of £26 15s. 10d., and £38 7s. 6d. per acre as compared with 383 acres, in 226 allotments, which realised £8226, being an average price per lot of £36 8s. 10d., and £21 9s. 6½d. per acre, for the year 1896, thus showing an increase for 1897 of £14,493 as compared with the preceding year, (*vide* Appendix A., Return No. 5). The progressive increase of £16 17s. 11½d. per acre in the price realised on Town lands is none the less gratifying in that it is due to the extra demand that has arisen for business allotments in mining districts on the West Coast. The purchase of these small allotments (¼th of an acre) at satisfactory prices is an indication of good faith and solid progress in the community. New towns have been proclaimed, and portions subdivided for sale at Deep Lead and Macquarie, (Kelly's Basin). A Town site has been selected, and the land resumed from the operations of the Mining Act at Rosebery, where a number of allotments would have been surveyed for the next Land Sale but for a delay by the Railway Department in fixing the proposed terminus of the North-East Dundas Railway extension. It has become such an important feature in the year's proceedings that I have had the results from the last two years' sales tabulated for reference and comparison. (*See* Appendix A., Return No. 8.)

INSPECTION OF SMALL SELECTIONS.

The result of the inspection, which took place at the end of 1897 and commencement of 1898, of selections made under the Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894, from the date of the former to 31st May, 1896 (about the time the first payments became due) affords the earliest information available by which a reliable opinion may be formed as to how far "the three years' free system" is attaining the objects for which it was introduced.

The ensuing table shows that of the total of 484 lots selected up to 31st May, 1896, comprising an area of 19,126 acres, only 115 lots, comprising 4359 acres, or about one-fourth of the whole number, were occupied by the selectors thereof; 246 lots, comprising 9795 acres, were found to be more or less improved, though in many cases the Act was barely complied with, and the remaining 123 lots were in a state of nature, and were forfeited in February, 1898, by which 4972 acres reverted to the Crown:

INSPECTION of Lands selected under Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1893-94, from date of Act, 14th November, 1893, to 31st May, 1896.

County.	Resided upon and improved.			Improved but not resided upon.			Unimproved and unoccupied.			Total Lots inspected.			Forfeited February, 1898.							
	No.	AREA.			No.	AREA.			No.	AREA.			No.	AREA.						
		A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.				
Buckingham	17	570	3	24	65	2106	0	31	25	872	3	2	107	3549	3	17	25	872	3	2
Cornwall	6	188	1	32	9	305	1	34	8	357	0	34	23	851	0	20	8	357	0	34
Cumberland .....	...	...	...	...	2	74	1	15	...	...	...	...	2	74	1	15	...	...	...	...
Devon	15	593	0	8	63	2783	3	9	24	1087	3	28	102	4464	3	5	24	1087	3	28
Dorset	18	611	2	15	7	371	0	19	9	359	0	19	34	1341	3	13	9	359	0	19
Glamorgan	3	147	0	5	6	297	1	4	12	541	2	27	21	985	3	36	12	541	2	27
Kent	4	143	0	5	34	1301	2	35	14	560	3	11	52	2005	2	11	14	560	3	11
Lincoln	1	49	3	26	1	49	3	20	...	...	...	...	2	99	3	6	...	...	...	...
Monmouth	16	612	0	22	4	200	0	0	6	213	3	38	26	1026	0	20	6	213	3	8
Pembroke.....	14	470	0	25	27	1111	2	2	14	469	1	29	55	2051	0	16	14	469	1	29
Somerset	4	196	1	23	1	49	3	20	1	49	1	18	6	295	2	21	1	49	1	18
Westmorland ...	5	206	3	18	4	163	1	11	3	114	1	11	12	484	2	0	3	114	1	11
Wellington	8	370	3	8	22	933	3	9	7	345	1	12	37	1649	3	29	7	345	1	12
King Island	4	199	0	26	1	46	1	32	...	...	...	...	5	245	2	18	...	...	...	...
	115	4359	1	37	246	9794	3	1	123	4971	3	29	484	19,126	0	27	123	4971	2	39

It is worthy of note that the total number of allotments selected under the Amendment Acts of 1893 and 1894, to 30th June last, is 747, and that the total number of lots of 50 acres and under, selected under the ordinary 14 years' credit system, is 418. These results taken together are not altogether encouraging, in so far as the special inducements held out in the Acts of 1893 and 1894 for the encouragement of industrial settlements on agricultural Crown lands are concerned. As many intending selectors are doubtless unacquainted with the ultra-liberal provisions contained in the Amendment Acts, it is reasonable to suppose that they will be more freely availed of as they become better known. There can, however, be no question but that the insistence upon habitual residence, and that progressive improvements be effected on the land year by year during the full term of purchase, have hindered selection under these Acts where the land was not required for immediate occupation. But herein lies one of the main features of the system, operating as an effectual check against land speculation being carried on under the guise of agricultural settlement. Constant inspection of these areas is, however, essential for the proper carrying out of the Acts, and to prevent a blocking of the way by forfeited lands, and thereby misleading the would-be selector.

RETURN of Country Lands forfeited in 1897.

County.	No. of Lots.	Area.		
		A.	R.	P.
Buckingham	31	1606	1	37
Cumberland	5	487	1	17
Glamorgan	3	111	0	32
Kent	14	1007	1	8
Lincoln	2	316	0	8
Somerset	2	325	0	3
Pembroke	21	1029	1	36
Monmouth	8	221	0	24
Cornwall	19	1952	2	36
Devon	45	2693	3	39
Dorset	32	1585	0	19
Flinders	19	2041	1	11
Westmorland	11	792	3	9
Lincoln	5	143	3	10
Montagu	7	79	3	27
Russell	2	56	2	17
Wellington	28	2500	1	1
TOTALS	254	16,950	2	14

ARREARS OF INSTALMENTS.

The year's work in dealing with the arrears of instalments and Crown rentals handed down from past years continues to impose a heavy strain upon the clerical branch of the Department. The sums are, however, being consistently reduced by steady and persistent effort, having regard to the policy of leniency at all times extended by the Department to the deserving selector who is making an honest endeavour to clear off his liabilities.

The arrears of pastoral rents are greater than at 31st May, 1897. This increase is due to the extra concessions allowed to pastoral lessees, consequent on the heavy losses they sustained by the bush fires of last summer. The comparative results are given in the following Returns:—

RETURN showing Arrears of Purchase Money and Rent at the following dates:—

Date.	Purchase Money in arrear.			Rent in arrear.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
30th June, 1894	47,686	2	11	5650	5	10
31st December, 1894	36,079	16	0	1590	10	0
31st December, 1895	48,497	8	4	1369	10	6
31st December, 1896	43,246	7	4	1533	5	0
31st May, 1897	41,373	18	5	1862	12	0
31st December, 1897	36,591	16	8	2007	10	0
31st May, 1898	36,570	0	0	2620	0	0

Arrears of Instalments of Purchase Money for Crown Lands on 31st May, 1898.

	£36,570
	£
Postponement granted to the amount of	5061
Sub-divisions arranged and pending	5303
Leaving a balance unprovided for	26,206
	£36,570

POSTPONEMENT OF INSTALMENTS.

The results of the year's transactions under Sections 5 and 6 of "The Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1894," are encouraging, inasmuch as the total sum upon which payment has been deferred at £5 per centum per annum interest has been reduced from £7648 10s. 11d. for the 12 months ending June 30th, 1897, to £708 10s. 6d. during the 12 months ending June 30th, 1898; while the interest collected during the former period was £496 9s. 5d., as compared with £384 8s. 6d. during the latter.

The particulars of the amount of purchase money postponed at interest during the two years ending June 30th last are given in the succeeding Return :—

RETURN of Instalments postponed, showing Total Areas of Selections and Amount of Purchase Money deferred in respect thereof, for the period of Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898, and for the previous Twelve Months.

	1896.						1897.					
	Area.			Amount.			Area.			Amount.		
	A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.	A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
July	8612	3	30	1991	11	6	5867	0	25	74	16	6
August	7740	2	21	1164	11	1	12,171	2	38	331	7	7
September	3413	1	36	823	2	11	8997	1	4	187	3	6
October	1932	0	26	274	3	1	412	0	12	1	16	4
November	7782	3	38	955	8	3	539	1	20	2	17	7
December.....	3213	1	26	859	7	8	368	1	8	1	14	0
	1897						1898.					
January	3034	1	14	1580	6	5	1371	2	24	9	17	10
February	2836	0	13				1581	0	36	19	1	2
March.....	1894	3	16				1853	3	28	18	9	2
April.....	1914	0	25				1968	3	24	14	15	3
May	1112	0	9				1599	0	21	17	7	2
June	3384	2	1				2402	0	19	29	4	5
	46,871	2	15	£7648	10	11	39,132	3	19	£708	10	6
Interest collected during the above periods .....	...			£496	9	5	...			£384	8	6

Sub-divisions under Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1894, for Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.

Sub-divisions granted—		Sub-divisions being dealt with—	
No. of Lots.....	38	No. of Lots.....	16
Area granted.....	2051 acres	Area being dealt with.....	676 acres
Area reverted to Crown as result of Sub-divisions.....	3611 acres	Area that will revert to Crown when Sub-divisions effected	1329 acres

PASTORAL LEASES.

The rent collected from pastoral leases during the year 1897 was £4787, and for the year 1896, £4365. The rent collected during the first six months of the year 1898 is £2723, and for the first six months of 1897, £2429, showing a progressive increase respectively of £422 and £294.

Pastoral leases were issued during the year 1897 over an area of 258,861 acres, as compared with 241,587 acres during the year 1896, being an increase over the latter total of 17,274 acres. The area over which such leases were issued during the first six months of 1898 is 114,515 acres, as compared with 121,000 acres for the first half of 1897, being a decrease of 5485 acres on the returns for the last-named period (*vide* Appendix A, Return No. 1). This slight falling off is not a matter for any surprise. On the contrary, it might have been expected that the amount would have been considerable, owing to the long-continued drought which prevailed throughout the summer months, lasting well nigh into winter, and the general and unprecedented bush fires which extended to every pastoral district in the Island, and which swept miles and miles of run-fences in their progress. In many cases almost the whole of the summer grass was consumed by bush fires, and in the absence of seasonable autumn rains it has been an anxious year for pastoralists.

In some instances Crown lessees have been compelled to relinquish their leases owing to losses by bush fires—in fencing and otherwise. Fortunately for them the winter has been of a very mild description, otherwise the mortality in their flocks would have been serious.

The impediment—to which I have in previous Reports directed attention—arising from the inadequate provision for the consistent inspection of Crown lands, still hampers the proper administration of the Crown Lands Act, and results in an annual loss to the Treasury of legitimate sources of revenue which should be collected. In making these disparaging remarks against the present facilities for field supervision, it must not be taken as a reflection upon those officers of the Police Department, who perform their (in many cases) unremunerated services for this Department as Bailiffs of Crown Lands in conjunction with their Police duties, which are carried out in a manner that reflects credit upon their good judgment.

MINING AREAS.

Section 48 of Part IV. of the Crown Lands Act (54 Vict. No. 8), empowers the Governor in Council to declare any portion of Crown land within a proclaimed Gold or Mining Field as and to be a “Mining Area”; and Section 52 of the said Act cites that “Any land which may have been selected, purchased, or bought at Public Auction, within any such Mining Area shall be open to any person to search or mine for gold or other metal, or any other mineral thereon, in manner hereinafter provided.” Although this section has been somewhat difficult to work under, “Mining Areas” have been proclaimed from time to time under Section 48 above quoted, in the interests of selectors, and lands sold within such areas for agricultural purposes. The first occasion for testing the practicability of this part of the Act, as applied to mining, occurred on the Zeehan field in the early part of this year, by the pegging out and lodging an application with the Mines Department for a lease, under the Mining Act, of a portion of a selection held under contract to purchase.

The lodging of this application has opened up the whole question as to how far Mining Rights have been preserved over lands sold under Part IV. of the Crown Lands Act, with the result that the measure in that respect has been shown to be practically inoperative. It is improbable that the Secretary for Mines will give his consent to further Mining Areas being proclaimed under existing circumstances, except in special cases, and well outside of mining centres. This has, practically, brought matters to a standstill in regard to selection in mining districts. An amendment of the Crown Lands Act is therefore needed, in order that, while the interests of every *bonâ fide* selector under Part IV. shall be fully protected, the land he selects will, at the same time, be available for the reasonable requirements of the legitimate miner. It will be an impossible undertaking to administer this part of the Crown Lands Act, either to the satisfaction of the Department, or with fairness to the public, until some such provision as I have suggested is established. At the present time there are at least 5,000,000 acres within the proclaimed gold or mining fields, and as applications for land are being made from Macquarie (at Kelly's Basin) to Bischoff, and numbers from other districts as well, it is hoped that it will be practicable to bring the matter before Parliament during the present session, in view of the enormously large area shut off from selection. It is desirable also that opportunity will be taken at the same time to safeguard the mining industry in such a way that these very extensive mining reserves may be very largely reduced.

