

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT.

(RETURNS RELATIVE TO THE PURCHASE OF THE OTAHU ESTATE, SOUTHLAND.)

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated 19th October, 1897.

Ordered, "That there be laid before this House a return setting out the negotiations for the purchase by the Crown, under the Land for Settlements Act, of the estate known as 'Otahu,' in Southland, and the reports of the Valuers and of the Land Purchase Board thereon, together with a statement as to what has been done as to the settlement of the land up to the 29th September last."—(Mr. G. HUTCHISON.)

OTAHU ESTATE.

STATEMENT showing what has been done as to the settlement of the land:—

The estate has been subdivided, and is advertised as open for selection on the 4th November, 1897.

Wellington, 4th October, 1897.

His Excellency the Governor is respectfully advised to sign as approved the attached Proclamation declaring land to be Crown land subject to "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894."

JOHN MCKENZIE, Minister of Lands.

Signed.—R., 9th October, 1897.

For Gazette.—J.F.J. 12th October, 1897.

(L.S.)

RANFURLY, Governor.

A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS the land described in the Schedule hereto has been acquired under the provisions of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894" (hereinafter termed "the said Act"), and the purchase thereof has been concluded as by the said Act is provided: And whereas it is enacted by the said Act that all land so acquired shall be proclaimed as Crown land subject to the provisions of the said Act:

Now, therefore, I, Uchter John Mark, Earl of Ranfurly, the Governor of the Colony of New Zealand, in exercise and pursuance of the power and authority conferred by the said Act, do hereby proclaim and declare that the land described in the Schedule hereto shall, on the date of the publication hereof in the *New Zealand Gazette*, be and be deemed to be Crown land subject to the provisions of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894."

SCHEDULE.

Otahu Settlement.

ALL that area in the Southland Land District, containing by admeasurement 6,044 acres and 29 poles, more or less, being Sections numbered 5, 15, 9, 10, 13, 24, 1, 97 (P.R.), 17, 31, 2, 14, 39, and 40 of Waiau Survey District; as the said area is delineated upon the plan marked S.G. 19195, deposited in the Head Office of the Department of Lands and Survey, at Wellington, in the Wellington Land District, and thereon coloured red.

Given under the hand of His Excellency the Right Honourable Uchter John Mark, Earl of Ranfurly; Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George; Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over Her Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies; and issued under the Seal of the said Colony, at the Government House, at Wellington, this ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven.

JOHN MCKENZIE, Minister of Lands.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

JAMES McKERROW, Dunedin, to J. F. JOHNSON, Secretary, Land Purchase Board, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

11th August, 1897.

I HAVE received your telegram *re* payment of Batger. (2.) If Drake is paid, ask Mr. Marchant to assume possession of land, and order Drake to remove stock. (3.) Do not understand your allusion to Foster and Rangiatia. Has Foster accepted my offer to purchase? (4.) I leave for Conical Hills to-morrow morning.

BATGER and MENZIES, Invercargill, to JAMES McKERROW, Esq., Land Purchase Commissioner, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

4th August, 1897.

CAN you oblige by arranging for cheque reach here before Monday next? Reply.

MR. VINCENT.—Report: W. J. C. 6th August, 1897.

THE ACCOUNTANT.—It was posted on the 4th, at 2.15., and would catch the southern mail which closed at 3.20.—P.W.V. 6th August, 1897.

FOR Land Purchase Inspector (Mr. J. McKerrow).—W. J. C. 6th August, 1897.

J. F. JOHNSON, Secretary, Land Purchase Board, Wellington, to Messrs. MENZIES and BATGER (care of Henderson and Batger), Invercargill.

(Telegram.)

6th August, 1897.

OTAHU cheque posted by Treasury on 4th, at 2.15; would catch mail at 3.20; should reach Invercargill to-night's express.

(Memorandum.)

Government Buildings, Wellington, 2nd August, 1897.

Otahu Estate.—In compliance with the Crown Solicitor's request in his letter to you dated the 19th ultimo, I herewith return conveyance and memorandum of transfer of the above estate for registration and final completion. The purchase-money (£7,555 4s. 6d.) will most likely be payable in Invercargill on or about the 10th instant, as already stated to you in Mr. McKerrow's telegram of even date. The voucher is countersignable by you. Kindly return deeds when registered for deposit in this office.

