

1898.
—
VICTORIA.

REPORT

OF

PROCEEDINGS TAKEN UNDER THE PROVISIONS

OF

THE LAND ACTS AND THE WATTLES ACT 1890,

DURING THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER,

1897.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

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REPORT.

To His Excellency the Honorable Sir John Madden, Knight, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria, and Administrator of the Government of the said Colony, &c. &c., &c.

Department of Lands and Survey,
Melbourne, 19th September, 1898.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I have the honour to submit the annexed Report by the Secretary for Lands of proceedings taken under the provisions of the Land Acts and the *Wattles Act* 1890 during the year 1897.

The Report has reference to the undermentioned subjects, which are dealt with in the order indicated :—

I.—Settlement.	III.—Pastoral occupation.
II.—Sales by auction.	IV.—Miscellaneous.

Appendices B and C give a detailed account of the work done in the Survey and Forest Branches of the Department.

I have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's most obedient servant,

R. W. BEST,

Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey,
and President of the Board of Land and Works.

To the Honorable Robert Wallace Best, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey.

Department of Crown Lands and Survey,
Melbourne, 19th September, 1898.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit the following Report of proceedings taken under the provisions of the Land Acts and the *Wattles Act* 1890 during the year 1897.

I.—SETTLEMENT.

The general methods of alienation of Crown lands in Victoria, from the first sales to the 31st December, 1897, are shown in the following Table (A):—

TABLE A.

	BY AUCTION.				BY SELECTION.						General Total.
	Country Lands.	Town Lands.	Suburban Lands.	Totals by Auction, &c.	Selection and Lease.		Certificate Selection.		42nd Section, Act 1865, &c.		
					No.	Area.	No.	Area.	No.	Area.	
	Aeres.	Aeres.	Aeres.	Aeres.	No.	Aeres.	No.	Aeres.	No.	Aeres.	Aeres.
Under Imperial Acts ...	...	...	...	3,944,237	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,944,237
„ <i>Land Act</i> 1860 ...	392,610	1,273	4,979	398,862	...	410,600	...	...	...	...	809,462
„ „ 1862 ...	422,610	2,800	31,295	456,705	...	1,363,243	...	59,992	...	...	1,879,940
„ „ 1865 ...	639,761	6,709	34,137	680,607	5,900	1,499,910	3,078	559,423	...	753,574	3,493,514
„ „ 1869 ...	986,175	17,229	32,693	1,036,097	Section 19. 65,990 10,506,452		...	...	Section 49. 11,702 183,438		11,725,987
„ „ 1878 ...	...	...	...	...	Section 11. 453 76,100		...	...	Section 10. 401 1,202		77,302
Totals ...	...	...	...	6,516,508	...	13,856,303	...	619,415	...	938,214	21,930,442
During year—	<i>Land Acts</i> 1884-1890.				<i>Land Acts</i> 1884-1890.						
1885 ...	23,917	2,106	877	26,900	...	...	...	...	...	...	26,900
1886 ...	16,727	2,134	420	19,281	...	...	...	...	...	...	19,281
1887 ...	16,661	2,800	104	19,565	Section 42. 83 11,310 30,875						
1888 ...	15,549	4,373	102	20,024	290	49,745	...	...	...	...	69,769
1889 ...	10,601	2,244	835	13,680	409	63,906	41	5,383	...	...	82,969
1890 ...	8,941	3,094	166	12,201	505	91,974	33	4,409	...	...	108,584
1891 ...	4,989	1,801	563	7,353	507	88,610	26	2,069	...	...	98,032
1892 ...	7,681	2,336	603	10,620	482	74,841	16	1,960	...	...	87,421
1893 ...	3,448	2,844	254	6,546	748	100,280	13	1,554	Section 22. 13 58		108,438
1894 ...	4,737	2,111	...	6,848	907	97,867	76	1,668	78	363	106,746
1895 ...	1,904	1,444	...	3,348	578	46,568	23	992	22	106	51,014
1896 ...	1,471	1,179	...	2,650	613	22,336	18	368	5	32	25,386
1897 ...	2,677	1,418	...	4,095	653	54,115	20	808	4	20	59,038
Totals under <i>Land Acts</i> 1884-1890 ...	119,303	29,884	3,924	153,111	5,775	701,552	266	19,211	122	579	874,453
Auction ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6,669,619	acres.		
Selection ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16,135,276	„		
Total ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	22,804,895	acres.		

NOTE.—Forfeitures have in each case been deducted from the area selected.

Table B shows the number of leases and licences under Land Acts 1869, 1878, 1890, and 1891 on 31st December, 1897, with the area and rental:—

TABLE B.

Section of Act.	No.	Area.	Annual Rental.
<i>Progress Payments.</i>			
Residence—			
		Acres.	£
Licences—Section 42, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	4,465	496,634	24,832
Section 17, <i>Land Act</i> 1891 ...	87	998	100
Section 22, <i>Land Act</i> 1891 ...	122	579	46
Section 9, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890 ...	1	131	7
Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878	26,216	4,482,742	224,137
Section 44, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	1,429	234,863	11,743
Non-residence—			
Licences—Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878 ...	4	2,770	277
Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	232	15,287	1,529
Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878	394	57,701	5,770
Section 50, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	56	6,844	684
<i>Leases and Licences other than Agricultural and Grazing—</i>			
Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869 ...	1,529	22,100	2,107
Section 65, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	4,387	79,839	6,313
Section 99, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	3,359	10,508	23,502
<i>Pastoral Occupation—</i>			
Section 3, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	33	184,282	530
Section 21, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	73	1,111,354	3,219
Section 32, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	8,461	3,450,997	32,699
Section 67, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	1,145	353,477	2,946
Section 123, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	3,525	5,914,997	13,940
Section 85, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	116	4,488	2,005
Section 5, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890 ...	17	7,515	56
Section 10, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890 ...	1	548	5
<i>Mallee Lands Act 1896—</i>			
Pastoral Leases ...	3,442	8,674,778	16,500
Perpetual Leases ...	70	34,859	290
Agricultural Allotment Licences ...	52	17,552	877
Total ...	59,216	25,165,843	374,114

SECTION 20, LAND ACT 1869.

This section, the rights of which were preserved by section 2 of *The Land Act* 1884, and are continued by section 2 of the *Land Act* 1890, bestowed on licensees under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869 the right to acquire, on expiration of the term of their licences, the fee-simple of their selections, either by paying the balance of purchase money in one sum, or by deferred payments under lease.

The following Table shows the transactions during 1897:—

TABLE C.

Applications.		Grants Gazetted as Approved.	Leases Gazetted as Approved.	Purchase Completed.	Area Purchased.	Area Leased.	Balance of Purchase Money paid by Licensees.	Area Leased and afterwards Purchased.	Amount Paid by Lessees as Balance of Purchase money.
Lodged.	Dealt with.								
9	21*	1	20	1,475	279,879	3,826	£ s. d. Nil	279,879	47,565 10 0

* The surplus of applications *dealt with* over the applications lodged consists of applications *lodged* in previous years, but not dealt with.
NOTE.—The transactions of a like nature under section 11, *Land Act* 1878, are included in this Table.