TIMBER INDUSTRIES.

Wattle-barking.

The season for wattle-barking commences on October 1st and terminates on the last day of the February following. Owing to the very exceptionally dry season 1897-8, which commenced at an earlier period than usual, there was not so much demand for wattle areas as usual, and in many instances in which tenders had been accepted the tenderers were unable to complete. The heavy bush fires which were so prevalent right through the summer also militated against barking, and destroyed hundreds of tons of wattle-bark throughout the country. Still, there can be no doubt that much wattle-bark was stripped on Crown lands upon which no fees have been paid or any account rendered. It is known that some of the best wattle districts in Tasmania are within the Municipalities of Spring Bay and Glamorgan, over the latter of which it has in the past proved impossible to exercise reasonable control, owing to, I may say, the total absence of co-operation on the part of the local

authorities with the officers of this Department. So long as the present divided control of the police continues there will be a loss of revenue, and consequently the same cause for complaint year after year. Then, again, it is known to the Department that strippers make great havoc of young wattles, and are in many cases utterly regardless of the provisions of the regulations, but it has been found to be impossible, unless at considerable expense, to bring the offenders to justice.

The number of Bark Licences issued is 16, and the total area operated upon during the 1897-8 stripping season is 17,349 acres, which realised the small sum of £28 15s., being £35 7s. less than the return for 1896-7. These results compare very unfavourably with the hundreds of tons of wattle-bark that are put upon the market, and although a large percentage of the total marketed has undoubtedly been obtained from private property, yet the sum quoted above cannot be said to at all represent the State value of the wattle-bark taken from Crown lands. Should the approaching season prove favourable for stripping, the evil to which I have referred will be much intensified, owing to the large areas which the drought of last season rendered it impossible to operate upon.

SAW-MILLING.

Saw-mill owners have suffered very severe losses from the bush fires of last summer; in some instances the whole of their milling plants, with miles of their tramways, have been completely destroyed. Apart from these calamities, it is apparent that something is needed still to bring the saw-milling industry into a prosperous condition. Under the law as it stands a saw-miller may acquire the sole right by licence to the marketable timber upon any area, not exceeding 500 acres, for a period of five years. The amount charged by the Government for the right to the timber is based upon a valuation thereof furnished to the Department by the Bailiff of Crown Lands or by the District Surveyor.

Saw-millers now complain that the maximum area allowed—500 acres—is too small to enable sufficient capital to be subscribed for the erection of suitable plant, construction of tramways, and other necessary works. A number of saw-mill owners have already laid their views before the Minister of Lands and Works, and it is understood that Parliament will be asked to amend the law in the direction of giving fixity of tenure to the miller over largely increased areas. Recognising, however, the great importance of the timber industry of the Colony, and the value of expert advice on the subject, a comprehensive Report thereon has been obtained from George S. Perrin, Esq., F.L.S., F.R.G.S., F.R.H.S., formerly Conservator of Forests in Tasmania, and now permanent head of the Forest Department of Victoria. I am sure we feel deeply obliged to Mr. Perrin for his good services. His Report should be especially valuable, not only from the high position he holds in the realm of forestry, but on account of his personal acquaintance with the forests, soils, and climatic conditions of Tasmania. I have not had an opportunity to ascertain the views of the Government in regard to future operations, as the Report has only recently come to hand. I understand it will be printed as a Parliamentary Paper, after which there will no doubt be such useful discussion upon it as will indicate the extent to which Parliament is prepared to support the adoption of Mr. Perrin's recommendations.

REGULATIONS.

Regulations have been issued and laid upon the Tables of both Houses of Parliament, as provided for in Section 127 of "The Crown Lands Act, 1890," for the care and control of Franklin Square; and amended Regulations, framed in pursuance of the authority contained in Section 17 of "The Game Protection Act, 1895," (59 Vict. No. 26), for the better care and protection of, and controlling and the taking of mutton-birds for food.

Special notices were published in the *Government Gazette*, and in every journal in the Colony, offering the occupation of Crown lands for three years, at a nominal rental, to all who had suffered substantial loss by the prevailing bush fires of last summer. Twenty-six lots, covering a total area of 2747 acres, have been taken possession of.

BUSH FIRES.

Consequent on the great destruction to property by bush fires throughout the country during last summer, which, in many cases, rendered poor people homeless, and even in some instances unfortunately resulted in the loss of human lives, it was considered desirable to reprint and issue copies of "The Bush Fires Act." Special notices were also circulated cautioning persons against lighting any bush fires, except as within the conditions prescribed by law.

CROWN LANDS GUIDE.

A new issue of the Crown Lands Guide has been brought up to date, and published for the information of persons desirous of becoming acquainted with the agricultural Crown lands throughout the Colony, and the conditions under which such lands are leased, held under occupation for pastoral purposes, selected under the deferred payment system, or purchased at auction. Special reference is made to the Timber and other industries. A new departure from the general practice has been adopted in this instance by the introduction of photographic views illustrating timber-milling, orcharding, and other matters of interest to the public. The views have been specially

supplied by Mr. J. W. Beattie, of Hobart, and are a great addition to the usefulness of the publication, which is somewhat larger than former issues, and is a convenient and reliable work of ready reference. As such it has been well received and favourably noticed by the Press of the Colony.

OFFICIAL INSPECTIONS.

I made an official tour through the West Coast Mining District in March and April of this year, during which a number of important matters were brought under my notice in the different mining centres. They had reference to various Government Departments, and under ordinary circumstances it would have been somewhat out of the usual custom to refer to them officially; but, inasmuch as it is not practicable for heads of departments to make frequent excursions to these parts, I ventured to embody such of them as the residents desired, and in my opinion justified me in that course, in a special Report which I had the honour to submit to you for the consideration of the Government. Amongst those of greatest concern to this Department, and upon which I was almost compelled to receive several deputations of the inhabitants, was the question of unauthorised occupation of Crown lands at Queenstown. This has been, and is still, one of the most difficult problems to solve in connection with *bonâ fide* settlement on town lands, consequent on the uncertainty of occupation for residence purposes claimed by virtue of the authority conferred under a Miner's Right or Residence Licence. The Mining Act, 1893, and Regulations framed thereunder, authorise the holder of a Miner's Right to take possession of a specified area of *any* Crown lands not specially withdrawn from the operations of the Mining Act for mining or residence purposes, and thereupon the land as taken possession of becomes a mining field under Section 4 of the Mining Act—it may be situated in the middle of the Queen's Domain,—while the holder of a Residence Licence may take possession, in a similar manner, of any area not exceeding a quarter of an acre, by which he acquires a right, except as against the Crown, to the fee simple of the land under "The Residence Areas Act," which Act is administered by the Department of Lands and Surveys. It is in this connection that my remarks are intended to apply. Under a Miner's Right the holder is allowed to sublet, assign, or sell portions of the area simply on the strength of his licence before any grant deed has been issued or even applied for, leaving the Lands Department to square up the intricacy of the position. It will readily be understood that the disputes and contentions as between the parties interested are considerable under ordinary circumstances; but, in regard to the Queenstown allotments, where the only available land for building purposes is in the narrow valley of the Queen River, between steep ranges on either side, where the influx of population has been unprecedented on any mining field in this Colony, and where persons have "dumped down" promiscuously in all directions, that it has been quite impossible in some cases to reduce the chaotic condition of affairs (which it was impossible to prevent) to order and regularity to the satisfaction of everybody. The means adopted by the Department to confine settlement within the limits prescribed have been exceptionally considerate—so much so, indeed, that there are scores of persons living upon and still forcing their way on to land to which they have no legal right whatever, and in open defiance of the edicts of the Department and the provisions of the law. The evil to which attention is directed is increasing, and unless prompt measures are taken to uphold the prerogatives of the law, trouble such as I have indicated will assume even greater complications in the future than it has created in the past. Prevention against these encroachments in the first instance would save a world of trouble afterwards, and in conjunction with the preservation of valuable timbers from the wholesale destruction at present going on, especially on the West Coast mining fields, point conclusively to the fact that the time has arrived when additional provision for a system of inspections over these and other matters is essential to the proper administration of this Department.

VILLAGE SETTLEMENT.

After about 3½ years' experience, during which the Village Settlement at Southport has passed through many vicissitudes, it was finally handed over to the control of the Government, by virtue of the provisions embodied in the regulations under which it had been conducted. It is, I believe, generally understood that the settlement was initiated and managed by a committee of ladies, who are fairly entitled to commendation for the praiseworthy efforts made to honestly grapple with a grave problem, and to the good wishes of the community for the voluntary zeal and devotion put forth for the relief of the poor in distress. In return for such efforts they have the satisfaction of knowing that six persons, with their families, who were unable to successfully face the battle of life unaided, have been rendered self-supporting, and are permanently established on the land.

In addition to the foregoing, settlers' huts have been erected on four other allotments, and portions of them cleared, which are now available for extending the settlement. A substantial four-roomed cottage has also been erected, and the allotment occupied by the Committee partly cleared.

Moreover, some 60 persons were sent down to the settlement, where they were supported for various periods, and were thus assisted to tide over the most severe season of the recent depression.

While the undertaking has not been as satisfactory as could be desired, it is quite as satisfactory as might have been anticipated, in view of the fact that the enterprise was started in the true sense of affording relief to those most in need of assistance, without regard for their experience of the nature of the work they would be called upon to perform. Progress was hindered, too, from other causes incidental to commencing such an undertaking. It is the first experiment of the kind made in Tasmania, for which Parliament has in all voted £800, which sum has been supplemented by smaller private subscriptions. It will, I believe, compare favourably with any similar undertaking in Australasia.

The conditions upon which it is proposed that the settlers remaining shall be permitted to purchase the fee simple of their allotments are, that one-half of their indebtedness to the Committee, amounting in the aggregate to £258, which, together with the survey fees, shall be added to the upset price of £1 per acre, and shall extend over the full term of 14 years under the credit system.

PROSECUTIONS UNDER THE CROWN LANDS ACT.

Eighteen prosecutions have been conducted by the Bailiffs of Crown Lands for offences under the Crown Lands Act during the year 1897 in various parts of the Island, principally for illegal wood-cutting. Of these eight resulted in the offenders being fined, with costs; four were discharged with a caution, two were dismissed, and four cases were not pressed, on payment of licence fees to cover the seizures.

SURVEYS.

In my last annual Report attention was called to the fact that all surface surveys required by the Department of Mines had been transferred to control of the Surveyor-General, under the statutory authority contained in the Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1894, (58 Vict. No. 13). A further important step has been taken in the consolidation of all Public Works Surveys in the Department of Lands and Surveys. The saving effected in these transfers has, I venture to affirm, fully justified the change. It is, however, not upon the grounds of immediate saving, but rather in the increased efficiency and ultimate economy which must follow the initiation of one systematic consolidation of all technical work in one professional department, with officers specially trained in its details, that the change is justifiable. A practical illustration of this fact will be found by comparing the result attained under the recently amalgamated scheme of Mining Surveys (in regard to which the demand during the last 12 months has been the greatest on record) with the irregularities and confusion which occurred on the West Coast in 1891-2, when these surveys were being conducted under divided authority.

There is still a question in regard to underground mine surveys to which it appears to be essential that I should make some reference. These surveys are required by the Department of Mines every year, to show what progress is being made in the workings, and for the prevention of accidents by explosions between adjoining mines, and for other purposes. They are at present being carried out by any surveyor holding authority from the Minister of Lands to make ordinary surface surveys under instructions from the mine manager. Such surveys, to be reliable as a safeguard against mining accidents and the sacrifice of human lives, require to be made with extreme accuracy, and should, I maintain, be entrusted only to surveyors of recognised high standing in their profession. Is this the practice?—or can it be expected that the results are satisfactory under the conditions stated? The inconsistency of the position is apparent from the fact that, while it is stipulated that the individual must have been authorised to make surveys by the Surveyor-General's Department to be eligible to undertake mine surveys, yet the latter Department may not be represented on the Board of Examiners appointed to enquire into the qualifications of the latter; it may be that there is not an authorised Land Surveyor on such Board. No serious accident has occurred, so far as I am aware, which has been traced to an error in the underground mine survey; but such may happen at any time, and it appears to be essential in the interests of the mining community that all reasonable safeguards should be provided in order to minimise, as far as practicable, a possibility of any catastrophe.

SPECIAL SURVEYS.—Annual Return for Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.

Town of Queenstown (extension), 303 lots; Town of Zeehan (extension), 249 lots; Town of Macquarie, 213 lots, surveyed and permanently marked.

Twenty-six miles of road surveyed for Public Works Department in numerous small sections throughout the Colony.