J. F. JOHNSON,

Secretary to Land Purchase Board.

The Commissioner Crown Lands, Invercargill.

BATGER and MENZIES, Invercargill, to McKERROW, Esq., Land Purchase Commissioner, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

31st July, 1897.

KINDLY reply when settlement Otahu will be made.

(Telegram.)

28th July, 1897.

MORTGAGEE of Otahu is willing to accept payment immediately on receipt of Government cheque.

D. BARRON,

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.

J. McKerrow, Esq., Chairman of the Land Purchase Board, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

28th July, 1897.

Re payments of Otahu.—The voucher can be passed in at once, but before my doing so please ascertain if Printz, mortgagee, is willing to take his money as soon as proffered, because unless he is so there will be no use in forwarding Government cheque to lie dead for a time.

D. Barron, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.

JAMES McKERROW.

(Memorandum.)

Government Buildings, Wellington, 28th July, 1897.

"*The Land for Settlements Act, 1894*."—Messrs. Menzies and Batger, the owners of the Otahu Estate, having accepted the offer made by the Government to purchase that property, the sum of £7,555 4s. 6d. will be required for the purchase thereof immediately. A further sum will be required for survey, roading, &c., but of this you will be advised by the Survey Department at a later date. The purchase will in future be known as "Otahu."

The Secretary to the Treasury, Wellington.

JAMES McKERROW, Chairman.

(Telegram.)

27th July, 1897.

MR. BATGER informs me they have sold part of the stock, and remainder will be disposed of shortly, and also that dissolution of partnership necessitates immediate winding-up of the estate.

D. BARRON,

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.

J. McKerrow, Esq.,

Chairman, Land Purchase Board, Wellington.

J. McKERROW, Land Purchase Inspector, to D. BARRON, Esq., Commissioner Crown Lands, Invercargill.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 24th July, 1897.

I HAVE received deeds of Otahu Estate. As two or three months must elapse before plans are published and advertisement made of the land, it would be better to postpone taking possession until after shearing, say, until end of December. Ask Mr. Batger if he can occupy country until then. Purchase-money to be paid on taking possession.

JAMES McKERROW.

Department of Lands and Survey, Invercargill, 20th July, 1897.

(Memorandum 369/118.)

Re Otahu Estate.—I forward herewith letter from the Crown Solicitor with transfer and conveyance of above property from Messrs. Menzies and Batger, also voucher for payment of the price arranged. It will be seen that the original area has been reduced by river encroachment to 6,044 acres and 29 perches.

D. BARRON.

J. McKerrow, Esq., Land Purchase Inspector, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

Invercargill, 19th July, 1897.

Re Otahu Estate.—As desired by you, I herewith hand you the conveyance and transfer of the 6,044 acres and 29 perches of freehold lands in this estate to Her Majesty the Queen duly executed by the vendors, Messrs. Menzies and Batger, with the voucher in duplicate, signed by Messrs. Menzies and Batger, claiming for the full purchase-money (£7,555 4s. 6d.). The conveyance and transfer are undated, and are held unregistered until the releases of the existing mortgages to Mr. Printz are received duly executed, and the receipt of the cheque from Wellington for the purchase-money out of which Mr. Printz's mortgages will be paid off.

Yours, &c.,

T. M. MACDONALD, Crown Solicitor.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.

P.S.—The conveyance and transfer will require to be returned to me for registration at the same time as the releases of Mr. Printz's mortgages.

In Executive Council, Wellington, 30th June, 1897.

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government is respectfully advised to sign as approved the attached memorandum, concluding the purchase of the lands mentioned in the schedule thereto, in terms of section 5 of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894."

JOHN MCKENZIE, Minister of Lands.

Approved in Council.—J. P. 2nd August, 1897.

ALEX. WILLIS, Clerk of Executive Council.

MEMORANDUM.