Table D shows the number of applications under section 20 of *The Land Act* 1869 of holdings varying in extent from 80 acres and under to 320 acres, which were approved during 1897:—

TABLE D.

80 acres and under ...	...	...	...	...	7
Over 80 and under 160 ...	...	...	...	...	5
Over 160 and not exceeding 240 ...	...	...	...	...	1
Over 240 and not exceeding 320 ...	...	...	...	...	8
Total ...	...	...	...	...	21

NOTE.—This Table includes particulars of a like nature under section 11, *Land Act* 1878.

SECTION 31, LAND ACT 1869.

This section, the rights of which were preserved by section 2 of *The Land Act* 1884, and are continued by section 2 of the *Land Act* 1890, conferred on holders of licences, obtained under the repealed Acts of 1862 and 1865, to occupy lands for other than pastoral purposes, the right to acquire the fee-simple of the lands so held, credit being given in the purchase for all moneys paid by them as rent and survey fees.

In cases in which purchase has not been allowed on account of the auriferous character of the land, or of portions thereof being required or likely to be required for railways or other public purposes, such of the licensees whose payments represent an amount equivalent to the estimated value per acre of the land have continued in occupation at a nominal rental of One shilling per annum pending removal of objections or decision as to public requirements.

Table E shows the transactions during 1897:—

TABLE E.

Number of Applications.		Purchases Completed.	Area Purchased.	Balances of Purchase Money Received.	Survey Fees Allowed.
Received.	Approved.				
7	22*	22	Acres. 410	£ s. d. 69 15 0	£ s. d. 35 6 6

* The surplus of applications approved over the number received during the year consists of applications the previous objections to which have been withdrawn.

THE LAND ACT 1890.

Division 1, Part I.

Section 18 of this Act confers on licensees under section 49 of *The Land Act* 1869 the exclusive right of purchasing their holdings at a price to be determined by the Board of Land and Works. One hundred and seventy-nine applications, representing 3,114 acres, were approved during the year, and the sum of £291 15s. 9d. was received.

Division 3, Part I.—Agricultural and Grazing Lands.

Under this Division provision is made for the occupation of Crown lands for the combined purposes of grazing and agriculture.

Section 32 empowers the Governor in Council to grant leases of "Grazing Areas" for any term of years, provided that the term for which the land is so leased shall expire not later than fourteen years after the 29th December, 1884. Table F shows the extent of the operation of this section during each month of the year:—

TABLE F.

1897.	Number of Applications.		Area Leased.
	Received.	Approved.	
January	39	28	Acres. 7,055
February	46	25	7,969
March	49	21	5,938
April	32	25	6,580
May	60	17	5,022
June	59	13	3,133
July	49	44	11,086
August	80	—	—
September	60	29	8,860
October	56	26	7,199
November	58	16	2,733
December	50	18	7,924
Totals	638	262	73,499*

* The annual rent payable in respect of this area is £765 15s. 2d.

NOTE.—With respect to the applications received it should be noted that in many instances several applications are made for the same Grazing Area.

Sections 42 and 49 provide for the issue of licences for agricultural allotments not exceeding 320 acres in extent. Table G shows the transactions under these sections during the year:—

TABLE G.

Section.	Number of Applications.		Area Applied for.	Area Licensed.	Fees Payable Yearly.		
	Received.	Approved.			£	s.	d.
42—Residence	1,028	644	106,580	53,984	2,699	4	0
49—Non-residence	38	20	2,681	808	80	16	0

Section 44 enables licensees under section 42 of this Division of the Land Act to acquire, on expiration of the term of their licences, the fee-simple of their licensed holdings either by paying the balance of purchase money in one sum or by deferred payments under lease. The following Table shows the transactions during 1897:—

TABLE H.

Applications.		Grants Gazetted as Approved.	Leases Gazetted as Approved.	Purchase Completed.	Area Purchased.	Area Leased.	Balance of Purchase Money paid by Licensees.	Area Leased and afterwards Purchased.	Amount Paid by Lessees as Balance of Purchase money.				
Lodge J.	Dealt with.								£	s.	d.		
328	337*	10	327	16	1,607	55,946	348	12	0	1,029	950	10	6

* The surplus of applications approved over the number received during the year consists of applications received during the previous year but not then dealt with.

NOTE.—This Table includes particulars of a like nature under section 50, Land Act 1890.

Table I shows the number of Crown Grants under section 44 of the Land Act 1890 of Licensed holdings varying in extent from 80 acres and under to 320 acres, the issue of which was approved during 1897:—

TABLE I.

80 acres and under ...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Over 80 and under 160 ...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Over 160 and not exceeding 240 ...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Over 240 and not exceeding 320 ...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Total ...	...	...	...	...	...	10

NOTE.—This Table includes particulars of a like nature under section 50, Land Act 1890.

Under section 56 a lessee of an agricultural allotment of land under *The Land Acts* 1884–1890, or of an allotment under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869 or any Act amending such Part, can give an “order” for the delivery of the Crown grant to any person who has made an advance of money on the security of a lease, the mortgage being transferred from the lease to the Crown grant. Fifty-eight orders, representing in all an area of 13,590 acres, were registered during the year.

Section 57 empowers licensees under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869, and licensees of agricultural allotments under *The Land Acts* 1884–1890, to register liens at the Crown Lands Office upon the security of the permanent improvements effected on their holdings up to half the value of such improvements. Thirty-three liens, comprising an area of 4,571 acres, were registered during the year, representing, as advanced on this kind of security, £3,366 14s.

Division 4, Part I.—Auriferous Lands.

This Division provides for the occupation of Crown lands classed “Auriferous.” Under section 65, licences for the purpose of residence or cultivation may be issued for lands not included within any city or town, and not exceeding 20 acres in extent. Under section 67, licences may be issued for grazing purposes only up to 1,000 acres.

No alienation of auriferous land can take place; therefore, all occupiers of the public estate under this Division are in the relation of annual tenants, and their occupation is subordinate to that for mining purposes.

The transactions during the year under sections 65 and 67 are shown in Table J :—

TABLE J.

Section 65.			Section 67.		
Number of Applications.		Area Licensed.	Number of Applications.		Area Licensed.
Received.	Approved.		Received.	Approved.	
242	110	Acres. 1,895	120	33	Acres. 8,470

WORKED-OUT AURIFEROUS LANDS.

By the 22nd section of the *Land Act* 1891 it is provided that whenever it appears to be no longer profitable to mine for gold within 50 feet of the surface of any unalienated lands of the Crown, such lands may, after inquiry by a warden, be declared to be "worked-out auriferous lands," and licensed in allotments not exceeding five (5) acres in extent. Every licensee who shall have complied with the conditions of his licence will, at the expiration of seven (7) years, be entitled to the fee-simple of the land at a price to be fixed by the Board of Land and Works, and the amount paid as annual licence-fees will be deducted from the purchase money payable.