RETURN of Number of Instructions issued to Surveyors for the Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.

Name.	Survey Department.	Mines Department.	TOTAL.
Chalmers, H. J.....	7	28	35
Combes, H.....	65	—	65
Eddie, G. T.	42	29	71
Frodsham, T.....	57	31	88
Hall, R.....	100	50	150
Hardy, W. M.....	35	—	35
Innes, E. G.....	60	2	62
Jones, D.....	—	145	145
Clark, T.....	58	109	167
Sorell, J. A.....	29	44	73
Windsor, F. E.....	105	1	106
Wilson, C. S.....	71	715	786
Authorised Surveyors	171	113	284
	800	1267	2067

RETURN of Selection and Auction Surveys received during the Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.

Survey District.	Officer in charge of Survey District.	Selection Surveys.		Auction Surveys.		Total.	
		Area in Acres.	No. of Lots.	Area in Acres.	No. of Lots.	Area in Acres.	No. of Lots.
Buckingham	Combes, H.	958	22	395	5	1353	27
Cumberland	Frodsham, T.	1082	28	1157	11	2239	39
Dorset	Eddie, G. T.	1583	25	311	6	1894	31
Devon	Hall, R.....	719	15	267	8	986	23
Deloraine	Sorell, J. A.	470	13	963	19	1433	32
Franklin	Innes, E. G.	834	22	119	2	953	24
Pingal	Clark, T.....	1369	31	454	13	1823	44
Moorina	Dove, H. P.	26	1	—	—	26	1
Mersey	Chalmers, H. J.	149	5	3	1	152	6
Montagu.....	Wilson, C. S.	95	10	208	879	303	889
Oatlands	Hardy, W. M.	772	16	183	3	955	19
Russell	Jones, D.....	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tasman's Peninsula ...	Hinsby, J. H.	508	16	239	4	747	20
Wellington	Windsor, F. E.	1245	23	282	16	1527	39
King Island	Flannigan, M.....	2647	29	11	1	2658	30
	TOTAL.....	12,457	256	4592	968	17,049	1224

MARKING MINING LEASES.

The covenants contained in leases issued under the Mining Act, 1893, (57. Vict. No. 24), render it imperative upon the lessee to erect and maintain, during the currency thereof, a corner-post of specific dimensions at every angle of his lease. Compliance with this condition is only possible after having first displaced the permanent survey-peg, for which offence any person is liable to a penalty not exceeding £50. This anomaly (if nothing worse) was pointed out to the proper authority by the head of the Survey Department when the Mining Act was before Parliament, but it was retained. It is a matter of much significance, and is calculated to lead to serious complications at any time, without, as it appears, any good object being attained. It is therefore gratifying to observe that the importance of the point raised has been recognised by the present Secretary for Mines, who, I believe, will take the earliest opportunity that presents itself to eliminate the objectionable clause, and bring the conditions of the Mining Act into harmony with the requirements of the law appertaining to surveys thereunder.

Another important matter as between the Mines and Survey Departments which is receiving attention is the need that exists for the adoption of a method for reconciling the section numbers at the corner-pegs with those given on the district mining charts. This, if carried out, will be a boon to prospectors and others, who find a great difficulty in fixing their position where they have no personal knowledge of the boundary lines, consequent on the fact that whenever a lease has been

forfeited and retaken up the number is changed on the plan only. Except where a re-survey has been made, it has hitherto been impracticable to assimilate the two sets of numbers, although I have been aware of the confusion that existed. It is now in a fair way of being rectified by mutual understanding with the Secretary for Mines.

REAL PROPERTY SURVEYS.

Recognising the responsibility devolving upon the State in regard to Real Property Titles, it has been insisted upon for some time past that all surveys for which Crown grants are claimed under the Real Property Act shall be made by instructions from the Surveyor-General. The change, although opposed at the outset upon various pretexts of a more or less untenable character, has worked beneficially. More confidence is now reposed in these surveys by reason of the work being entrusted only to such reliable surveyors as are well known to the Survey Department. Cases have occurred in which the individual employed any surveyor haphazard, upon such terms as he could make with him. The importance of accurate surveys is little appreciated or understood in the community generally. The individual requiring a title may care little for the survey—he would possibly be quite content with a plan drawn from a bird's-eye view of the land. In such cases he is likely to employ the cheapest and, consequently, an unreliable surveyor for the job. It is true that the individual may suffer heavy loss from his own act, but he risks it, and thus the seed of future legal and other complications is sown.

The old system of private surveys still obtains in the Lands Titles Office where a transfer only is required under the Real Property Act, it being contended by the Recorder of Titles that once a Crown grant is issued for a piece of land the matter of transfer is a private concern, and that the Crown has no right to interfere between the parties consenting to the transaction. This would be true were it not for the fact that the Crown is responsible for the proper execution of the deed. The system is to some extent the same in some of the neighbouring colonies, where, however, the necessity for further restricting the conduct of transfer surveys is exercising the attention of the highest authorities on the subject. There the State insists that every surveyor shall have obtained a special qualification before he is permitted to undertake Real Property surveys. This extra certificate affords special security against the employment of careless, incompetent, or untrustworthy surveyors. Here the circumstances are quite different—there is no such security provided for—as it has been ruled by the Law Department that any authorised surveyor is eligible to make surveys under the Real Property Act in Tasmania. Where the State guarantees the *bona fides* of a title, as in the case of a Certificate of Title under the Real Property Act, and as surveys are essentially required as the foundation of the title, there appear to be very sound reasons indeed why such surveys should be performed under the best possible conditions for ensuring accuracy.

EXPLORATION TRACKS.

The only item for record under this heading is the marking of a track from near the Humboldt Divide to Port Davey. The work was submitted to Mr. E. A. Marsden, who received his final instructions from this Office. The party left Hobart to commence operations at the Tyenna end on 15th February last. The route bears south-westerly from a point on the Gordon Track 14 miles from the end of Tyenna Road, on the Florentine Divide, and is estimated at 50 miles to Port Davey. Progress was much delayed by wet weather, and, accordingly, the members of the party were exposed to considerable hardships. Mr. Marsden returned to Hobart on 19th May last. He furnished a sketch plan of the route, which is filed in this Office, and, I believe, furnished a report to the Hon. Minister of Lands.

Mr. Marsden's report is encouraging in regard to some of the mineral country passed over. He especially refers to the existence of micaceous slate quartz and sandstones resting on a slate bottom near the Crossing River. Between the Crossing River and Port Davey he mentions the occurrence of black slate in conjunction with quartz leaders, micaceous schists, metamorphic sandstones, and clay slate. These are all very promising indications, which should lead to the country where they have been observed being thoroughly prospected for minerals; they show the value of such works as Mr. Marsden was engaged upon to prospectors, in choosing a suitable locality in which to commence operations.

There is room for much more exploration track cutting, especially in the Counties of Kent, Arthur, and Franklin, which would be of great advantage in opening up the country by prospectors; but it should be undertaken on a definite plan, and carried on year by year during the summer months. Some such system is necessary in order to insure obtaining the best value for the outlay incurred. The particulars of all such tracks should be taken in such a way that they could be entered on the plans of this Department for general information.

THE WOOLNORTH BOUNDARY.

Attention is again directed to the increasing necessity for finally deciding what is to be done in regard to fixing the south boundary of the V.D.L. Co.'s Woolnorth block of land. The accumulation of purchase applications, which are now "hung up," are being pressed for, and the delay in settlement of the boundary question is interfering with the administration of the Crown Lands Act, and impeding settlement on the Crown Lands in that locality.

DRAFTING ROOM.

The Chief Draftsman reports as follows :—"Four town plans, three country plans, and 20 mineral plans have been drawn in the Drafting Room during the last twelve months; and 62 town plans and 56 country plans have been posted up to date, showing even a brisker demand for plans than there was during the previous twelve months, and which was commented upon in the last Report as being a very large increase over previous years.

"The fourth sheet of the two-chain scale detail plan of the City of Hobart has been completed, and I am hopeful that next year I shall be able to report that the two remaining sheets have been done, and the Department be in a position to publish a complete plan showing the particulars of the alienation from the Crown of each lot within the city boundaries, a want that has been much felt, but owing, I presume, to its magnitude, was not previously undertaken. This work has now been in hand for over three years, but, unfortunately, it has constantly to be put aside for urgent current work.

"About 1000 plans and diagrams of road surveys were transferred to this Department from the Public Works Department in July, 1897, when the control of the Public Works Surveys was placed entirely in your hand, and, I am happy to say, that so far everything is proceeding in a satisfactory manner. The plans have been mounted on calico and classified, and the diagrams bound in volumes, which have been numbered, paged, and indexed, and the volume and page noted on the diagram or plan of the allotment through which each road passes, so that the plan or diagram of any road survey can now be turned up at a moment's notice.

"Since the date of the transfer to this Office just 100 Roads are recorded as being in various stages of dealing under the Land Vesting Act.

"586 grant deeds have been prepared in duplicate, as against 549 last year, and 391 for the previous twelve months. 2344 diagrams and plans from survey have been computed, examined, and otherwise dealt with, as compared with 1625 for the previous twelve months, and a reference to the table below will show that there has been a very large increase under nearly every heading of work performed in the Drafting Room."

RETURN of the principal Office Work performed in the Drafting Room of the Department of Lands and Surveys during the Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.

Plans prepared.	Country and Town plans compiled and drawn	7	
	Ditto ditto posted up to date	118	
		—	125
Applications dealt with.	Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894, (selection) ...	446	
	Crown Lands Act, 1890, (31st Section)	571	
	Ditto, (auction and private purchase)	212	
	Ditto, (rent).....	503	
	Ditto, (selection in mining areas)	134	
	Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1894, 10th Section, (reduction of area).....	21	
	Ditto, 1895, (for purchase of second-class land)	126	
	Residence Areas Acts, 1891 and 1893, (purchase).....	430	
		—	2443
Grants prepared.	Grant deeds prepared in duplicate.....	...	586
Diagrams and Surveys received.	Selections	263	
	Auction and residence areas	971	
	Real Property Act	16	
	Re-surveys, &c.	119	
	Mineral sections	935	
	Public Works roads.....	40	
		—	2344
Diagrams and Plans examined.	Computed and examined.....	1357	
	In course of examination	124	
	Unexamined	24	
	Mineral sections examined.....	839	
		—	2344
Diagram books and grant schedules.	Diagram books prepared for binding.....	24	
	Grant schedule books ditto.....	2	
		—	26
	Claims for grants under the Real Property Act and through the Supreme Court dealt with .....	...	10
Instructions for Surveys.	Instructions prepared and issued to Surveyors for land surveys .....	...	800
	Instructions prepared and issued to Surveyors for mineral surveys .....	...	1267
Surveyors' accounts.	Surveyors' accounts in triplicate passed for payment .....	...	216
Closed roads.	Roads described for closing by Proclamation .....	...	33
Descriptions.	Descriptions of allotments furnished to clerical branch for contracts for sale of land .....	...	321
Plans of districts.	Road Districts described for Proclamation	11	
	Municipal ditto	6	
	Recreation ditto	4	
		—	21

REPORTS OF DISTRICT SURVEYORS.

The Reports of the officers of the various Survey Districts throughout the Colony are published in the form of an Appendix (B.) hereto.

DEPARTMENTAL AND GENERAL.

In addition to other transfers recorded in the early part of this Report, the duties of the clerical branch have been further increased by taking over the keeping of the Land Fund Registers from the Department of Public Works, for the assistance of the latter in the administration of the Land Fund for the construction of Public Works.

I am again called upon to record my regret at the loss of the oldest and most respected member of the Survey profession in the Colony, in the person of the late Richard Hall, Esq., of Leith, whose sad death occurred in Launceston on March 29th last, after having undergone a severe surgical operation for the removal of an internal complaint. Mr. Hall had been an authorised surveyor since the year 1857, and was transferred to the charge of the Devon District in 1870, where he continued his professional labours almost up to the time of his death, having thus rendered 40 years' faithful service to this Department. Mr. Hall has been succeeded by his son, Mr. Arthur Caplen Hall, who received his certificate as a duly qualified surveyor from the Survey Board of Examiners in Tasmania on February 7th, 1888. He is a young surveyor of much promise, and is justly held in esteem by his brother professionals, and enjoys the confidence of the Department.

Lastly, it is my pleasure to express my appreciation of the uniform zeal and aptitude shown by the younger members of the staff in the diligent performance of their duties. To those officers in the more immediately responsible positions I desire to extend my best thanks for the generous and loyal support they have at all times rendered in maintaining the efficiency of the Department, and in furtherance of the best interests of the Public Service and co-operation with its members generally.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

E. A. COUNSEL, *F.R.G.S.*,

Surveyor-General and Secretary for Lands.

The Honourable ALFRED THOS. PILLINGER,
Minister of Lands and Works.

