

part of the country was again let for two years, so as to give time to open roads into it. At present a road is under formation up the Tokanui Valley, which opens up the first block of 5,000 acres reserved for settlement. This road is to run on to Waikawa Harbour, a well-known inlet on the coast in the early days of saw-mills, and which will again come into prominence as an excellent harbour for coasters as soon as the surrounding country is roaded and opened for settlement. The Tokanui Road also runs through the Otara District to Fortrose.

Through Runs 171 and 171A.—These are the Waikouaiti Runs, which under the old leases contained together an area of 37,000 acres; about 7,500 acres were reserved for disposal on sale and settlement-conditions, and are now under subdivisional survey. The balance of 29,310 acres were re-leased in six small runs at an average rent of 1s. 9d. per acre for fourteen years. The country, although close to the trunk-line of railway, is very difficult of access, the deep gorge of the Waikouaiti River barring approach. With careful examination a very fair road has been selected, the steepest grade 1 in 6, but that only for a short distance, the rest of the line much easier. A bridle-track is to be formed throughout the block of 7,500 acres. The land will be ready for disposal in the spring.

Education Reserves.—The Waikaia Education Reserve, of 208,000 acres, is a very valuable compact block of excellent well-grassed hill and plain. Fifty thousand acres have been reserved from the runs for settlement, of which 5,034 acres were recently offered on terms of deferred payment, and 5,342 on perpetual lease, when both classes were eagerly competed for, and nearly all taken up the first day of application and of tender. Side cuttings, culverts, and formation on the road-lines are now in hand by the Southland County Council.

SOUTHLAND.—Seaward Forest to Coast.—This is a flat swampy district, of 60,000 acres, long thought to be worthless, but three years ago, by fascining across the tongues of swamp, cutting drains, and road-formation, a few thousand acres behind Woodend were found to be habitable. The land was surveyed and rapidly taken up on deferred payments. The gravelling of seven miles of road-formation was finished during the year.

Forest Hill Tramway.—Five and a half miles constructed by the Public Works Department for horse-traffic and light wagons. It has been opened for some time, and is in charge of the County Council. Tenders are called for its farther extension into the Forest Hill District.

Orepuki to Waiau.—Five miles of road formed from terminus of railway-line to the banks of the Waiau River; and 3,000 acres of Crown lands surveyed along road-line.

Branch Road to Forest Hill.—Seven miles formed and ditched at the lower end of the district, which lies into railway-station at Wilson's Crossing.

Tomogalak Creek to Deferred-payment Land.—This is to give access to 2,000 acres of alluvial flat on banks of Mataura River, at present cut off by bluffs. Side cuttings and formation in hand, and about half done; length of road, four miles. Land is to be opened on deferred payments.

Bay Road to Otara Bush.—This is a road to the bush, situated on the opposite shore of New River Harbour from Invercargill. The bush was cut over by the saw-mills, and has since been subdivided into sections of small area; but until it is opened up by a road it would be unreasonable to offer any of the sections on settlement-conditions. Bush-clearing, ditching, and formation of two miles well forward.

Bush Land East of Makarewa.—This is another area that has been cut over and then subdivided into sections for village-settlements. Bush fallen on roads, and clearing in progress.

Port William to Half-Moon Bay.—The formation of a track between these two places is as much to enable the sparse population to co-operate in the matter of school and other social matters as to open the Crown lands. The work is being done in several small contracts.

GENERAL AND DEPARTMENTAL.

The department has nearly 500,000 acres surveyed and mapped, and now before the public for selection and purchase under the various settlement-conditions, and for cash. An additional 150,000 acres is being mapped, and will be ready for disposal within the next two or three months; and the pioneer-roading in the different stages of exploratory surveys or actual formation is in course with regard to other blocks in each of the eleven land districts. The work has got into such a train that, if the essential work of roading is allowed to proceed as at present, there will be a constant supply of Crown lands kept up ready for settlement.

During the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1883, the area of Crown lands was augmented by the proclamation of 42,918 acres of purchased Native lands, of which 3,092 acres were in the Auckland District, and 39,826 acres in the Wellington District. There are one or two other Native blocks in the latter district, the purchase of which is nearly completed, and when proclaimed will work in very well with adjacent Crown lands. Roads have been explored in anticipation through some of these Native and Crown lands, and they can be opened out quickly whenever the time comes.

The various Crown land sales have been well advertised in the local newspapers, and the more important have been made known throughout the colony by means of posters and plans exhibited at the post-offices and on the Crown lands advertisement-boards at the principal railway-stations.

For places beyond the colony "The Crown Lands Guide" has been found to be a very effective means of making known the land-system of the colony, and of attracting attention to it. "The Crown Lands Guide" No. 4 was issued in May, 1882, and No. 5 in February, 1883. Of each, 3,500 copies were printed and 1,200 copies distributed by the head office, one copy being sent to each of all the public reading-rooms of New Zealand and of the Australian Colonies, to the clubs and military stations of India, to the boats of the Union Steam Shipping Company, also to the Orient steamers, and the Peninsula and Oriental steamers trading to Australian ports, and a supply to the Agent-General in London, the remainder being used in the colony. The department has had, through the Australian Press and from private sources, ample assurance that the Guide has made the land-system of New Zealand widely known.