During the year 12 applications under this section were received whilst 4 applications were approved for 20 acres.

PROGRESS OF SELECTION.

Table K shows the progress of selection under sections 32, 42, 49, and 65 of *The Land Acts* 1884-1890 :—

TABLE K.—LAND SELECTED.

Year.	Under Section 32.		Under Section 42.		Under Section 49.		Under Section 65.	
	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.
1886	1,493	591,138	...	...	...	...	48	937
1887	3,621	1,328,169	83	11,310	...	...	198	3,742
1888	3,813	1,545,612	296	50,758	...	...	421	7,936
1889	2,348	925,939	418	65,862	41	5,383	627	11,578
1890	1,612	606,185	518	94,898	33	4,409	1,057	19,154
1891	1,288	479,667	539	95,634	37	3,597	560	10,220
1892	949	347,201	538	84,924	30	3,799	524	9,530
1893	584	211,401	845	115,611	25	2,403	597	11,002
1894	636	189,874	1,014	112,607	99	4,635	646	11,474
1895	374	91,227	771	72,090	39	1,896	305	5,376
1896	251	67,275	796	43,284	34	1,272	215	3,730
1897	262	73,499	653	54,115	20	808	110	1,895

NOTE.—This Table includes selections under section 17, *Land Act* 1891

Reports have been obtained from Land Officers as to the proceedings of selectors and the progress of settlement during the year in their respective districts, and a digest of their reports is given in Appendix A.

LICENCES AND LEASES REVOKED OR DECLARED EXPIRED.

The following Table shows the number of licences and leases, under the sections specified, revoked or declared expired during 1897 :—

TABLE L.

	No.	Extent.
		Acres.
Licences—Section 19, <i>Land Acts</i> 1869–1878	16	3,090
Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	9	144
Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878	1	315
Section 42, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	183	20,948
Section 49, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	32	1,808
Section 65, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	105	1,936
Section 67, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	94	33,697
Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878	44	8,070
Section 21, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	7	142,550
Section 32, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	514	203,399

NOTE.—The Treasury profited to the extent of £4,684 9s. 11d. through revocations and forfeitures during 1897.

Table M sets forth the grounds on which the licences and leases referred to in Table L were revoked or declared expired, and the lands resumed by the Crown :—

TABLE M.

	At Licensee's or Lessee's request.	Non-payment of Rent.	Non-compliance with Conditions.	Declared Expired.	Land Sold.	Land Abandoned.	Leases Surrendered.	Total.
Licences—Section 19, <i>Land Acts</i> 1869–1878 ... ..	...	2	...	13	1	...	...	16
Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869 ... ..	...	6	...	1	1	1	...	9
Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878 ... ..	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1
Section 42, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	12	121	33	11	2	4	...	183
Section 49, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	23	3	6	...	...	...	...	32
Section 65, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	32	64	6	...	...	3	...	105
Section 67, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	13	60	1	18	...	2	...	94
Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Acts</i> 1869–1878 ... ..	...	39	2	...	...	3	...	44
Section 21, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	4	3	...	...	...	...	...	7
Section 32, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	8	280	52	...	...	14	160	514
Totals	92	579	100	43	4	27	160	1,005

II.—SALES OF CROWN LANDS BY AUCTION.

The principle of deferred payments was introduced in Part V. of *The Land Act* 1884, now Division 5, Part I., *Land Act* 1890, one-fourth of the price bid being paid at the time of sale, and the remaining three-fourths spread over three years, payable quarterly, in instalments of equal amounts, bearing interest at the rate of £6 per centum per annum.

During the year, 4,095 acres were sold for £16,182. Interest to the amount of £1,031 14s. 9d. was paid with the instalments of purchase money as they fell due.

The area of country lands sold at auction during 1897 was 2,677 acres, of which about 2,143 acres were improved and subject to valuation, and 534 acres unimproved.

Table N shows the proceeds of sales by auction of country lands during each year from 1892. Similar particulars for each year from the commencement of *The Land Act* 1869 will be found in the departmental Report for 1891 :—

TABLE N.

Year.	Area Sold.			Amount Realized.	Average per Acre.
	A.	R.	P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1892—6 months ending 30th June—					
Unimproved land	1,297	1	36	3,045 17 10	2 6 11
Improved „	2,738	0	24	3,265 9 6	1 3 10
„ 6 months ending 31st December—					
Unimproved land	886	0	4	1,725 3 6	1 18 10
Improved „	2,759	1	31	3,167 0 10	1 2 11
1893—6 months ending 30th June—					
Unimproved land	923	2	24	1,826 14 0	1 19 6
Improved „	1,426	1	26	2,017 13 8	1 8 3
„ 6 months ending 31st December—					
Unimproved land	625	2	35	880 18 9	1 8 2
Improved „	472	0	38	1,264 18 4	2 13 6

TABLE N—continued.

Year.	Area Sold.		Amount Realized			Average per Acre.		
	A.	R. P.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1894—6 months ending 30th June—								
Unimproved land	1,648	0 0	2,472	0 0		1	10	0
Improved	920	0 0	1,058	0 0		1	3	0
„ 6 months ending 31st December—								
Unimproved land	1,032	0 0	1,651	0 0		1	12	0
Improved	1,137	0 0	1,279	2 6		1	2	6
1895—6 months ending 30th June—								
Unimproved land	449	3 14	1,025	12 8		2	5	7
Improved	1,000	0 39	4,375	12 8		4	7	6
„ 6 months ending 31st December—								
Unimproved land	280	3 2	1,288	9 9		4	11	9
Improved	172	3 31	623	14 6		3	12	1
1896—6 months ending 30th June—								
Country unimproved	410	0 26	1,205	2 3		2	18	9
Country improved	484	1 25	772	15 3		1	12	1
„ 6 months ending 31st December—								
Country unimproved	127	2 33	364	5 8		2	17	4
Country improved	448	2 14	631	7 6		1	8	2
1897—6 months ending 30th June—								
Country unimproved	391	1 10	1,143	3 5		2	18	6
Country improved	997	1 34	2,606	4 10		2	12	3
„ 6 months ending 31st December—								
Country unimproved	142	0 38	439	19 3		3	2	0
Country improved	1,145	1 23	1,559	0 5		1	7	3

Table O shows the alienation by auction, during 1897, of town and country lands, and the amounts derived therefrom :—

TABLE O.

Town Lands.			Country Lands.		
Area.	Amount.	Average per Acre.	Area.	Amount.	Average per Acre.
A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1,417 3 13	10,433 4 9	7 7 3	2,676 3 25	5,748 7 11	2 2 11

III.—PASTORAL OCCUPATION.

The Land Act 1884 came into operation on the 29th December, 1884, and the occupation of runs, under pastoral licence, under *The Land Act* 1869 ceased on the 31st December, 1884.