APPENDIX A.

No. 1.

GENERAL RETURN, Crown Lands Branch.

	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.	1894.	1895.	1896.	1897.	1898. First Six Months.
Receipts from all sources £	70,645	64,823	67,707	67,840	54,536	42,493	34,885	40,496	47,209	53,533	31,932
Receipts from Deposits and Instalments, 24th and 31st Sections.....£	35,406	38,208	37,373	34,117	27,712	26,976	21,262	21,877	21,827	21,335*	8860*
Receipts from other Sales of Crown Lands.....£	13,754	11,010	10,074	7947	14,519	5840	5900	6446	8460	14,508	5894
Rent of Crown Land for Pastoral purposes.....£	4746	5032	5690	4627	4047	4181	3038	4594	4365	4787	2723
Fees for Timber Licences, Grant Deeds, &c.....£	3077	3637	1983	1927	1873	1127	1613	1017	1269	1904	731
Survey Fees.....£	13,662	6936	12,587	19,222	6385	4369	3072	6562	11,288	10,999	13,724
Area of Country Lands sold.....acres	35,671	50,566	42,986	30,649	31,204	19,788	20,866	14,316	16,026	24,519	8772
Area of Town and Sub-urban Lots sold.....acres	706	885	572	412	306	684	277	269	383	592	199
Area of Land selected under "Immigration Act"....ac.	1227	1109	217	112	1968	1722	655	558	Nil.	118	45
Area of Land leased for Pastoral purposes....acres	82,669	177,397	93,026	37,234	63,530	63,805	46,002	236,345	241,587	258,861	114,515
Number of Applications for Selection and Purchase...	1632	1783	1924	1305	1385	770	1487	899	1009	2037	822
Number of Grant Deeds issued.....	573	553	530	525	454	555	341	397	432	606	282

* And selections under Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894.

No. 2.

RETURN showing the Number of Lots and Area of Land purchased under "The Waste Lands Act, 1870," "The Crown Lands Act, 1890," "The Crown Lands Amendment Acts, 1893 and 1894," and "The Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895," during the Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1897, and 30th June, 1898, respectively.

	Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1897.			Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1898.		
	No. of Lots.	Area.		No. of Lots.	Area.	
		A.	R. P.		A.	R. P.
Waste Lands Act, 1870.....	5	222	3 0	2	105	0 0
Crown Lands Act, 1890.....	177	8370	3 19	238	14,678	1 31
Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1893 and 1894	100	3499	2 31	161	5919	1 19
Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895 (Second-class land)	46	4272	2 3	54	4217	3 11
TOTALS.....	328	16,365	3 13	455	24,920	2 21

No. 3.

RETURN showing the Number of Lots and Area of Land for which new Leases have been issued during the Twelve Months ending 30th June, 1897, and 30th June, 1898, respectively, with Rental of same.

	Twelve months ending 30th June, 1897.			Twelve months ending 30th June, 1898.		
	No. of Lots.	Area Acres.	Rental.	No of Lots.	Area Acres.	Rental.
			£ s. d.			£ s. d.
Islands.....	3	220	7 0 0	5	225	25 10 0
Occupation Licences	187	75,675	316 11 10	240	83,367	345 10 8
Half-yearly Rentals	154	145,293	803 0 0	193	168,824	1091 10 0
TOTALS	344	221,188	1126 11 10	438	252,416	1462 10 8

No. 4.

RETURN showing the Area of Leased Lands in Tasmania, and Amount of Annual Rental of same at 31st December, 1897.

	Area in Acres.	Rental:		
		£	s.	d.
Leases and Occupation Licences of Pastoral Lands	748,155	4651	3	2
Ditto, Islands	85,420	781	7	6
Total	833,575	5432	10	8

No. 5.

RETURN of Land Sales from 1888 to 1897, inclusive.

YEAR.	NUMBER OF LOTS.			AREA OF LAND SOLD.			AMOUNT FOR WHICH SOLD.			AVERAGE PRICE PER ACRE.	
	Country.	Town and Suburban.	TOTAL.	Country.	Town and Suburban Lots.	TOTAL.	Country.	Town and Suburban Lots.	TOTAL.	Of Country Lots.	Of Town and Suburban Lots.
				acres.	acres.	acres.	£	£	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1888.....	483	192	675	35,671	706	36,377	47,782	5794	53,576	1 6 9½	8 4 1½
1889.....	723	435	1158	50,566	885	51,451	68,319	14,051	82,370	1 7 2½	15 17 6
1890.....	610	207	817	42,986	572	43,558	57,176	8454	65,630	1 6 7	14 15 7
1891.....	451	89	540	30,649	412	31,061	40,623	2588	43,211	1 6 6	6 5 7
1892.....	467	587	1054	31,204	306	31,510	41,447	18,633	60,080	1 6 6½	60 17 9½
1893.....	328	70	398	19,788	684	20,472	26,452	3502	29,954	1 6 8½	5 2 4½
1894.....	445	188	633	20,866	277	21,073	29,584	6159	35,743	1 7 10	22 4 11.
1895.....	380	136	516	14,316	269	14,585	20,757	5193	25,950	1 8 11½	19 6 1
1896.....	325	226	551	16,026	383	16,409	20,997	8226	29,223	1 6 2½	21 9 6½
1897.....	432	848	1280	24,519	592	25,111	30,486	22,719	53,205	1 4 8½	38 7 6

No. 6.

RETURN showing Amount received for Rent of Pastoral Crown Lands and Annual Occupation Licences for the past Ten Years, and for the first Six Months of 1898, respectively.

	£
1888	4746
1889	5032
1890	5690
1891	4627
1892	4047
1893	4181
1894	3038
1895	4594
1896	4365
1897	4787
1898, six months	2723

No. 7.

RETURN showing Area of Country Lands in the various Counties sold from 1888 to 1897 inclusive.

COUNTY.	1888.			1889.			1890.			1891.			1892.			1893.			1894.			1895.			1896.			1897.		
	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.
Buckingham	2500	1	11	3051	1	26	6150	0	2	2752	0	24	2775	2	16	2396	2	27	1697	3	25	3009	3	16	1351	3	16	2696	2	9
Cornwall	1379	1	11	3007	2	28	3048	0	7	3440	3	33	2929	1	21	1279	2	5	673	2	21	1112	0	30	596	1	16	967	1	12
Cumberland	2295	1	12	745	3	19	1083	2	23	1213	3	15	1942	3	25	1395	2	20	382	1	16	117	3	34	1189	2	22	3084	1	10
Devon	9937	0	1	11,560	2	3	9247	2	0	6269	2	30	4732	2	11	3428	3	22	4283	3	36	1973	3	7	1620	3	25	3334	0	26
Dorset	8238	3	7	9794	0	37	4707	3	18	3248	0	29	3278	3	26	1869	1	27	3198	1	37	2145	0	1	2696	2	1	1907	3	6
Flinders Island .....	..	..	..	3743	3	2	2412	0	21	35	0	26	669	3	30	1459	1	25	1047	3	19	460	3	24	25	0	38	132	1	9
Franklin .....	..	..	..	57	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	199	2	3	..	..	..	..	..	..
Glamorgan	387	1	0	743	1	1	443	2	35	148	3	0	334	0	9	496	3	18	1064	3	14	160	1	2	419	2	20	240	1	14
Kent	1392	3	9	2121	1	9	2445	0	22	1322	3	38	721	3	22	878	1	13	1736	2	5	1186	0	1	1230	0	31	653	1	9
King Island .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1253	3	4	320	0	0	71	3	27	193	3	21	2949	3	34	3707	3	31
Lincoln	114	3	1	340	2	12	991	1	3	105	2	24	..	..	..	159	2	0	405	3	34	..	..	..	171	2	22	470	1	10
Monmouth	946	2	7	1166	2	10	488	3	6	273	1	30	836	0	8	284	3	17	1180	2	10	692	1	24	407	1	8	490	0	18
Montagu .....	..	..	..	148	0	23	291	1	35	1664	1	6	749	3	22	1278	2	2	450	3	23	20	0	0	143	2	16	567	3	9
Pembroke	2524	2	16	3441	1	24	2243	0	12	2676	2	38	1197	1	0	445	3	24	1389	3	33	1353	0	3	840	3	14	2979	2	31
Russell	165	3	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Somerset	451	2	36	1287	2	24	23	3	16	..	..	..	810	0	27	..	..	..	557	3	3	..	..	..	197	1	8	25	2	30
Wellington	4792	0	5	8695	2	20	8432	2	28	7979	2	32	8318	0	37	3760	3	20	2573	1	11	1170	1	25	1708	3	11	2813	0	29
Westmorland	544	3	12	655	0	13	977	3	1	517	0	9	654	2	23	337	0	30	143	1	6	521	2	25	476	3	6	447	3	4
TOTAL	35,671	0	22	50,566	2	9	42,986	3	29	30,648	2	23	31,204	3	1	19,788	0	10	20,866	1	0	14,316	3	16	16,026	2	8	24,518	2	17

No. 8.

RETURN of Town Allotments sold during the Years 1896 and 1897.

TOWN.	1896.				1897.			
	Number of Lots.	Area.		Purchase Money.	Number of Lots.	Area.		Purchase Money.
		A.	R. P.			A.	R. P.	
Alma	1	2	2 16	£ 8 0 0	—	—	—	—
Adelaide	—	—	—	—	1	0	2 0	5 0 0
Beaconsfield	4	0	3 25	75 0 0	3	0	2 13	50 0 0
Branxholm	—	—	—	—	1	0	0 18½	12 0 0
Burgess	—	—	—	—	2	20	0 0	58 6 8
Campbell Town	7	4	3 12	140 0 0	3	2	0 18	60 0 0
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	2	24	1 14	40 0 0
Dundas	6	1	2 5½	190 0 0	35	11	2 0½	764 0 0
Deloraine	1	0	2 26	7 0 0	—	—	—	—
Derby	2	0	2 26	25 0 0	6	24	3 10½	105 6 8
Devonport	—	—	—	—	2	14	1 36	133 6 8
Dunally	1	0	3 24	5 0 0	—	—	—	—
Douglas	2	5	1 39	30 0 0	—	—	—	—
Frankford	2	60	3 0	112 6 8	1	47	0 0	72 0 0
Franklin	1	14	1 21	42 13 4	—	—	—	—
Fingal	—	—	—	—	1	1	1 11	20 0 0
Gormanston	46	10	3 31½	2638 13 4	17	3	3 26½	1243 13 4
George Town	—	—	—	—	1	4	0 28	24 0 0
Hellyer	1	7	2 30	20 0 0	1	12	0 3	20 0 0
Hull	1	10	0 5	20 0 0	—	—	—	—
Hamilton	—	—	—	—	1	0	3 5	5 0 0
Ilfracombe	—	—	—	—	1	9	3 38	85 6 8
Jacobs' Boat Harbour	2	20	2 38	62 13 4	1	8	0 16	32 0 0
Kay (Town Reserve)	1	1	2 19	26 13 4	—	—	—	—
Leven	2	94	2 0	146 13 4	—	—	—	—
Lefroy	—	—	—	—	1	0	1 0	10 0 0
Llewellyn	2	18	0 38	86 0 0	—	—	—	—
Lovett	1	3	1 21	12 0 0	—	—	—	—
Lottah	1	0	1 7	10 0 0	7	1	1 17½	100 0 0
Latrobe	—	—	—	—	1	0	0 7½	50 0 0
Lynchford	—	—	—	—	4	1	2 14	100 0 0
Liverpool	5	58	0 26	149 13 4	1	11	3 2	29 6 8
Lymington	—	—	—	—	2	12	0 29	40 0 0
Mathinna	10	2	1 14½	260 0 0	2	0	2 0	55 0 0
Mount Stuart	—	—	—	—	1	0	1 13	1 0 0
Mangana	1	0	0 38	15 0 0	—	—	—	—
Marlborough	—	—	—	—	7	52	2 16	94 6 8
New Town	6	1	2 31½	485 6 8	—	—	—	—
Pagunta	—	—	—	—	2	15	2 0	40 0 0
Queenstown	87	22	0 16½	2417 6 8	258	59	0 0	8831 6 8
Ringville	—	—	—	—	58	21	2 19	2639 6 8
Ross	1	5	0 0	41 6 8	—	—	—	—
Strahan	2	0	1 5½	98 0 0	19	17	1 10	556 0 0
Smithton	1	5	0 0	26 13 4	1	2	0 0	20 0 0
St. Helens	—	—	—	—	1	7	3 0	7 15 0
Southbridge	—	—	—	—	1	58	1 16	70 0 0
Tunnack	—	—	—	—	1	10	3 24	34 13 4
Ulverstone	—	—	—	—	4	8	3 1	133 6 8
Underwood	—	—	—	—	1	10	0 36	66 13 4
Weldborough	1	3	3 13	20 0 0	—	—	—	—
Welsh	1	6	3 11	26 13 4	—	—	—	—
Walpole	1	4	1 27	13 10 0	—	—	—	—
Wivenhoe	—	—	—	—	4	22	1 11	37 10 0
Zeehan	26	13	1 4	1015 6 8	393	92	1 27	7073 5 0
TOTALS	226	383	1 11½	8226 10 0	848	592	0 30½	22,719 10 0

APPENDIX B.

