

The population I estimate as follows:—

	Miners.	Others.
Reefton Township	100	400
Black's Point	75	75
Murray Creek Reefs	150	50
Rainy Creek	20	—
Soldier's and Devil's Creek	50	—
Boatman's and Vicinity	80	30
Larry's	30	10
Inangahua Valley	30	74
Christy's to Lyell	30	20
Lyell Township	20	80
Lyell Reefs	150	50
Upper Buller and Matakītaki	50	50
Totals	785	835

From 250 to 300 of the above miners are engaged in alluvial workings, the returns for which I am unable to give definitely, as large quantities of gold are purchased, especially in the Matakītaki, by local storekeepers. I might also mention here that scattered parties of Chinese are now setting in to work in the district, and, as far as I have been able to observe, have conducted themselves in an orderly and peaceable manner.

The number of births registered in the district for the year are 40; deaths, 20; and marriage certificates issued, 7.

#### LOCAL REVENUES BOARDS.

The past year has seen the initiation of the new Local Revenue District Board Act, by which a portion of the money raised in each district is placed at the disposal of the local Board for expenditure. I have no doubt that as the powers conferred on these local Boards become enlarged, which in fact they do from the 1st of April, 1874, that very much good will result in many ways. The residence on the spot of a local Board, to whom the wants of the district can be directly represented, and moreover who will have the means at their command of attending to those wants, will tend to allay very much of any past dissatisfaction that has existed, and relieve the Government from blame, oftentimes totally unmerited. I think the maintenance of the main roads made by the Government might be very properly handed over to the local Boards, who, being constantly on the spot, would exercise a continuous supervision over the roads, and take care that by putting in the stitch in time, they will be able to avoid the necessity of putting in nine afterwards. For the same reason, many of the votes of the Provincial Council could be more economically expended by the local Board than if left to supervision at a distance. All that appears necessary is that the Government and the local Board should work hand in hand together, and there can be no doubt the benefit will be mutual.

#### SALE OF TOWNSHIP.

In my last report I strongly recommended the sale of the Reefton township. This has partially been done so far as occupied sections are concerned, but I must still urge upon the Government, not only as my own wish, but that of the inhabitants themselves, that the unsold portion of the township should be at once put up to auction. This could be done by the withdrawal of all the surveyed township from the gold fields. I would also strongly recommend the immediate sale of the occupied sections at the Lyell and Black's Point, and also to put up the remaining sections at each place to auction with as little delay as possible.

I would advise that the Waste Lands Act be so amended as to enable reserves to be made in new places on the gold fields for churches, hospitals, recreation grounds, &c., all of which could easily be arranged for when laying off a new township.

#### LOCAL HOSPITAL.

The rapid progress of the place, and the distance from any other hospital, render it necessary that a suitable building should be at once erected for Reefton. With this object in view, some £63 have been already collected towards a building fund, the inhabitants trusting to obtain a vote of £400 as an equivalent to £200 to be raised by the public for that purpose. They anticipate also that they will require a vote of £600 for the maintenance of the hospital during the ensuing twelve months, as a *quid pro quo* for £300 to be raised by private subscriptions.

#### THE NEW LICENSING ACT.

This does not appear at all adapted for the gold fields. The licensing meetings being annual, and no provision made for transfers in the interim, in the event of a new field being discovered no licenses could be granted, and sly grog selling would be upon the increase. It appears far better to license proper houses, and so bring them under police surveillance, than place at the mercy of the illicit vendor of what, in many cases, is little better than poison. So far as the present towns are concerned, the recent action of the Provincial Council in handing over half of the publicans' license fees to the local Revenue Board, should have a most beneficial effect in the suppression of sly grog selling, as it will be manifestly to the interests of the local Board to see that they are not deprived of any portion of their revenue by unlicensed persons selling spirituous liquors.

#### ROADS.

I have already recommended that the maintenance of the existing main road should be handed over to the local Boards, but I may be permitted now to mention what works I consider most necessary within my district.