Section 3 of *The Land Acts* 1884–1890 provided, however, for the continuation, under grazing licence, of the occupation of such runs until the lands comprised therein were required for the purposes of the Act.

One area, comprising 3,260 acres, formerly held as a pastoral run under *The Land Act* 1869, was forfeited during the year.

The sum of £18,288 16s. 6d. was received during the year for grazing licences, under sections 3, 67, and 123 of *The Land Acts* 1884–1890.

The area of runs formerly held under pastoral licence under *The Land Act* 1869, and occupation of which was renewed under the provisions of section 3 of *The Land Act* 1884, was on the 31st December, 1897, 184,282 acres.

The amount of pastoral rent paid for each year since 1891 is shown in Table P below. Similar information for each year from the passing of *The Land Act* 1869 up to the end of 1891 is shown in the departmental Report for 1891.

TABLE P.

	£	s.	d.
1892
1893
1894
1895
1896
1897

Seven (7) leases, comprising 142,550 acres, were declared void during the year. For further particulars, reference is invited to Table Q.

TABLE Q.

PASTORAL ALLOTMENTS—SECTION 21, LAND ACT 1884-1890.

Number of applications received from 1st January to 31st December, 1897	...	11
Number of applications approved from 1st January to 31st December, 1897	...	11
Area leased	...	129,489 acres
Area available on 1st January, 1898, for application	...	1,849,569 „

THE LAND ACT 1891.

This Act came into operation on the 29th December, 1891.

During the current year many applicants for land have availed themselves of the provision made in section 7, whereby grazing areas of 320 acres and less in extent may be at once licensed by the Governor in Council.

Section 16 provides that areas not exceeding 20 acres and not contiguous or adjacent to Crown lands and areas not exceeding 3 acres required for church sites or for any charitable purposes may be sold. Under the provisions of this section 66 cases were approved, dealing with an area of 1,326 acres.

Section 17 provides for the application of the "betterment" principle wherever land has been or may be enhanced in value by railways or other public works. Since October, 1893, 87 licences have been issued for an area of 998 acres, the rental of which has been increased in accordance with this clause.

MALLEE.

The *Land Act* 1890, Part II., and the *Mallee Lands Act* 1896 deal with about 11,166,793 acres of land, exclusive of Mildura (250,000 acres), in the north-western district of the colony. In addition to the area above, 155,207 acres have been laid off as roads through the mallee to facilitate travelling in this portion of the colony. The transactions for the year are as under:—

Leases issued	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	1	Area, 126,720 acres
				{	Allotments	...	19	„ 52,255 „
				{	Perpetual leases	...	64	„ 31,457 „
Licences issued	...	...	...	{	Agricultural allotments	...	16	„ 7,073 „
				{	Garden, Store, &c.	...	39	„ ... „
Leases cancelled for non-payment of rent and for other causes	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	2	„ 82,276 acres
				{	Allotments	...	43	„ 38,220 „
Licences cancelled	...	...	...			...	Nil	
Leases transferred	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	—	„ — „
				{	Allotments	{ Whole	256	„ 170,189 „
						{ Portion	64	„ 43,546 „
				{	Perpetual leases	...	1	„ 320 „
				{	Agricultural allotments	...	1	„ 320 „
Land subdivided and made available	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	2	„ 82,226 „
				{	Allotments, parts of	...	5	„ 28,632 „
Applications received	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	...	...
				{	Allotments	...	...	23
Applications granted	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	...	2
				{	Allotments	...	...	20
Applications refused	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	...	Nil
				{	Allotments	...	...	3
Applications received for agricultural allotments	...	...	...	{	Perpetual leases	...	...	911
				{	Licences	...	...	187
Number granted	...	...	...	{	Perpetual leases	...	232	Refused 679
				{	Licences	...	33	„ 154
Applications abandoned	...	...	...	{	Blocks	...	...	1
				{	Allotments	...	...	3
				{	Perpetual leases (agricultural allotments)	...	...	17
				{	Licences	...	...	1
Number of Local Land Boards held	...	...	...			...	...	37
Cases dealt with	...	...	...			...	...	1,121

On 1st January, 1898, the areas available and held under lease were as follow:—

Available for application	...	...	{	Blocks	...	15	Area 1,405,784 acres
			{	Allotments	...	66	„ 389,504 „
			{	Agricultural allotments	...	445	„ 253,970 „
Held under lease	...	...	{	Blocks	...	65	„ 5,498,412 „
			{	Allotments	...	3,377	„ 3,176,366 „
			{	Perpetual leases	...	70	„ 34,859 „
Agricultural allotments held	...	...	{	Licences	...	52	„ 17,552 „

NOTE.—Three blocks containing 390,346 acres are permanently reserved for public purposes, and consequently are not included in lands leased or available.

The revenue derived was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Rents on blocks	3,418	2	8
Rents on allotments	13,116	4	10
Rents on agricultural allotments	538	13	4
Survey fees on blocks	61	0	0
Survey fees on allotments	20	0	0
Valuation of improvements on allotments	111	13	7
Interest on valuation of improvements on blocks	73	10	0
Fencing rate	765	17	8
Fees—			
Application	£1,123	0	0
Lease	75	0	0
Transfer	320	0	0
Mortgage	300	0	0
Licence	10	0	0
		1,828	0 0
Total	£19,933	2	1

VERMIN RATES.

Vermin rates, proclaimed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of local committees elected or appointed for the destruction of vermin, were collected and remitted to local committees as under:—

	£	s.	d.
Northern Vermin Board	494	18	0
North-Eastern Vermin Board	173	8	6
North-Western „ „	49	3	10
Eastern „ „	461	19	8
Western „ „	183	4	2
Middle „ „	257	13	8
Warracknabeal „ „	138	18	7
Total	£1,759	6	5

Selection in the Mallee has undoubtedly been greatly retarded by the continued drought. During the year, however, the Department resumed possession of Mallee blocks 53B and 54A containing 82,226 acres, held under lease by Messrs. Adams and Kersel. Portions of allotments 162, 162A, 163, 164, and 165, known as “Ultima,” containing 28,632 acres and held under lease by Mr. James O'Connor, were also resumed. The whole of this resumed area was made available in 138 and 48 agricultural allotments respectively. For the former 890 applications were received, and for the latter 120, thus showing that there is still a demand for good Mallee land. It is the intention of the Department to continue the practice of resuming suitable areas as required.

IV.—MISCELLANEOUS.

SECTION 76 OF THE LAND ACT 1890.

In this section provision is made for the alienation of portions of land not more than 10 acres in extent at a price to be fixed by appraisalment. During the year 318 acres were sold in this manner, realizing the amount of £763 5s. 1d.

SECTION 102, LAND ACT 1890.—COMMONS.

Additional commonage, to the extent of 37 acres, was proclaimed during the year. Commons were diminished by proclamation to the extent of 2,213 acres.