REPORTS OF DISTRICT SURVEYORS FOR THE YEAR 1897.

Survey District of *Buckingham*.—Mr. District Surveyor H. Combes reports as follows:—

Surveys effected.—Having lost nearly all record of the past year's work by the recent bush fires at Longley, I am unable to give the usual Return thereof.

Land suitable for Selection.—The Parishes and localities in this District which afford the best description of land for agricultural selections are Throckmorton, Ranelagh, the Upper Huon, Bagot, and Pedder, as detailed in my Report for 1896.

Roads and Tracks required.—Under this heading I beg to refer you to my recommendation contained in the Report for 1896. These again are a repetition of what I have written in preceding years, which, however, I regret to say, has not as yet led to any practical result, and unless some of the back lands are opened up by tracks, as I have so often suggested, I do not anticipate much more selection than is occasioned by the addition of small areas to already established homes, unless it be to secure from time to time beds of timber in isolated localities.

Progress of Settlement.—Beyond the addition of small areas to previous holdings, the progress of settlement has been slow in this District, and in some localities will be seriously retarded by the loss to settlers of houses and crops by the disastrous bush fires which occurred on the last day of the year under review. This District has been particularly unfortunate in that respect, and the result of the fire (at Longley especially) is now a matter of history, and the cause of much grief through the loss of lives and destruction of properties, which represented in some cases the work and savings of a lifetime.

Survey District of *Deloraine*.—Mr. District-Surveyor John A. Sorell reports as follows:—

Surveys effected.—During the year 1897 I have received instructions to survey 919 acres (under "The Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895,"), 371 acres ("Crown Lands Act, 1890,"), 219 acres ("Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1894,"), 175 acres ("Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1893,"), 2 lots (Residence Areas Act), 2 town allotments, 1 school site, 2 short road deviations for the Public Works Department, and a number of sections at Beaconsfield applied for under the Mining Act. Twelve lots were surveyed under "The Crown Lands Act, 1890," and 14 lots under "The Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895." It will be seen that the area applied for under the last-named Act is one-sixth as much again as that applied for under those of 1890, 1893, and 1894, or three-fifths of the total area of waste land selected in the Deloraine District during the year if we leave out of consideration those lots that consist of severances already paid for and for which resurveys were necessary.

Land suitable for selection.—The Crown land in the Deloraine District is generally unsuitable for settlement, but can be used for grazing purposes or in conjunction with the better class of lands already alienated. There seems to be a fair amount of tier land between the River Liffey and Jackey's Creek which, when cleared, would be suitable for grazing purposes. It is rough and very heavily timbered, but it will probably be applied for so soon as the Amendment Act of 1895 becomes generally known amongst the farmers and selectors in the District.

Roads and Tracks.—The Lake Track, opened by the Deloraine Improvement Committee, gives access to this land to the south of Quamby Bluff, but branch tracks to the Liffey and to Jackey's Marsh would be required to thoroughly open up the land to selectors.

Progress of settlement.—In connection with the progress of settlement in my District there is nothing calling for special mention, the Crown land therein being generally poor and adapted only for grazing purposes or for the extension of holdings already alienated.

Surveys of Mineral Lands.—Coming to the survey work done in the last twelve months, I have the honour to state that there has been a marked improvement in the mining surveys at Beaconsfield since the Surveyor-General took control of them, by the adoption of a triangulation, which has been gradually extended so as to embrace the whole of the Beaconsfield and Salisbury Gold Fields. Lost survey-points on these fields can now be reliably re-established by direct linear measurement from the trigometrical points, or by angular measurement from these points, or by the three-point method; while the troublesome errors of non-parallelism of meridian, which are inseparable from a less comprehensive method of surveying, are being gradually eliminated. Following up this improvement in the general survey of the goldfields, in order to make the subordinate surveys more prominent, I have caused all survey pegs recently affixed at Beaconsfield to be painted red and protected with mounds. This work will obviate the necessity of re-surveying so many of the sections applied for under plan and report, and throw some light on the chaos of posts which are intended to mark the salient points of the leases at Beaconsfield. I desire respectfully to point out that the Mines Department has imposed upon leaseholders the impossible task of erecting a post at each corner of every section of demised land, and that this hopeless, but apparently harmless problem—the determination of a point "on the ground" by the erection of not more than four posts, covering an area of not less than two square feet, each of which is supposed to be at the corner—has led to the confusion, not only of the

leaseholders, but of the surveyors themselves who from time to time have been employed on the Beaconsfield gold-field. Leaseholders are required by the Mining Regulations at least to disturb, if not wholly to remove each survey-peg affixed by the surveyor, and to erect in its place or alongside of it one or more posts, that is to say, leaseholders are required to alter their boundaries. This may seem an exaggeration, but I venture to say that any surveyor who has carefully noted the effect of the regulation which refers to the erection of these posts (always more or less carelessly located) will corroborate all I have written. The Regulation complained of seems to serve no good purpose; it involves lessees in unnecessary expense, and it has the ultimate effect of perplexing and hindering surveyors in their field-work. Corner-pegs or posts, I respectfully submit, should be affixed only by competent surveyors, and a penalty should be inflicted upon any one convicted of wilfully disturbing or removing them. It is also to be regretted that the Mines Department is continually changing the numbers of those sections whose boundaries remain unaltered. Some five or six years ago I cut numbers on the corners of some of the sections at Beaconsfield. These numbers are still quite legible, but are of no use, since the corresponding sections which have been abandoned and taken up again under plan and report have been re-numbered by the Department. If the office numbers had not been altered, those cut on the post would still serve as a guide to applicants, and be helpful to surveyors marking off adjoining sections. At present, this changing of numbers on the Government plans, and their absence from the corner-pegs on the ground, is such a source of perplexity and annoyance to applicants that I have deemed it my duty to bring the matter under the notice of the Surveyor-General.

Survey District of *Cumberland*.—Mr. District Surveyor Thos. Frodsbam reports:—

Surveys effected.—During the past year I have surveyed 64 lots, comprising an area of 5839 acres. This area has been well distributed over the whole District, as the following table will show:—

COUNTY.	LOTS.	AREA.
Buckingham.....	21	841 acres
Monmouth.....	12	2917 "
Somerset.....	1	99 "
Cumberland.....	25	1403 "
Lincoln.....	3	85 "
Westmorland.....	2	494 "
TOTAL.....	64	5839 acres

Progress of Settlement.—In the County of Buckingham there has been a marked improvement in settlement and production, owing to the rise in the prices of grain and small fruit, the selectors doing more clearing and planting out of soft fruit stocks. This is more particularly noticeable in Tyenna, the most recently settled parish, several additional families having settled there, and new buildings having been erected. In the County of Monmouth 12 lots have been surveyed, but one of these is a lot of 2439 acres in the Parish of Grafton, which has been brought under the Real Property Act, so that there only remains an area of 477 acres purchased from the Crown during the last twelve months. The surveys effected in Cumberland have been agricultural and pastoral lots taken up in connection with existing holdings, and have not led to any increase of settlement.

Value of Real Estate.—At a recent sale by auction part of the estate of the late Joseph Clarke, Esq., situated in this County, realised

Ellengowan.....	4350 acres	65s. per acre
and in the County of Monmouth adjoining:—		
Big Run.....	7608 acres	37s. 6d. per acre
Lot, Township of Hamilton.	6 "	37s. 6d. "
Broad Bottom.....	5096 "	46s. 6d. "
Norton Mandeville.....	4738 "	50s. "
Woolpack Farm.....	—	£310.

This will give a fair idea of the value of real estate in this district.

Land available for selection.—There still remains a quantity of good land to be selected at Uxbridge and Tyenna. The Tyenna-Gordon Track has opened up a small area of first-class land, some of which has been selected, and in the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland there are some fine areas of pastoral land.

Florientine Valley.—Nothing has been done in this direction, as, there being no road into the good land, selectors will not settle without means of access. The Great Western Railway Company have laid out their line through the head of this valley, and should their line be constructed I feel confident that this large area of agricultural land would no longer remain unproductive.

Survey District of *Devon*.—The late Mr. Richard Hall reports as follows:—

Surveys effected.—For the Mines Department 341 acres have been marked off, embracing 23 lots; 551 acres have been reported on, consisting of 13 lots, being 36 lots containing an area of 892

acres for mining purposes—being 24 lots for gold, and remainder principally for silver-lead. These lots were situated at Belmont, Five-mile Rise, and the Dove River.

34 lots of agricultural land have been marked off, consisting of 1636 acres; 6 town lots for auction, amounting to 53 acres. The country lots have been much scattered; many of them have had improvements made, such as scrubbing, and some have been wholly scrubbed and laid down to grass.

Progress of Settlement.—I think the progress of this District has been as rapid during the year 1897 as I have noticed it in previous years: especially is this the case in the Wilmot country, one settler having scrubbed 200 acres, burnt it off, and has a splendid crop of grass. He is making cheese from 50 cows, and has got some 150 head of cattle fattening. He has some 200 acres more scrubbed ready for burning. Another new arrival in the Wilmot has about 200 acres scrubbed: this is on land that has been lying idle for many years, but has now changed hands. There are many improvements taking place all through the Wilmot country. I do not think this part of the District is ever likely to stand still again; much of the land is of the very best description, and now people can see the splendid crops it produces there will be plenty of persons ready to settle on it.

Land available for Selection.—The amount of available good Crown land in the Wilmot and Narrawa Parishes is not great now. In the southern portion of Narrawa there are patches of good land right back to the mines, but as there is only a pack-track to most of it at present applicants are not inclined to go back to it. In the Parish of Nietta and to the south of it, around the base of Black Bluff mountain, there is a good quantity of available Crown land, and to the south west of Nietta, along the banks of the River Leven, there is a large stretch of good land which will form a fine settlement some day.

Roads and Tracks.—The track to Belmont is one that I could recommend for improvement; there is a good lot of Crown land to be opened up by it, and the mines are very much in want of some improvement to the road; there is a good deal of packing going on now. There are some thirty men employed at the bismuth and tin claims, and there are probably some sixty more engaged in gold prospecting. There are seven sections on one gold reef now being opened up. A road is required to branch off the Nietta road going in the direction of south west, so as to open up the land referred to above as existing on the banks of the Leven River. I have drawn attention before to the advisability of cutting a track, which would be an extension of the Pine Road southerly towards Mount Tor; to enable people to get in and prospect the country. I believe there is mineral country in the position referred to which is as much unknown as if it were on the south coast of Tasmania: minerals have been found all round it. I do not think there is much agricultural land about this little known country, but there is some I am acquainted with, and probably no one knows what the land is like further to the south.

Survey District of *Dorset*.—Mr. District-Surveyor G. T. Eddie reports as follows:—

Lands suitable for Selection.—There are now only isolated lots of land suitable for agriculture anywhere within reasonable access of road or railway. In the vicinity of Mount Barrow there is good land, but no further selections have been made since Messrs. Whittle selected their land in 1894. They have cleared and grassed a good portion, and seem to be satisfied with the land.

Roads and Tracks required.—I do not know of any tracks which might be cut, except the one recommended last year from Whittle's land, near Mount Barrow, to Camden Plains.

Progress of settlement.—Very little settlement has taken place during the last year on agricultural lands. The area of mineral land leased has also been small, though a great deal of good prospecting has been done, especially at the New Pinafore and Volunteer Gold Mines at Lefroy.

Survey District of *North Dorset*.—Mr. Authorised Surveyor H. P. Dove reports as follows:—

Progress of Settlement.—The amount of land selected for agricultural purposes in the District of North Dorset during the year has been of very small extent, the chief industry of the District being mining, and any land that has been applied for has been taken up by old settlers for the purpose of extending their farms. No "new" ground has been applied for. A butter factory has recently been started near Derby, which may lead to some further selection in the vicinity, but I do not anticipate any selection of a large extent in this District until there is better and cheaper means of carriage for produce to the chief markets, or until there is an improvement in the tin market, and increased population in the townships.

Land available for Selection.—There is a considerable amount of land in the vicinity of Derby suitable for selection, and a road is required into Crown lands, surveyed through the selections of Collins and Gunton, and through the purchased land of M. S. R. Hardman: this road would connect with that recently surveyed by me along the east boundary of land applied for by Alfred Hardman, and sold by auction.