WHEREAS under the provisions of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894," the Minister of Lands directed the Board of Land Purchase Commissioners to negotiate with the owners of the private lands mentioned in the schedule hereto for the purchase thereof: And whereas the Board has in writing recommended the Government to acquire the said land at a price of £1 5s. per acre, the land in the opinion of the Board being good and suitable for settlement in farms of 500 acres and upwards, the Board also believing that there will be a demand for this class of land:

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government is therefore recommended to conclude the purchase of the said lands mentioned in the schedule hereto at the price of £1 5s. per acre.

Schedule.

ALL that area in the Southland Land District, containing approximately 6,044 acres and 29 perches, and being Sections 5, 15, 9, 10, 13, 24, 1, 97 (P.R.), 17, 31, 2, and 14, Waiau Survey District; Sections 39 and 40, Waiau Survey District, known as Otahu Estate, the property of Messrs. Menzies and Batger.

JOHN MCKENZIE, Minister of Lands.

Approved.—JAMES PRENDERGAST, Administrator of the Government.

Approved in Executive Council, this 2nd day of August, 1897.—ALEX. WILLIS, Clerk of Executive Council.

DEAR SIR,—

Invercargill, 12th May, 1897.

We are duly in receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, and have to-day handed the title-deeds of Messrs. Menzies and Batger's Otahu property to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, in accordance with your request. Please note that in my letter to you of the 1st instant there was a slight clerical error, which you have also made in your letter under reply—viz., in quoting Messrs. "Henderson and Batger" as the owners of the property, our clients in the matter, instead of "Menzies and Batger." In your letter to me of the 27th ultimo the names were quoted "Menzies and Batger" correctly. You understand, of course, that Messrs. Menzies and Batger are the owners of the estate and vendors thereof to the Government, and are the parties for whom we are and have been acting all along. Apologizing for this clerical error,

We have, &c.,

James McKerrow, Esq., Chairman,

MENZIES AND BATGER.

Board of Land Purchase Commissioners, Wellington.

Government Buildings, Wellington, 7th May, 1897.

D. Barron, Esq., Commissioner Crown Lands, Invercargill.

Messrs. McNab and Watson, by letter of the 1st instant, intimate Messrs. Menzies and Batger's acceptance of the Government offer of £1 5s. per acre for the purchase of their Otahu Estate. I have acknowledged their letter to-day, and asked them to hand title-deeds to you, so that you may instruct Crown Solicitor to prepare conveyance at once. You can supply correct data as to boundaries from the new survey about to be undertaken. I have asked the Surveyor-General to-day to authorise survey as soon as may be.

JAMES MCKERROW.

DEAR SIR,—

Government Buildings, Wellington, 7th May, 1897.

I have your letter of the 1st instant, notifying Messrs. Menzies and Batger's acceptance of the offer of the Government to purchase their Otahu Estate, of about 6,049 acres, at £1 5s. per acre.

I have requested the Surveyor-General to put the survey in hand as soon as may be. Whenever the areas are verified, the purchase-money will be paid and delivery taken of the estate. Meanwhile, will you be good enough to hand the title-deeds to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill, who will instruct the Crown Solicitor to prepare the conveyance as soon as he can supply the correct data as to boundaries from the new survey about to be made?

I have, &c.,

Messrs. McNab and Watson, Solicitors, Invercargill.

JAMES MCKERROW.

The Surveyor-General.

Government Buildings, Wellington, 7th May, 1897.

Re Otahu Estate, Waiau Plain, Southland.—The offer of the Government to purchase the above estate at £1 5s. an acre has been accepted. It is in two portions, as follows:—