Fifteen (15) commons which were found to be no longer required were abolished.

SECTION 117, LAND ACT 1890.—PENALTIES.

The amount of penalties, at the rate of Five shillings per acre, received during 1897 for non-improvement by lessees under the Land Acts of 1862 and 1865, and interest on rents in arrear, was £290 14s. 11d.

SECTION 128, LAND ACT 1890.—PUBLIC HEARINGS.

During the year 1897, 395 sittings of Local Land Boards were held, at which applications for land and other business, comprising in all 4,739 subjects (including applications for mallee lands), were dealt with.

Four hundred and sixty-seven cases were publicly heard by the Minister during the year.

THE WATTLES ACT 1890.

The Wattles Act was passed with a view to afford special facilities for the cultivation of the various species of acacia which have a commercial value, but its provisions were not largely availed of during the year. During the twelve months one (1) application for lease, embracing an area of 500 acres, was received. No applications under this Act were granted during the year.

CROWN GRANTS AND LEASES.

Two thousand eight hundred and forty-three Crown grants and 916 leases were prepared and passed from the head office during 1897.

FEES AND CERTIFICATES.

The sum of £13,531 10s. 4d. was received during the year for certificates, transfers, and registrations under *The Land Acts* 1884–1890, and for miscellaneous fees, including those payable for grants, leases, and survey charges.

ARREARS OF RENT.

The arrears due by Crown lessees and licensees amounted on 31st December, 1897, to £754,649.

REVENUE.

Table R shows in detail the revenue contributed by the Department to the Treasury during 1897:—

TABLE R.

<i>Temporary Occupation.</i>				£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Pastoral occupation and grazing licences (including fencing rate, £765 17s. 8d.)	...	...	...	22,517	10 11		
Rents under section 32, <i>Land Act</i> 1884–1890	...	...	...	28,166	14 4		
" " 65, " "	...	...	...	3,323	2 5		
Rents under sections 45 and 47, <i>Land Act</i> 1869, Part VIII., <i>Land Act</i> 1884, and Division 8 of Part I., <i>Land Act</i> 1890	...	...	...	*22,363	12 6		
						76,371	0 2
<i>Alienated in Fee simple by Auction and Deferred Payments, also Rents received towards Alienation.</i>							
			A. R. P.				
By auction—Town land	...	...	1,417 3 13	†17,727	0 9		
" Country land	2,676 3 25				
Sundry payments on account of purchase in fee simple	...	...	...	2,082	10 8		
By purchase under section 31, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	...	...	...		69 15 0		
" " 18, <i>Land Act</i> 1890	...	...	...		291 15 9		
Rents under section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	...	...	...		839 1 6		
" " 19, " , as amended by <i>Land Act</i> 1878, section 3, <i>Land Act</i> 1880, section 42, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890, and section 22, <i>Land Act</i> 1891	...	...	...		19,564 0 0		
" " 11, " 1878, and section 49, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	...	...	...		1,139 10 0		
Rents and balances of purchase money under section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869, section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878, section 3, <i>Land Acts Amendment Act</i> 1880, section 4, <i>Land Act</i> 1880, and section 44, <i>Land Act</i> 1890	...	...	...	260,282	10 6		
Rents under sections 5 and 20, <i>Settlement on Lands Act</i> 1893	...	...	...		944 3 1		
						302,940	7 3
Penalties under section 117, <i>Land Act</i> 1890, and interest	...	...	...		290 14 11		
Fees for grants, leases, licences, surveys, &c.	...	...	...		13,531 10 4		
Sale of plans and sundries	...	...	...		1,488 8 9		
						15,310	14 0
Total Revenue	...	...	...	...	...	394,622	1 5

* This amount includes arrears of rent due in previous years.

† This item includes interest £1,031 14s. 9d., and instalments on account of some sales prior to 1894.

VERMIN DESTRUCTION.

The following is the expenditure under this head for year ending 31st December, 1897:—

Subsidy paid shire councils, &c., for destruction of dogs and foxes	...	...	...	...	...	£1,322	9	10
Wages of men working Crown lands, material, &c.	...	...	...	...	...	7,325	8	2
Salaries of inspectors and allowances to police rabbit inspectors	...	...	...	...	...	4,492	19	0
Total	...	...	...	...	...	£13,140	17	0

SECTION 36 OF THE MINES ACT 1890.

In this section provision is made whereby the holders of registered Miners' Rights may purchase the area occupied by them at a price to be fixed by appraisement.

During the year 96 persons exercised the right of purchase thus conferred, the area purchased being 49a. 2r. 33p., whilst the amount realized was £1,314 7s. 7d.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. F. MORKHAM,

Secretary for Lands.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

REPORT ON WORKING OF LAND ACT FOR THE YEAR 1897.

District.	Applications Approved.										Remarks.	
	Land Act 1890.											
	Section 32.		Section 42.		Section 65.		Section 42.		Section 65.			Report as to use made of Land leased under Section 32 Land Acts 1884-1890.
No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.			
Alexandra	6	882	1	75	...	...	Satisfactory	...	...	Used principally for grazing ...	Report as to Agriculture and New Rural Industries. Good yield of oats and wheat. A large increase of area under wheat during 1897. Grazing fair, but has suffered through drought; no loss of stock, however, in this district owing to it.	
Ararat	4	1,210	4	643	6	108	Satisfactory	...	...	Used for grazing. A number of 32nd holdings will be probably selected under section 42 before the leases expire at the end of the year 1898	No new industries. Agricultural returns fairly good, the average yields per acre were:—Wheat, 2½ bags; oats, 5 bags; hay, 1½ tons. The fruit harvest has been a failure, owing to scarcity of rain and depredations of birds driven in from the ranges by the bush fires	Several dairy herds started in connexion with the butter factories have been seriously affected by the continuous drought, and some of the creameries and factories have had to suspend operations on account of the scarcity of milk.
Stawell	4	1,527	1	101	5	99						
Bairnsdale	30	10,236	41	4,305	...	...	Licenseses under section 42 have, on the whole, made good use of the land during the year, by grazing and dairying	...	...	Land leased under section 32 principally used for grazing	Early crops good, late crops partial failure for want of rain. Maize and hops looking well, notwithstanding dry weather. No new rural industry started during the year	Grass and water plentiful up to the beginning of December, when drought set in. Good prices ruling for stock and produce.
Ballarat	5	566	4	183	30	377	Satisfactory	...	...	Grazing ...	The agricultural portions of this district were as usual devoted to the growth of oats and wheat (for hay principally), of which there was a fair average yield. The potato crop was (owing to the unfavorable season), below the average, both in quality and quantity. No new rural industries to report. Dairying operations have extended during the year	Licenseses under section 67 have expressed the opinion that greater satisfaction would be felt if the lands so held were brought under section 32; although forming portion of the auriferous area little or no use is made of the lands for mining purposes.