There is a strip of land to the east of Charles Krushka's purchased land along the Ringarooma River which would certainly be taken up if it were not for the fact that it would have to be sold by auction. A short road from the Main road through Foster's purchase would make this land easy of access. There is also good agricultural land to the west of the Boobyalla Road, which will undoubtedly be settled upon in the course of time, but in the present state of affairs I have only drawn attention to the lands likely to be taken up in the near future. The lands under grazing leases near Derby will also in due course be enquired for at auction, all of which matters I am watching, and will bring before your Department when the opportunities arise.

Survey District of *Fingal*.—Mr. District Surveyor Thos. Clark reports as follows :—

Surveys.—The number of applications for agricultural land for this year has, I think, exceeded that of 1896. During the past year I have received instructions for the following surveys :—

A.	R.	P.	
111	3	0	0, in 4 lots, under Section 10 Crown Lands Amendment Act. 1 road deviation for Public Works Department.
0	0	13	in 1 lot, sub-division survey.
2	1	24	in 1 lot, Police purposes.
775	0	0	in 17 lots, under 31st Section Crown Lands Act, 1890.
790	0	0	in 15 lots, under 49th Section Crown Lands Act, 1890.
525	0	0	in 10 lots, under Crown Lands Amendment Act.
2	0	27	in 9 lots, under Residence Areas Act.
50	0	0	in 1 lot, under 39th Section Crown Lands Act, 1890.
50	0	0	in 1 lot, re-survey.
395	0	0	in 44 lots, under Gold Fields Regulation Act.
845	0	0	in 28 lots, Mineral. 8 Water-Rights.

I now hold instructions for 27 surveys, including agricultural, mining, and water-rights, but these will be disposed of during the next three months.

Lands available for Selection.—In the vicinity of Upper Ringarooma there are still about 5000 acres of first-class land available for selection, most of which is near the Ringarooma River, some seven miles south of the settlement. A continuation of the Maurice Road is much needed in the direction of this land to selections already taken up but not yet settled on. Should this road be made, I feel sure a number of selectors would find their way back to the Crown lands mentioned. There are also large areas of second-class land about this settlement that could be brought under grass for fattening purposes. As this is a flourishing season for grass and other crops, and the output of fat cattle will be large, I think it may be expected that the settlement will make a firm advance during 1898.

The settlement of Upper George's River is making very slow progress. There are many patches of good land on the steep hills that surround this settlement available for selection, most of which is between Weldborough Road and G. D. Brown's, on North George. To open up this land a cart-road would have to be made some 10 miles.

The settlement of St. Mary's is slowly advancing. There are still many small patches of good land among the rocky hills available for selection, probably 500 acres in all. The output of coal from this settlement for the past year has been large.

At Blessington there is a fair amount of good land available for selection in the vicinity of North Esk and Ford Rivers, extending from those rivers towards Ben Nevis. There is also a large area of second-class land here that could be brought under grass. The climate is very wet and cold, but stock seem to do well there.

Roads and Tracks.—The road from Ringarooma to Mathinna is in a very bad state; this road is very much needed. All other roads through the district are in fair order. The track from Mathinna *via* South Mount Victoria to Alberton is in a bad state owing to fallen timber and scrub.

Mining.—There is still a large amount of Tin-mining going on, most of which is under Miners' Rights, extending from Ringarooma to Blue Tier. At Lottah the Anchor, Liberator, and Australian Tin Mining Companies are pushing on extensive works to deal with lode-mining; the result of which will soon be known, and should it be up to expectations there will be a still larger area leased for mining. At present there is very little water for these mines.

At Alberton gold-mining is taking a change for the better, while at Mathinna mining is at a standstill, but I think ere long a change for the better will take place. About 6 miles from Fingal a number of sections have been surveyed, and the prospects here are very good indeed.

Water Rights.—In some cases the applicants have decided to employ their own surveyor, and in such cases I notice the surveys are not made as promptly as they would be if done through the District Surveyor. I know some cases where applications were made over a year ago, and the applicants have not yet had the necessary survey made for the Mines Department.

Survey District of *Franklin*.—Mr. District Surveyor E. G. Innes reports as follows :—

Lands available and suitable for selection.—In the County of Kent and the numerous parishes forming that division of the District under my charge there are considerable areas of good land suitable for agricultural purposes. The greater portion of this land is now some distance back from the water frontage, is heavily timbered, and is not very easily got at, owing to the want of extension of the various roads leading from the shipping-places towards the same.

In the County of Buckingham, Parishes of Bedford, Pedder, and Bagot there is very little land available for selection; what there is generally would be called inferior or second-class land, only suitable for selection by those who have homesteads adjoining.

Upon South Bruni Island there is still a considerable area of good land, and of late selection in that direction has again taken a start; but, as a large proportion of the land available on Bruni carries timber of the very best description, it is not desirable to push selection until the timber has been removed.

There is a large area of good land in the Parishes of Garrett and Purves, but the same objection exists here, viz., that it generally carries valuable timber, and until that has been removed by the various saw-mills it is not advisable to let it fall into selectors' hands, or, at least, to push selection to any extent.

Blakeny, the most southerly Parish, contains very little land suitable for selection, being generally very rough and broken, heavily timbered, and covered with a dense scrub.

Tracks and Roads required.—Parish of Leithbridge, an extension of the road up the Huon Valley is required; also an extension of the road at Franklin known as the New Road, towards Arve River.

Parish of Honeywood, extensions of Nimmo's Road, Castle Forbes Bay, Scott's Rivulet Road, Halloran's Road, and the Arve Road are required to give access to Crown lands in their vicinity.

A road is required leading from the main road (Dover to Hastings) at Raminea, up the valley of the Esperance; there is a large tract of land hereabouts which has no outlet at present.

Tracks.—A track for prospecting and other purposes is urgently required to connect Port Esperance with Port Davey and Cox's Bight upon the south coast. Tin has been found in paying quantities near Cox's Bight, but, owing to the rough nature of the coast and want of means of access, what were once very promising mines are now practically abandoned. The country in the vicinity of Port Davey gives every indication of being mineral-bearing, especially in the vicinity of the Arthur Ranges, and if the tract indicated was cut it would give means of reaching a portion of the Colony at present almost unknown, and, possibly, assist to add to the known mineral wealth of the Colony.

If a track as proposed is cut from Tyenna to Port Davey, the present track to the River Craycroft should be connected to it, as any track from Tyenna to reach Port Davey to be of any use for traffic must pass through the gap between the Arthur and Franklin Ranges, so that the distance to connect with the Picton Track would not be great, and would be of considerable value as a means of access to that portion of the country.

Progress of Settlement.—For the past year there is very little to chronicle in the way of progress in the Huon, especially in the early part of the year. Towards the latter end of the year things began to wear a better aspect, fruit crops promised well, plenty of good grass existed and consequently all stock looked well, and as far as agriculture went everything promised well for a favorable season. Unfortunately these hopes have not been realized, for in December the weather set in terribly hot and exceptionally dry, withering up the grass, preventing small fruits coming to perfection, and seriously damaging the apple crop. In addition to this, bush fires became rampant, taking charge of the forests and scrubby country, sweeping away tramway, bridges, and huts, and, in the case of Messrs. Tyler at Ida Bay, the sawmill and all appliances, which had only recently been erected, was completely destroyed. All over the district a large amount of damage has been done by fire, and the regulations regarding lighting fires in the bush *cannot be too vigorously enforced*, as often a fire carelessly lighted takes charge of large areas of valuable country, destroying everything before it, and in a few hours destroys the work of years, and reduces those who through their own thrift have become fairly well-to-do, to the verge of ruin.

The timber trade, of which great things have been prophesied for some time past, still hangs fire, and, although considerable areas have been selected for timber under the new regulations, in the present state of affairs no one cares to do much with them, and unless the outlook is considerably better for 1898 than it has been for 1897, I am very doubtful whether the lots will ever be held and the rents paid.

As far as selection for agricultural purposes goes, during the latter part of 1897 things have begun to resume the aspect of former years, and instructions from all parts of the district have come in freely, so that at the present time I have my hands full of survey work; this is a better sign, as it points to renewed prosperity, indicates that farmers have money coming in to be able to lay it out in the necessary fees, &c., and, with remunerative prices for such of the crops as remain, we may still hope for something like the old state of affairs.

Survey District of Mersey.—Mr. District-Surveyor H. J. Chalmers reports as follows:—

Land available for Selection.—I regret to say that selection within the district under my charge has been very limited during the year, consequent upon the fact that there is, virtually speaking, no land available for agricultural purposes sufficiently near to market; the very small areas existing along the rivers, and in some of the gullies, are cut out by virtue of the Regulations as to frontage and shape, making it compulsory to include a very large percentage of very inferior land in order to obtain that of good or fairly good quality.

In the County of Lincoln, along the banks of the Forth River there is some fairly good land, but the isolated locality and the difficulty of access will be an impediment to selection for many years to come, the only hope being that mineral discoveries will enhance its value by the creation of a market in the locality.

Progress of Settlement.—There has been no progress whatever in selection for many years past, and there is not sufficient work to warrant the area marked as a district being continued as such. The small amount of work required to be done throughout the year could easily be accomplished by its being amalgamated with one of the adjoining districts. Such a course would be attended with far more satisfactory results. The expense attendant on making small isolated surveys is often

times greater than the "fee." Thus these surveys are postponed for favourable opportunities, causing irritating delays and general dissatisfaction on all sides. Although directly opposed to my own interests, I am in duty bound to impress this matter for your serious consideration.

Tracks.—The only "track" that calls for immediate attention is that leading towards the West Coast from the Mole Creek Railway Station. From the station to Liena Town Reserve the road is passable, and with a judicious expenditure of sixty or seventy pounds would be available for wheel traffic, and an immense convenience. From Liena, or locality, westward the track is in a state of nature, or more properly speaking "self-made," by reason of continual traffic by cattle and pack-horses, and during the winter months is, in places, exceptionally dangerous. Although a full report has recently been made by Mr. Surveyor Innes, there are still many who affirm that the route can not only be considerably shortened, but many of the steep and unsatisfactory grades reduced to a minimum. It is also believed that the greater part of the distance through the "snow" regions could be easily avoided. However this may be, the construction of this "track" is urgently needed to further the development now taking place in the vicinity of Mount Pelion and the Bluff. Many promising indications of minerals have been found in the locality which promise to develop into valuable properties, but which must of a necessity languish without the means of better communication.

Surveys.—During the year I have surveyed five sections in the district, aggregating 125 acres, for agricultural and pastoral purposes, and 700 acres for leases under the Mineral Lands Act.

Survey District of *Montagu*.—Mr. District Surveyor Chas. S. Wilson reports as follows:—

Progress of Settlement.—The progress of settlement as regards the selection of agricultural lands has been this year, as in previous years, very limited; but it is satisfactory to record that the few areas now held are gradually being brought under cultivation. I might here emphasize the fact that there is on the West Coast an ever-ready market for produce of all kinds, which, in itself, should afford a sufficient incentive for the small farmer to select, without delay, available patches of good land. The district which I have charge of is essentially a mining one, and so healthy is the general outlook of mining here that one cannot but predict a prosperous future for Tasmania through the aid of this industry. The erection of substantial buildings in the various towns has eclipsed all previous years. Both at Zeehan and Queenstown (the site of the Mt. Lyell Mining and Railway Company's Reduction Works) the growth of population has been rapid. At both these towns property has advanced in value, and there is still a constant demand for Government lots.

During the year the new town of Ringville was surveyed.

At Mount Black (the Rosebery) a town is springing up which will probably be one of considerable importance. Although there have been many enquiries for allotments in this locality, and no doubt, if surveyed, the lots would command high prices, still, taking into consideration the bearing the Emu Bay Railway will have on the position of the town, it is extremely difficult, in fact, impossible, for a professional man to say, in the absence of surveys, what land could safely be divided into allotments and offered to the public, without jeopardising the Railway Company's projected line. The railway route, I understand, will be located at an early date, and I then will be in a position to definitely advise you on the matter.

Mining Surveys.—For the past year 600 instructions for surveys for mining purposes were issued to me, about one-half of which were received during the last quarter of the year.

The progress of the survey work has been somewhat retarded owing to prevailing bush fires—in fact, for several weeks I deemed it too dangerous to keep my parties in the field—consequently the surveys are not as forward as I would wish them to be. With a view, however, of expediting the work, and taking advantage of the summer months, I have engaged several more authorised surveyors, and I trust, therefore, to have the surveys well in hand at an early date.

Mining Fields.

Zeehan and Dundas.—Consequent upon the decline in the price of silver, the output of silver-lead ores has been considerably less than in 1896. In view, however, of smelters being erected for the local treatment of these ores, it is fair to assume that the output for 1898 will be as great as in previous years.

Mount Read.—Active mining operations are still being carried on in this district, and the Hercules Company contemplate exporting their rich ores so soon as tramway communication is established.

