

Improved-farm Settlements.—A full return has been furnished on each of the improved-farm settlements by Commissioner of Crown Lands. I forward you herewith plans showing the area of bush felled on each of the settlements for roads only. Purakauiti No. 2, 23 acres; Puaho, 23·50 acres: A 10ft. road has been completed through the block for a distance of 2 miles 50 chains. Two branch roads have been felled and logged up for a mile and a quarter, and now require forming. Block II., Woodland: Area felled, 32 acres; no roads have been formed in this block. Rimu (Block XV.): Area felled, 54·50 acres. Contracts for road-formation have been let, but none are yet completed. Waipati: Area felled, 128·58 acres. Road contracts are in progress, but none completed. Swinburn: All the road contracts in this settlement have now been completed, and extend over a distance of 4 miles 4 chains. The works consisted of formation, chipping, culverts, and gravelling. An outlet has now been given to all the sections in this settlement.

C. W. ADAMS, Chief Surveyor.

SOUTHLAND.

Four settlements are in operation—viz., Waikawa, Haldane, Papatotara, and Motu-rimu.

Waikawa.—This settlement, situated in Block XVII., Waikawa Survey District, is two to three miles distant from the Niagara School, and about five miles from the Port of Waikawa. The land generally is fairly good; it is, however, for the most part rough, and, except in the case of a few of the front sections, not much will be fit for the plough. Work was begun on the settlement about August, 1894.

There are on the settlement sixteen sections, excluding reserves, and all have been allotted, one section of 200 acres area being held by father and son. The number of settlers resident is sixteen, all except two being married men. The total number of individuals on the settlement, including women and children, is fifty-six. Twelve good houses have been built, the settler in each case having taken advantage of the Government advance for that object. Some of the settlers have fair gardens and substantial fencing, and the progress generally is satisfactory.

Two hundred and eighty-nine acres of bush were felled last winter; of this area about 177 acres were burnt, and the work of burning and sowing is still in progress. As the dry weather continued well into April the area burnt would probably be considerably increased. Last year's grass was all that could be desired. The settlers own between thirty and forty head of cattle and six horses.

During the quarter ending the 31st March the settlers have been engaged on the formation of a road to give access to back sections Nos. 1 to 5, and there is now completed (except three gaps, totalling 8 chains, nearly finished) a length of 63 chains from the main road through the settlement. It is very important that this formation should be continued, and I would strongly urge that, instead of giving the settlers more work at bushfelling during the coming winter, they should be employed upon this road, so that the back settlers, who have been hitherto at a great disadvantage in getting anything on to their sections, owing to the rough nature of the country, may have the same ready access enjoyed by those holding front sections. It seems to me preferable that this work should be done, rather than that more bush-land should be felled and sown when the settlers have already more grass than they will be able to stock for some time. It would be greatly to the advantage of the settlers to complete the road through from Section 1 across the Waikawa River to the Waikawa-Fortrose Road, as they would then have a direct route to Waikawa Township instead of the present roundabout one through J. Campbell's and W. Haldane's sections. The work would cost about £300, this amount giving a ford only across the river.

Haldane.—This settlement is situated in Blocks IX. and X., Waikawa Survey District, between Fortrose and Waikawa, at a distance of fourteen miles from the former, and eight miles from the latter place. The settlement consists of twenty-four sections, twenty-three of which have been allotted. Twenty of the settlers are residing on their sections—fourteen married men with their families, and six single men. There are forty-two children, and total number of individuals is seventy-six.

Operations on this settlement were begun in the month of June last year. An area of 363½ acres of bush has been felled, and up to the end of March 100 acres was burnt. Burning and sowing were in progress at the beginning of April, every advantage being taken of the recent good weather. The roadwork up to the end of the year consists of bushfelling and logging-up on the road leading through the settlement from the Otara-Waikawa Road. The whole length of the road (2 miles 32 chains) has been felled full width, and 53 chains have been logged up 40ft. wide. No formation has yet been done on this road. Whilst waiting for an opportunity to burn the bush the Haldane settlers were employed on formation of branch road running south from corner of Section 30, Survey Block IX., Waikawa Survey District, to the estuary. This work is referred to under the Waikawa-Otara Road.

The present position of the Haldane Settlement is not so satisfactory as in the case of the Heathfield and Waikawa Settlements. Haldane is more recently established than the other two, and has not had time to overcome the initial difficulties. Progress, moreover, has been retarded by an unusually wet season. But, after making allowance for the youth of the settlement, and for the bad weather, another cause for the want of success must still be looked for. Many of the men are unaccustomed to the work of bushfelling and road-making, and consequently, though paid high prices, they do not earn good wages. Haldane is more favourably situated than either Heathfield or Waikawa, having a good road through to Fortrose; the land, too, is excellent, and when the men have acquired the right experience the settlement will succeed.