Beechworth	6	615	23	2,707	10	200	Satisfactory	..	Land is being used for grazing purposes	The average yield of wheat in this district was satisfactory. The fruit crop was not so abundant as the previous year. The grape crop was not so good, owing to the limited rainfall. Tobacco was almost a total failure, as also were hops. One farmer had 12 acres of hops which were attacked by red spider and had to be burned off.
Benalla	10	2,908	35	1,366	..	..	Satisfactory	..	Lessees under section 32 have used their holdings for grazing purposes. Conditions of fencing and destroying vermin have been well complied with	The yield of wheat in this district was very good. The tobacco crop was almost a total failure in the King River district, the plants having been attacked with blue mould.
Bendigo	..	..	32	1,840	6	120	Highly satisfactory	..	Chiefly for grazing purposes	In the Bendigo district farmers have every reason to be satisfied with the excellence of the returns obtained. In those localities where settlers have been favoured with a fair share of rain the yields have exceeded the most sanguine expectations, averaging for wheat, from 12 to 21 and as high as 32 bushels; oats, 20 to 38, and barley, 20 bushels to the acre. Hay-growing is a feature in the county of Bendigo, and the returns obtained from that source have been highly gratifying. Reports are to hand that orchards and vineyards throughout the district are progressing satisfactorily
Camperdown and Warrnambool	..	..	..	..	..	..	Satisfactory	..	The principal use the land is put to is grazing for dairying purposes	No new local industries. Owing to the dry season, which is a rarity in this district (it being well supplied with springs), the grass was never more plentiful or the season more remunerative until the advent of the bush fires
Castlemaine	6	1,800	33	490	13	260	Satisfactory	..	Where lessees are precluded, through mining objections, from selecting under section 42 of the Act some attempts have been made to turn the land to further advantage, but, in the majority of instances, the 32nd blocks are only used for grazing purposes	Large areas of what were only abandoned diggings a few years ago have been selected under garden licences and miners' rights in different localities throughout the district, and although the soil appears to have been of a very inferior character, these lands have been reclaimed and are now transformed into orchards and vineyards, furnishing convincing proof of what perseverance and industry may achieve.

APPENDIX A—continued.

District.	Applications Approved.						Report as to the Working of Land Act 1884-1890 on Holdings under Sections 42 and 65.	Report as to use made of Land leased under Section 32 Land Acts 1884-1890.	Remarks.
	Land Act 1890.								
	Section 32.	Section 42.		Section 65.					
No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.				
Echuca and Kerang ...	4	601	73	5,153	...	...	Very satisfactory ...	The few holdings which are leased under this section of the Land Acts are principally used for grazing only.	Although a considerable portion of this district has been subjected to the fullest severity of an exceptionally dry season, the returns have proved entirely satisfactory, all things considered, the yields from wheat crops varying from 3 to 8 bushels to the acre. Of course there have been failures, but they are few, and the excellent results from irrigated lands helped to modify the losses from other localities. Near the Murray, and between Swan Hill and Kerang, certain irrigated areas have yielded abundantly, 3 tons of hay, and 25 bushels of wheat to the acre having been harvested. The cultivation of amber cane, which insures a supply of feed for stock during a dry winter, is now a noticeable feature, very healthy crops being visible along the course of the various irrigation drains. The water supply has caused endless expense and trouble during past summers, but notwithstanding such severe drawbacks, there is evidence of a desire on the part of farmers to increase the area of cultivation, it being a firm belief that the dawn of a more prosperous period is at hand. There are no new industries to note in consequence of the last very dry season, and the consequent failure of the grain crops. Very little land has been tilled this year, the country having been allowed to run to grass, which is considered to give a safer and more reliable return for the expenditure incurred.
Geebung ...	37	8,720	40	7,457	...	...	Holdings under these sections are still continuing to work their selections to the best advantage, and are progressing as satisfactorily as they possibly can under the immense drawback of bad roads and difficulty of access to markets	Dairying is still the main industry relied upon by the selectors for a return for the labour and money expended in clearing and preparing their land for other uses. Cultivation is almost entirely confined to the river and creek flats. The majority of holders under section 32 are anxious to get them converted into 42nd section holdings	Principally grazing ...
Hamilton ...	17	6,272	9	868	...	...	Satisfactory ...	No new industries. Most of the land in this district is used for grazing. Where cultivation has taken place good returns have been realized, but the exceptionally dry season will greatly interfere with successful cultivation. Some good crops have been grown on Condah Swamp.	

Horsham ...	26	6,740	33	2,240	...	Satisfactory ...	Used for grazing purposes	...	A good demand continues for grazing areas under yearly licences.
Melbourne	60	10,321	210	10,983	13	260	Grazing chiefly	...	The area under cultivation was larger than usual, but owing to the third successive dry season the yield on the plains has not been upto the average; whilst on all the land south and west of the Wimmera River towards the South Australian border the yield has been one of the best for many years past. Throughout the district a large number of creameries have been established.
Omco	6	580	8	640	4	58	The land has been chiefly used for grazing purposes	...	The wheat and oat crops will not be good, owing to the light rainfall during the latter months of the year. The milk factory on the Plains has changed hands, and under the present management promises to be successful. The season has been unfavorable owing to the scarcity of grass
St. Arnaud	7	1,404	41	4,305	15	260	Grazing	...	The area under crop is considered to exceed that of last year, and the yield is tolerably satisfactory in most parts of the district.
Sale	30	16,459	49	7,928	5	100	Land held under section 32 used for grazing mostly	...	Plenty of grass and water up to beginning of December, when very dry weather set in. All stock and produce brought splendid prices. Very few applications under section 65 dealt with.
Seymour	10	2,658	16	2,831	3	53	Used for grazing	...	Scarcity of grass and water owing to long-continued dry weather. Wheat and oat crops yielded a fair average; an increased area of wheat sown anticipating higher prices.
Warracknabeal	Included in Horsham District						Land principally used for grazing	...	A large tract of country was sown with wheat, but owing to the dry season, the crops in Karkaroo have been almost a total failure, although in Borung they turned out fairly well. An attempt is being made to grow flax in one part of the district, and the grower is very sanguine as to the ultimate result of his efforts, as he has already obtained a fair specimen crop.

APPENDIX B.

PROFESSIONAL DIVISION.

I have the honour to submit the following report relating to the work performed during the year ended the 31st December, 1897 :—

SURVEY BRANCH.

1. The surveys required in connexion with the selection and occupation of land continue to be effected by authorized surveyors, who have been assigned districts, the fees received by them being paid through the Treasury, and fixed by regulation.

The officers in charge of the Government survey parties are expected to make reports as to the accuracy or otherwise of the authorized surveyors' work with which, in their own operations, they come into contact.

This at present forms the only check on the ordinary selection surveys.