Colebrook and Rosebery Districts.—It is satisfactory to record that mining operations are being carried on in these districts in a most spirited manner. The prospects of the Colebrook Mine are remarkably good, and the management are to be congratulated on the way in which they are testing their property. At the Rosebery (Mount Black) the mines are delayed through lack of improved communication; this, however, will only be a matter of a brief period, as the Emu Bay Railway, which is now being constructed, will serve this group. About 4000 acres have recently been applied for (for minerals) in the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Black.

Mount Lyell Field.—Until the beginning of this year, the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company claimed a monopoly of attention by investors. Recent developments have, however, demonstrated beyond doubt that the Lyell field, which was once held to be a "one mine-show," now has several properties which are daily attracting investors and speculators. The Lyell Tharsis and the North Lyell Companies each have excellent prospects of becoming ere long dividend-paying

mines. As is already known, the North Lyell Company contemplate the construction of a railway, about 32 miles in length, from their mine to Kelly's Basin, Macquarie Harbour. This will be the means of opening up a considerable stretch of country, and Government lands which hitherto have been locked up may now become a source of revenue. Already some 4000 acres have been applied for (for minerals) along the proposed route, principally at Mount Darwin.

A new Mining Field.—*The Red Hills and Lake Dora* country, which is situate in the mineral zone known generally as the Mount Lyell mineral belt, has this year principally engaged the attention of prospectors. Approximately 14,000 acres have been applied for in these localities, and I feel confident that several of the properties, if properly managed, bid fair to become mines of the future. At the Red Hills there is an immense surface formation, and a company of that name (the Red Hills Mining Company) is now vigorously exploiting the property, but, owing to want of proper communication, the directorate of this company is labouring under exceptional difficulties. It will be remembered that in my last annual report I recommended the construction of a pack-track into this country, and I now once again urge that this should be done, and that as speedily as possible. It is well worthy of note and of considerable importance to the public that the mining companies which are deemed by mining investors to be the soundest, both for investment and speculative purposes, are those mines which are governed by experienced directors. This exemplifies, in some sort, the wisdom of securing at the outset the services of directors who have had considerable mining experience, and who, moreover, can give proper attention to the judicious application of the shareholders' money. It is a frequent occurrence that mining directors are elected to their responsible positions not on account of possessing any special qualifications, but for the sole reason of being proprietors of a large interest in the "show"; consequently the expenditure is in the majority of such cases misapplied, and I am convinced that thousands of pounds are yearly absolutely squandered. This, I regret to think, applies very largely to West Coast ventures.

Tracks.

I can but reiterate my previous reports with regard to opening up the West Coast mineral lands by means of tracks. Practically speaking, nothing whatever has been done in this direction during the past year. This is to be regretted, as I venture to think that the most substantial asset the Colony possesses lies in her mineral fields. The laying out of a few hundred pounds by the Government at the proper time is a mere bagatelle compared with the enormous amount of revenue following the discovery of one mine capable of supporting several thousand souls. Whenever large surface formations have been shown from authentic assays to contain payable ores, steps should at once be taken by the Government to hasten on the mining developments. What is now urgently required on the West Coast is a system of tracks arranged so as to serve the country to the best advantage, and I feel confident that with a moderate expenditure of, say, £15,000, on tracks alone the Colony would within a reasonable time benefit at least tenfold.

Survey District of Outlands.—Mr. District Surveyor W. M. Hardy reports:—

Surveys effected.—My time has been fully employed in making surveys under the several provisions of the different Crown Lands Acts, also in surveying roads for the Public Works Department, and were of the usual character of such surveys, and this year were scattered all over the district, entailing much expense to reach from one to the other.

Land available for Selection and Rental.—There is no Crown land sufficiently good or large in extent to tempt people from a distance to select, although there is for rental, except on Maria Island, where there is excellent land awaiting the first comer. Owing to the boat accident of last year the local people are now prejudiced against the place, with one notable exception, whilst others fear the want of communication. I have done my best to remove this last misconception, pointing out that owing to the rivalry of the different traders very good and constant communication is available, besides, near the land in question, is a safe shelter harbour, frequently availed of. A steam service running to Dunally is talked of also. The south end of Maria Island would make a valuable lease, and only requires about a quarter of a mile of fencing to close it in.

The Second Class Land Act.—A good deal of land is being taken up under this Act, and I anticipate a good deal more. In many cases it may prove prejudicial to the revenue derived from leases, as the leases are spoiled and thrown up, but by and by the purchaser will feel in a position to annex other lots on the same terms of not less than ten shillings an acre. An attempt to get better land down to this value is not infrequent, and I suppose natural.

Wattle Bark, Guano, Timber Licences, &c.—I was desired during the past year to report any infraction of the existing Regulations on these matters. I did not hear of any such breach whilst I was in the vicinity, everyone being on their best behaviour, but the Government has suffered very considerable loss over the wattle-bark in the past, and will again as soon as the local authorities only are to be dreaded. Guano has been removed from the White Rock, and I was able to stop one contemplated expedition that proposed going without a licence. A good deal of timber has been seized, but I suspect that licences are frequently dispensed with.

Unauthorised Occupation.—The practice of setting fire to Crown lands to improve the grass is of frequent occurrence. Unauthorised occupation is not quite so common of late, nor the plan of applying for a selection and failing to pay survey fee whilst the land is exploited. I have noticed a few cases where survey fee is paid and the land occupied, and the surveyor is put off on some pretext till the land is no longer required, when a refund of the survey fee is asked for.

Improvements on Credit Selections.—It will no doubt be pleasing for you to learn that I have to report very creditable progress under this heading, the selectors having spared neither time, labour, nor trouble in improving their lots, and the result is most commendable.

Roads and Tracks.—Much has been done in this direction, mostly by the gangs of unemployed, and in places where the work was urgently needed. It is a pity that the work had to be restricted; still, the settlers have reason to be very grateful for what they have obtained, and the work has been done over a large area judiciously.

Survey District of *Russell*.—Mr. District Surveyor David Jones reports as follows:—

Lands suitable for Selection.—Now that the Emu Bay Railway Company are pushing on with the construction of their railway from the Burnie-Waratah Line to Mount Zeehan *via* the Rosebery District, it would be well to refer to the Crown land on and near its route. South and adjoining the south boundary of the Surrey Hills Block, owned by the V.D.L. Company, containing some 150,000 acres, patches of fair land can be found. Some of the spurs from Hatfield Plain leading down to the Cue River, near the railway route, are covered with a basaltic soil of good quality, extending south for about two miles from the south boundary of the V.D.L. Company, which crosses Hatfield Plain about 10 or 12 chains north from its south end, leaving a portion of the plain as Crown land. On the Cue River flats some of the land would do capitally for grazing purposes. It would be difficult to estimate the area of this land without a careful examination, but 2000 acres must be well within the mark. The elevation of some of this land above sea level is one drawback to it, being over 2000 feet. The fall to the Cue Valley cannot be much short of 500 feet, so that this drawback is gradually done away with. Other small areas can be found along the surveyed line for the railway, but whether in blocks sufficiently large to found a settlement it is hard to say. The delta formed by the joining of the Huskisson River to the Pieman River contains about 1500 acres of really splendid land, but is certainly some distance westerly from the present railway survey of the Burnie-Zeehan Line. On the road from Waratah to Wynyard some good land also exists, adjoining on the west the west boundary of the V.D.L. Co.'s Surrey Hills Block. The area is considerable, and when the Act for classifying the land and disposing of it on terms, extending over 14 years, as low as 10s. per acre, becomes better known, will no doubt be applied for and taken up. The junction of the Savage River with the Pieman affords a nice piece of land—of excellent quality—say 200 acres, which should be valuable if the mines near Corinna develop at all satisfactorily. It has been flooded in its lowest places. On each side of the main road from Waratah to Heazlewood, for about two miles along road from the former place, some fairly good basaltic land can be obtained, extending easterly to Knole Plain for, say two miles, then over Knole Plains—all tolerably fair native grass land—for another two miles, to the west boundary of the V.D.L. Company's land. On the completion of the Burnie-Zeehan Line this land should become a valuable asset to the Government.

Roads and Tracks.—A track made north-westerly from Mount Bischoff to join a track made some years ago from Table Cape to Specimen Reef, would admit prospectors into country known to contain certain metalliferous deposits, notably a fair grade galena. Another track that could be made at a reasonable cost, and be of great benefit to prospectors, is one leading into the north end of the Meredith Range. This could now be started from the Mount Stewart Company's Mine at the Castray River, a pack-track having already been made from the Waratah-Heazlewood Road into this mine. The Main Road from Waratah to Corinna is steadily advancing, it being now possible to take a dray as far as the 18-mile peg from Waratah. This means getting well round the dreaded Bald Hill with horse and trap, a lift that will be thoroughly appreciated by travellers. Still another proposed track to exploit a little known country should be made from the V.D.L. Co.'s old road to Chudleigh near the S.E.L. of their Surrey Hills Block, go south and pass on the west side of May Day Mount, the trig station of which is outside the V.D.L. Company's boundary, cross the Vale River, continue to the east of Mounts Remus and Romulus and west of Barn Bluff, joining the track recently marked by Mr. E. Innes on the west of Mount Pelion. This track, if made, would enable all the tributaries of the Mackintosh River to be prospected, and, as some of them take their rise in granite country, it is only reasonable to suppose that valuable metalliferous deposits are likely to be met with. Meredith's Track, from the 40-mile from Burnie, on the Emu Bay Railway to Zeehan *via* Strong's Rush and Cutty Sark country, badly wants a sum of money expended upon it in bettering grades, repairing old culverts and bridges, building new ones, and corduroying the soft and bad places. This is a pack-track that will be much used, and should give a handsome return for any outlay in improvements by the increase that would result in applications for mineral sections in its vicinity.

Progress of the District.—During the past year there has been no settlement upon agricultural sections. In the early part of the year there were very few applications for Mining Leases; in the latter part of the year they came in too fast to be dealt with by one surveyor. There are now three working in the district. Over 60 applications for mining purposes have been dealt with in 1897, 40 of that number being quite in the last part of the year—from the end of August to the 23rd of December—most of them in practically the roughest country in Tasmania.

In the vicinity of the North Pieman, at the Cutty Sark, Sandison's Show, and Boco Creek, prospecting is being carried on with fair success. At Kershaw and Sandison's they have a large outcrop of chiefly iron pyrites, containing a proportion of copper pyrites and about 8 dwts. of gold to the ton of pyrites. Mining operations are being pushed on at the Rocky River Mine, 9 miles

south of Corinna, also on the Rio Tinto Mine, about 24 miles south-west from Waratah, also at the Magnet Mine, 7 miles south-west from Waratah. The Mount Stewart Mining Company, near the Castray, are steadily getting out ore, and work is being again commenced at the old Godkin Mine. The old Cliff Mine, on the western slopes of Mt. Bischoff, have cut a good sulphide lode, carrying zinc, antimony, and argentiferous galena associated with carbonate of iron. These developments point to the interest shown in the district; and, as the construction works of the Emu Bay Railway Company are over the V. D. L. Company's south boundary, and are now fairly on Crown lands, all and everyone interested in the District of Russell, as well as the West Coast, can look forward with joyous hope to its future prosperity and success.

Survey District of Tasman's Peninsula.—Mr. J. H. Hinsby, Acting District Surveyor, reports as follows:—

During the year 1897 I have surveyed 20 lots, comprising 721 acres, on Tasman's Peninsula; one lot of about 50 acres on Forestier's Peninsula; and seven lots, comprising 193 acres, in the adjoining district.

Selection.—I think there seems to be a slight improvement in this direction, and the selectors on land already taken up seem to be doing good work. There has been a lot of splitting done on Tasman Peninsula during the past nine months, owing to the rise in the price of palings. Timber-cutting often leads to selection, as in searching for timber the splitters discover the patches of good land which very often carries good timber as well. The selectors on Forestier's are all opening up their lots and improving them generally. There is still much good land available there, also a fine lot of milling timber round the foot of Mount McGregor and along Flinders Creek.

There have been several more selections taken up in the vicinity of Cripp's Creek, and there is still a good area to be selected in that vicinity. From J. Fazackerley's 50-acre selection there is a nice strip of limestone country running out towards Cape Raoul, also another nice block situated between Tatnell's selection and the east end of Wedge Bay Marsh. I have not had a chance to examine any of the country on the Fortescue side of the Peninsula during the past year, there being no selection in that direction. In the vicinity of Mount Communication there has been a little more selected, and there are still a few lots to be obtained, mostly in small areas.

Roads and Tracks.—With regard to roads, I have surveyed them where necessary to give access to available Crown land or lots already selected.