2. During the year, 139,588 acres of resumed land in the Mallee country have been subdivided with a view to selection. These subdivisional surveys are effected by experienced surveyors, after suitable designs, prepared from preliminary feature surveys, have been approved; sites for water channels and storage, roads, and timber reserves being provided for in the designs. Mallee subdivisional surveys, upon their completion and before the allotments are made available for selection, are inspected by a departmental officer.

3. The permanent staff of field officers at the end of the year consisted of seven assistant surveyors.

4. Expenditure on departmental surveys for the year has been as follows :—

Subdivision of land for sale	...	...	...	...	£525	11	2
Main road surveys	...	...	...	...	1,652	13	4
Resurveys for sale, selection, &c.	...	...	...	...	2,053	2	2
Check surveys and connecting lines	...	...	...	...	435	5	4
Feature surveys	...	...	...	...	770	17	3
Subdivision of land for selection	...	...	...	...	380	2	8
Village settlement surveys	...	...	...	...	30	19	0
Surveys of sites for public purposes	...	...	...	...	121	0	8
Standard lines, boundaries, engineering surveys, &c.	...	...	...	...	385	8	7
					£6,355	0	2

5. The amount received as instalments on balances due on grazing area surveys, together with survey fees collected with first rents on surveyed allotments, was £2,132.

6. The Department has also to be credited with the following amounts for printing, plan work, &c., performed for other Departments :—

Patents Office	...	...	...	...	£29	10	0
Victorian Water Supply	...	...	...	...	7	10	0
Customs (Ports and Harbors)	...	...	...	...	21	10	6
Titles Office	...	...	...	...	7	0	0
Council Agricultural Colleges	...	...	...	...	1	12	6
Agricultural Department	...	...	...	...	1	12	6
Public Health Department	...	...	...	...	1	2	6
Defence	...	...	...	...	3	10	6
Mines Department	...	...	...	...	95	15	0
Public Works	...	...	...	...	2	15	0
Agricultural Department	...	...	...	...	1	10	0

7. The amount paid into Trust Fund, Survey Fees Account, by selectors and others as survey fees for the year 1897 was £5,757 0s. 11d., while the amount withdrawn therefrom for payments to surveyors refunds to applicants, and transfers to revenue was £3,712 5s. 7d.

COMPUTING AND ADJUSTING BRANCH.

8. During the year 414 plans were examined and checked (varying from 1 to 100 lots), of which 54 were returned to surveyors for amendment of discrepancies. The field notes are filed and are produced when required for reference.

In the adjusting room 1,635 cases of discrepancies have been investigated, and 93 certificates of amendment prepared and issued involving altogether the preparation of about 1,950 plans and diagrams.

The staff consists of one officer in charge and six assistants.

DRAUGHTING AND LITHOGRAPHY BRANCH.

9. During the year, owing to the large amount of miscellaneous work which this branch was called upon to perform, and to the limited number comprising the staff, little progress was made in the work of compilation or ordinary plan construction.

In connexion with the closed roads question there were over 1,700 plans prepared.

The county maps were posted up, and the unalienated lands shown thereon, in view of the introduction of a new Land Bill.

Requisitions from other Departments, as well as from municipal councils and other public bodies, for plans, tracings, &c., have received due attention.

Technical descriptions for the gazettal of reserves, roads, &c., and for other purposes have been prepared.

The amount of work disposed of in the lithographic and printing branches has been large. The demand for parish plans on the 40-chains scale has necessitated the posting-up and re-issue of a large number.

The staff, including lithographers, printers, and plan-mounter, numbers 23.

ENGRAVING.

10. The plate of the Geodetic Survey of Victoria, "S," North Division, is in hand. Plates "H" and "L" north, are completed ready for printing. Additions have been made to the two-sheet Map of the Colony of Victoria.

The staff is limited to one engraver.

PHOTOGRAPHY.

11. Transfers have been prepared for departmental plans, and, when required, for other branches of the service. A large amount of work for the Patents Office was also completed.

Staff consists of two—photographer and assistant.

S. K. VICKERY, C.E., F.R.G.S.,
Surveyor-General.

APPENDIX C.

FOREST BRANCH.

The most important event of the year was the appointment of a Royal Commission to consider the present state of Victorian forests, to take evidence relating to forestry, to visit and inspect timbered areas all over the colony, and report to the Honorable the Minister of Lands as to what steps should be taken to bring about a better system of conservation and management. It is to be regretted that this important step was not taken in hand years ago, before many of our best-timbered areas were destroyed by the selector and village settler.

In May, Messrs. Vickery and Blackburne (Surveyor-General and Inspector of Forests respectively), who had been deputed by the Honorable the Minister of Lands to inspect and report upon forest areas in the colony suitable for permanent reservation, completed what proved a long and difficult task.

They submitted report and plans, which are now before the Forest Commission, showing as proposed *permanent* reserves a total area of nearly four and a half million acres of undoubtedly the best timbered lands in Victoria, although generally unsuited for settlement.

CUTTING MINING PROPS IN STATE FORESTS UNDER ROYALTY PERMITS.

The revenue for the year derived from royalty rates on mining props obtained from our forests, principally by thinning out the surplus growth, amounted to £1,015. This sum is small, and out of all proportion to what *should* be collected if a fair rate were charged for forest produce.

If the State, however, considers it advisable to subsidize mining in Victoria by selling the companies timber at rates that cannot pay, I presume it is my duty to supply the timber at such rates, and by judicious conservation to endeavour to keep up the supply.

When royalty rates were first introduced some years ago, the then new system was strenuously opposed by some of the most influential mining men. We were accused of hampering mining enterprise, &c., &c., and raising the price of timber, thereby interfering unduly with, and to the detriment of, our most important and natural industry.

I am glad to say, however, that no bad results have followed the cutting of mining props under a rational system. Forester Ingle, of Beechworth, in an exhaustive report recently forwarded to me, states—" . . . The royalty from mining timber for my district is more than £520 for the year 1897. The mine officials now work amicably with us, and are always courteous and willing to give us any information required. The antagonism displayed during the first year or two against the royalty system has died out, the fear then expressed that it would increase the price of timber having proved unfounded. The companies are now procuring supplies *20 per cent. cheaper* than before the royalty rates were imposed. I venture to say that, if *indiscriminate* cutting had been allowed to continue in force, the Chiltern country would have been denuded of prop timber before now; cutters would have felled the handiest timber to the mines, and, *of course*, would have destroyed long saplings for one prop. *Now* it is to their own advantage to preserve such trees, *and they do it.*"

In the various other mining districts of the colony any friction caused by the introduction of the royalty system has long since disappeared. It is, however, a matter for grave consideration—as mentioned in my last year's report—whether the immense demand for mining props can be met without endangering the prospects of a permanent crop of timber. I fear it cannot. During the last five years the props cut in the Maryborough district, if laid end to end, would reach a distance of 800 miles.

Many excellent suggestions are embodied in the foresters' annual reports for the year. They are nearly all unanimous in recommending the continuance of forest thinning, especially in the redgum areas on the Murray and Goulburn Rivers, and the valuable young ironbark forests now to be found in so many parts

of the colony, and upon which our national railway system will have to depend almost exclusively for suitable supplies of sleepers. Money expended in forest thinning is, in my opinion, money well laid out. In addition to giving temporary employment, and thereby relieving our congested labour market, the removal, under trained supervision, of all stunted and surplus growth has a remarkably beneficial effect upon forests of young indigenous timber.

Another result of judicious thinning is that the danger from bush fires is reduced to a minimum. My views on these matters, however, have been so frequently expressed that I need not recapitulate them here.

It has been proposed during the year that certain areas in important forests, where the matured timber has been removed—notably Wombat and Mount Cole—should be absolutely closed for the cutting of live timber for a term of years, in order that the young timber may be the better protected. This matter is now under consideration, and the adoption of the proposal I strongly recommend.

With the sanction of the Honorable the Minister, an experiment will shortly be made by the introduction of royalty charges on all kinds of forest produce in the Heathcote and Rushworth districts. This system, if satisfactory, can ultimately be made sufficiently embracive to take in the whole colony.

REVENUE.

The forest revenue for the year amounted to £7,179, being an increase of £1,438 over that of 1896. With the adoption, as far as possible, of royalty charges, this marked improvement may be looked upon as likely to prove permanent, and I think it is fair to hope for an expanding revenue every year. The details of the revenue for the year are given below :—

FOREST REVENUE FOR THE YEAR 1897.

	£	s.	d.
Royalty on redgum timber	1,426	0	1
Royalty on railway sleepers	559	5	5
Thinning areas, royalty on mining props	£1,151	7	8
Thinning areas at per acre and ton	290	14	9
	<hr/>		
	1,442	2	5
Royalty on box, ironbarks, &c., piles, poles, posts, rails, &c.	76	18	6
Deadwood under gazetted licences	26	4	0
Royalty on wattle bark	£457	8	7
Sale of wattle wood	4	8	0
	<hr/>		
	461	16	7
Saw-mill licences	£242	0	0
Timber areas	111	0	0
Jinker and fallers' licences	475	0	0
	<hr/>		
	828	0	0
Splitters' licences	618	0	0
Grazing fees	1,200	5	8
Residence fees	18	0	0
Sales of confiscated timber, &c.	191	15	1
Penalties	380	19	3
	<hr/>		
Total	£7,179	7	0

SLEEPER HEWING.

Sleeper hewing under the charge of the foresters and forest foremen has brought in a good addition to our revenue, and I am much pleased to be able to say that the young timber that used to be cut extensively by the hewers is now almost universally respected.

About 200,000 sleepers are now used annually by the Railway Department, nearly one-half of which are obtained from private property. I anticipate from the wasteful system in vogue for many years, and the consequent destruction of valuable timber, that in the near future sleepers of box, redgum, or ironbark will be very hard to procure, and will undoubtedly be much dearer than they are at present.

During the year the forest officers, with one or two exceptions only, have worked well and to my entire satisfaction.

PLANTATIONS.

The following return will give some idea of the work performed by the Forest Branch in planting valuable timber trees during the last few years. The total of over half-a-million of trees only includes those planted *by hand* in permanent sites. In addition to these, some 300,000 bluegums and sugargums have been planted at Havelock and You Yangs in permanent plantations. They, however, were sown broadcast :—

Year.	You Yangs.	Sawpit Gully.	Gunbower.	Macedon.	Havelock.
1888-9 ...	12,000	8,350	—	6,000	—
1889-90 ...	52,000	42,500	—	12,000	—
1890-91 ...	56,000	17,000	—	8,000	—
1891-2 ...	42,008	28,699	10,000	—	—
1892-3 ...	28,810	16,000	8,000	—	—
1893-4 ...	22,265	17,821	3,000	—	9,500
1894-5 ...	19,180	15,527	5,300	—	1,840
1895-6 ...	22,250	11,958	1,500	—	1,000
1896-7 ...	19,656	18,960	1,000	—	5,481
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Totals ...	274,169	176,815	28,800	26,000	17,821

TREE DISTRIBUTION.

The number of applications for the surplus stock grown at the Macedon State Nursery shows a steady increase year by year, proving undoubtedly that the excessive ring-barking of our indigenous timber has made tree planting an absolute necessity in many districts. The most suitable and popular trees for our dry northern plains are

Sugargum (*E. Corynocalyx*.)
Pepper tree (*S. Molle*.)
Locust tree (*R. pseudo acacia*.)

It is well to mention that the trees from the State nurseries are carefully allotted and distributed so as to suit the various climates that are to be found in Victoria. In consequence, great numbers of gratifying letters come to hand thanking me for past consignments, speaking of success achieved, and asking for further supplies. I strongly recommend the Department of Education to pay more attention to tree planting in the ample grounds surrounding almost every State school in Victoria. The school inspectors could see that the trees supplied were properly planted and cared for. Prizes might also be given for the best-planted grounds in the various districts under each inspector. The children, furthermore, taught at school the value and beauty of trees for shade and other purposes, would not be likely to forget the lesson in after years; and I venture to predict that the "homes of the people" would be very much embellished in years to come by trees planted as the direct result of the school training indicated.

FOREST OFFENCES.

I desire to strongly urge the necessity of fixing a minimum fine for the first offence and a fixed increased fine for second, third, fourth, fifth, &c., &c., offences. The destruction of the State's timber in too many instances is regarded very lightly, and ridiculously small fines are inflicted. Recently local justices fined a man 2s. 6d. for a *fifth* offence of a most flagrant nature. Such a fine is a direct incentive to breaches of the law.

I have no hesitation in stating that the extreme leniency of the local courts is responsible for the great number of breaches of the forest laws constantly taking place. Woodmen in many instances find it cheaper to continually break the law and pay 1s. fines than to honestly take out licences.

I write strongly on this subject because I feel strongly. The best efforts of our smartest officers are to an extent neutralized by the leniency complained of, the officers themselves are discouraged, and the Department made (locally) a laughing stock of. The records of this branch, showing the offences committed and the penalties imposed, amount to nothing short of a public scandal.

FOREST FIRES.

The question of fire protection for State forests is one which, sooner or later, must be dealt with; and if forest conservation is to be made a "live" subject the forest vote must be largely increased, and more strict supervision given to the timber-getters, with a view of staying the gross carelessness and wanton disregard of forest interests now displayed by many of them.

In conclusion, permit me to point out that the forest staff is totally inadequate to cope with the enormous increase of work caused by the sleeper-hewers and the mining requirements at the present time. Twenty-two officers cannot properly overlook the forest work of the whole colony. To my mind it is wonderful that the supervision, and consequent repression of the forest destroyer, is carried out so well by so few officers, some of whom have enormous areas to supervise.

Wholesale destruction of timber now only obtains in places where no officer is stationed, unless in districts where facilities are given to the miner which are quite inconsistent with any proper scheme of forest conservation.

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