Concerning the lots at the head of Cripp's Creek, I should suggest that before any more money is spent on the line of road which runs down Cripp's Creek to the shipping-place in Wedge Bay at the mouth of the creek, another route which exists should be examined, that is, from the sections at the head of the creek, viz.—Batchelor's, Cowburn's, Tatnell's, and others, across Gard's Marsh to the road reserved by me through Leslie Kingston's 100 acres, thence on to the road from Nubeena to Benjafield's, Robinson's, and others. The road from Kingston's lot to its junction with Benjafield's could be improved upon by a deviation through G. Thompson's section, and with this deviation would be almost a level run right through, as well as putting the selectors straight to the Nubeena jetty. This would also open up a lot of country now inaccessible, and there would be less construction, as the road from Wedge Bay (Nubeena) is already constructed as far as T. Robinson's selection.

I have mentioned this route, as money has been already spent on the other route. This route would only be used by Spaulding and M'Guinness, and, after leaving their sections, passes through barren land its whole length, whereas the other road as suggested passes through good land all the way; again, the other route would require a jetty as well as road construction.

There have been no minerals of any importance found on the Peninsulas.

Owing to a demand for palings in the other Colonies, the splitting enterprise has been considerably revived, but most of the timber at present accessible has been worked out.

Survey District of Wellington.—Fredk. E. Windsor, District Surveyor, reports as follows:—

Surveys.—During the year 41 agricultural selections, comprising 2368½ acres, and 7 township allotments, making altogether an area of 2408½ acres, with 7¼ miles of roads and connection lines, and 5 Public Works road surveys, have been surveyed.

Progress of Settlement.—The early part of the Spring was remarkable for heavy winds and incessant rain, that prevailed up to the end of November. So much rain fell during the earlier periods that many of the farmers were prevented from planting potatoes until very late in the season, the result of which must be a failure on account of the exceptionally dry and hot weather we are now experiencing. Of course, the wet weather proved very favourable for the grass-growing, and had the effect of completely checking the caterpillar and ground grub, so we may hopefully look forward to a good grass, seed, and grain harvest.

The butter factory and creameries may still be considered the mainstay of the district, and have a very important bearing upon the purchase and opening up of the bush lands and bringing them under grass. Large areas have been scrubbed this last year, and improvements have steadily progressed.

This district should be in a much better position than it was at this time last year, meat having risen to a very high price along the Coast, and, cattle being very scarce, the farmers have been able to sell anything that looked like beef.

The bush fires that did such destruction last year seem to be about to be repeated this season, the whole district now being under smoke, and fires visible in several localities.

At the urgent wish of the inhabitants a portion of the timber reserve has been surveyed into allotments for sale by public auction; but, I regret to say that the part cut up is about the most rough and broken to be found on the reserve, and the prices realised at the sale can scarcely be taken as a criterion of what value is placed upon the other parts by those who wish to obtain a portion.

Owing to the Emu Bay Railway absorbing all superfluous labour, the farmers are unable to obtain men for harvest work, although offering 6s. per day.

Payments under Crown Lands Acts.—The operation of the Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1895, no doubt proved a great blessing last year to many of those who were behind with their instalments; but I think that a still further help could have been extended to some of the selectors, without detriment to the interests of the Government, by allowing those who resided on the land, and had improved the same in a *bonâ fide* manner, to remain there so long as they paid interest upon the amount of instalments due to the Government. Improvement would have still gone on, and the land would have become a more valuable asset in the possession of the Government.

Several cases came under my knowledge where more than a pound per acre had been expended upon the land in improvements, in one or two cases the ground being under grass. Owing to the want of funds, the applicants were compelled to relinquish their holdings in favour of the next comer, who took the land up under the new Act (C. L. A. Act, 1893), and thereby gained grassed lands for three years before having to pay any money other than survey fee.

Roads and Tracks.—The works that should have attention, and which have been previously referred to, are:—The construction of a suitable jetty at Green Point, Parish of Marrawah, selection having been very extensive during last year in that parish; and the re-marking of the back-line of the Woolworth Block to the Montagu River before those marks that have been found near the Coast get destroyed; and a new punt over the Arthur River Ferry: the fact of the money having been voted for that purpose does not make the crossing at the present time any the safer for man or beast.

Crown Land suitable for Agricultural purposes.

Parish of Marrawah.—About 3000 acres of good agricultural land still available, and in encouraging selection some attention should be paid to the road from the settlement to the shipping port. Before the potato carting had been completed last year, the road, that had been partly formed, was in places quite impassable, and the new road that the settlers opened out at their own cost was soon in an equally bad state, thus entailing a very great hardship upon the settlers, who were compelled to pay 12s. per ton freight by steamer.

Numerous selections have lately been applied for, and scrubbing has been very extensive on the old ones. The settlement promises to be one of the most thriving in the district. Cattle-fattening as well as cultivation, is extensively carried on, and several of the selectors now reside on their selections.

A weekly post, which is a great boon, has been established.

Parishes of Williams, Mowbray, and Poilinna.—Fully 5000 acres of fairly good land (basaltic) available for selection, but roads are required to open up these lands. A few sections, portions of old selections, have been surveyed and improved.

Parishes of Gibson, Ford, and Medwin.—2500 acres of good land still unselected, and some good agricultural land is to be met with. The Back-line Road should be completed, and the road from Irish Town to meet the South Road is very much required, as Irish Town at the present time has only a sand track to travel, through wet plains in the winter, for at least five miles, and the main South Road requires extending. No new selection has taken place, but improvements have been very extensive on the old ones, such as building, clearing, and fencing, &c.

Parish of Anderson and to the south of same.—A very large area of good agricultural land still remains unselected. The distance from the coast road and the unfinished state of the present road renders the land of little value. No new selection has taken place, but some of the old selections have been very much improved.

Parishes of Myalla and Dallas.—About 2000 acres of good basaltic land still available in these parishes. Some of the old lots have been re-selected, but selection in the back country will be slow until the roads are opened and improved. The road running south from main road at E. Boys' should be remetalled, as it is almost impassable in winter.

Parishes of Flowerdale and Preolenna.—About 5000 acres of good agricultural land is to be found in these two parishes. Some small areas have been applied for, portions of old selections, and a few fresh selections have been made.

The roads that could with advantage be opened are from Flowerdale to Calder (not yet marked out), across the Inglis River. The main Flowerdale Road west to Inglis River should be extended towards the Dipwood Range; also the road from Flowerdale to Sisters Hills should be completed, as most of the land fronting on that road has been reselected. Improvement on the selections has been very general.

Parishes of Quiggin and Calder.—2500 acres good basaltic land open for selection. Several of those lots that reverted to the Crown have been again selected in smaller areas, and some of them scrubbed. Several fresh selections have been made and partly scrubbed. A portion of the timber reserve has been marked off, and will be offered for sale by auction.

The Calder Road requires extending south to Moore's Plains and across the Calder River west to its junction with the Flowerdale Road to give access to the Crown lands in the Parish of Preolenna and those lots already selected. Some few selections have been recently made, and some of the old selections grassed and fenced.

Parish of Nolla.—About 3500 acres good agricultural land still open for selection. The Moore's Plains Road requires some attention, it being almost impassable for traffic in the winter. The cross road connecting that with the Waratah Road, through Ruffin's and King's, should be opened. Portions of several of the sections that reverted to the Crown have been selected, and several lots surveyed and scrubbed. I feel sure that all the land thrown up will again be taken by other applicants. Messrs. Biggins and Bauld can supply information about the Crown lands to those seeking sections.

Parishes of Elliott and Lewis.—A small area of good land still remains unselected in Elliott; some few lots have reverted to the Crown, but have been nearly all reselected. In the latter parish some large lots were thrown up, and some of these have been again selected; the whole of them, I think, will eventually be taken up again. The road along the western bank of the Cam River requires improving and extending south; also one of the cross roads should be opened to connect with the Waratah Road. The Cam Road south from Harnett should have some attention and the bad places formed and metalled before the bad weather comes on; as it is, the milk-carts have the greatest difficulty to get to the creamery. Improvement in that locality is very marked, the land that a few years ago was all bush now presents grass lands and cultivation.

Parishes of Oonah and Takone.—Some thousands of acres of good land to be met with. Several sections have reverted to the Crown and are still unselected. Several lots have been applied for in the vicinity of St. Mary's River, and will find an outlet and a market for produce at Waratah by railway.

Stowport and Natone.—Some 2000 acres of good land known to exist and still unselected, and some of the lots that reverted to the Crown are again open for selection. Some fresh selections have been made at the back of Stowport, and nearer to Waratah. The Chasm Creek road and the main road into the back lands require extending, and that already opened should be improved before the winter, as the residents at that time are almost cut off from the market.

King Island.

Mr. Authorised Surveyor M. Flannigan reports :—

Progress of settlement.—During the past year good progress has been made by the selectors on King Island in way of fencing, and, in one or two cases, ploughing and sowing grass and clover seed, principally by Messrs. Stephenson and Gunn, who have ploughed 200 acres, a good portion of which is under English rye-grass and white clover; the growth is very luxuriant, notwithstanding that this is the first year; the sandy nature of the soil makes ploughing comparatively easy; and I believe it is their intention to employ a second ploughman, to enable them to get as much land as possible under English grass in a short time.

Although the past year has been dry, and not as favourable as previous years, about 650 fat cattle have been shipped from King Island, principally to Strahan, where higher prices are obtained than at either Launceston or Devonport. Over 400 head of these were sent by Messrs. Stephenson and Gunn; they also shipped 40 fat sheep, being the first consignment of fat sheep from the island. I think the above should give a good idea of the capabilities of the island for stock-carrying purposes, considering this is only the second year that the settlers have gone in for grazing. Mr. James has taken 300 store sheep over, intending to go in for sheep as well as cattle, and no doubt more of the settlers will follow. About 1000 store cattle have been shipped to the island during the past season. I have not heard of any deaths from tare or coast disease among the stock, although some were attacked, but it has been found by changing them to other parts of the island they get over the complaint.

The population has increased from 113 to 125, and I heard that three new settlers with their families will shortly be on the island.

The communication from the mainland is better than in previous years; a boat could be relied upon during the past season within a fortnight, and on several occasions there were two boats in a week. The s.s. *Yollu* and *Star* have been doing the trade, but I believe a boat is being built expressly for the work, and will run weekly. This should give an impetus to selection, most of the people on the mainland disliking the island on account of the isolation.

There are still a few thousand acres on the east of lots selected by Messrs. Stephenson, Padman, Wilkinson, &c. which are equally as good as that held, but which will require clearing, being timbered with ti-tree, but compared with the mainland is only light, and in places only in belts. The land on the west of above lots is also good untimbered, but is more hilly, and the feed is early; it also dies earlier, and no doubt could be worked profitably with the low land, the latter being more moist than the hills. Around Yellow Rock Reserve and Whistler Point there are a few lots with feed. Most of the land of this description has been selected, and the coming selector will have to grow grass before stocking. There is also some good land between Bob Lagoon and Pass River, near the heads of Bungaree and Eel Creeks.

Land available for Selection.—On the east of lots selected between Pass River and Three River Creek there is some good land which is quite equal to that selected, but will require clearing; all the open country in this part is held, but the amount of labour required to clear is small, and,

no doubt, it would be found to repay the selector for his trouble, this portion of the island being known to be sound. On the south of Currie Harbour there are some lots which carry feed still open for selection, principally between the Ettrick River and Mr. McMahon's lot; there are a few thousand acres around there already cleared which only require grass to be sown, and within the next year or two there will be a large area held under selection in this part. North of the Ettrick there are one or two lots carrying grass. Along South-East Coast, from Seal River to Grassy, there are some good lots carrying feed, and along the south edge of the timber near Grassy River there is a narrow strip of good agricultural land.

Roads and Tracks.—The selectors have been hampered a good deal for want of roads; the only formed road is from Currie Harbour to Porky Creek, about 7 miles. A track has been cut by Mr. Calder from Pass River to Craw's block, near Bob Lagoon, with the intention of making it the main road. This track unfortunately, by keeping so far east, does not pass through the good land near the head of Bungaree and Eel Creeks, which may be found fit for agriculture. If the road is formed along proposed route, it will be necessary to have a by-road into the good land.

The road from Currie Harbour to Surprise Bay is also badly wanted; at present it is only with difficulty that a vehicle can be got along, the creeks being boggy or banks very steep.

Water Supply.—Owing to the scarcity of rain during the two last years, many of the water-holes are drying, which makes it necessary that reservations should be left along all lagoons or water-courses of any consequence; in the north the duck-ponds are dry, and one of the three lagoons is dry. Bob Lagoon is four feet lower than two years ago, and Porky Lagoon is also considerably lower, and the same applies to lagoons in the south.

I have drawn attention to this, having heard that some of the selectors wish to get the reservations closed; if that is done, and the dry seasons continue for another two years, the want of access to water by the settlers who are less fortunate in not having permanent water would be seriously felt.