1. 4,799 acres, in Sections 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 24, 31, and 97 (P.R.), Waiau Survey District. I would suggest that it would be suitable to survey the land into sections of about 500 acres each, and, with the object of including a portion of the thin shingly land west of the main 2-chain road in with the better land on the east side, all the sections south of the Wellwood Bushes might take in the land on both sides of the road. That would mean that each section would be about 120 by 40 chains, with a depth of 80 chains on the east side of the road, and 40 chains on the west side. North of the Wellwood Bushes the sections would not cross the road, because of the greater width of the block there. When Mr. David Barron, Commissioner, Southland, and I inspected the land in February last, Mr. Batger, one of the vendors, signified his intention, if the Government purchased the land, of availing himself of the provision of section 4 of "The Land for Settlements Amendment Act, 1895," so as to retain the homestead on or near Section 2, Loneker's Bush, and 640 acres surrounding; survey should be made accordingly of that area, with frontage to main road, and laid off so as to be in harmony with general design of sections. Loneker's Bush contains some valuable timber. Mr. Barron and I considered that a strip of it, 8 or 9 chains wide, should be reserved along the northern boundary of the block, for the wants of the settlers. We think that the front of the bush on the south side should go in with the homestead for shelter and amenity. At present it has a very beautiful situation. The greater part of Otahu Bush should also be reserved for the general use of settlers, and probably one or two other small bushes—if, on inspection, thought necessary—might be reserved for firewood.

Merton Creek in flood overflowed part of the best of the land. The channel requires to be straightened and widened; estimated cost, £300. It would be desirable to have this done before the land is settled, but in any case an ample reserve should be made for the purpose.

2. Sections 39 and 40, Waiau Survey District, 1,250 acres: Section 39, of 250 acres, will do very well as it is for one allotment. Section 40, of 1,000 acres, might be subdivided in two sections.

The Crown lands in sections 60 to 63 lie between and connect the above two blocks of Otahu. They have been abandoned, but should now be included with Otahu, and be offered at the same time. It is desirable that the survey be put in hand as soon as may be.

JAMES MCKERROW.

DEAR SIR,—

Invercargill, 1st May, 1897.

Re Otahu.—We have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 27th ultimo, offering £1 5s. per acre for this estate, and, in reply, we are now instructed by Messrs. Menzies and Batger to inform you that they hereby accept the said offer. We shall be glad if you will let us know when you are ready to settle, as our clients can give immediate possession to your nominee. We shall therefore be pleased to complete matters without delay.

We have, &c.,

M McNAB AND WATSON.

The Chairman, Board of Land Purchase Commissioners, Wellington.

SIRS,—

Government Buildings, Wellington, 27th April, 1897.

"The Land for Settlements Act, 1894."—Adverting to previous correspondence on the subject of your offer of Otahu Estate, containing 6,049 acres the property of Messrs. Menzies and Batger, at the price of £1 7s. 6d. an acre I am now directed by the Hon the Minister of Lands to offer you for such property the price of £1 5s. per acre. This offer is subject to the approval of the Governor in Council as in such cases provided.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MCKERROW, Chairman.

Messrs McNab and Watson, Solicitors, Invercargill.

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. JOHN MCKENZIE, Minister of Lands.

THE Otahu Estate, of 6,049 acres, the property of Messrs. Menzies and Batger, is situated in the Waiau Valley, Southland. It is in two parts. The larger area, of about 4,800 acres, is in the Waiau Plain; nearly all level. Fully one-half the area along the base of the ridges is fertile land, the remainder further out on the plain is thin and shingly. In laying out this land it would be advisable to run the sections across so as to include a portion of both classes of land in each section. This would imply that the areas would be about 500 acres each, and this would be advisable for the further reason that the farms would be eighteen to twenty-four miles from the Otautau Railway-station, and would be mixed farms depending mostly on stock. The Merton Stream, which runs through the property lengthwise, is liable to overflow when in flood; its channel requires widening and straightening at an estimated cost of £300. This might be left for the settlers to do provided a strip of reserve were left through the sections. There are about 200 acres of well-grown timber, and firewood in several clumps over the plain that will be a great aid to settlement.

The homestead consists of a good dwelling-house of eight or ten rooms, in good order; a woolshed and small stable, water-wheel, and thatched sheds, none of them of much value except the dwelling-house. In connection with the homestead several hundred acres have from time to time been under the plough, which are now mostly laid down in grass. At the time of inspection—13th February—a forty-acre field of oats was being cut by the reaper-and-binder—a very fair crop. About 150 acres of turnips were promising to be a good crop if they only had rain in time. The other part of the property, containing 1,250 acres, is situated from two to three miles north-east of the larger portion, on the Waiau Plain. It is up on the terrace on both sides of the upper part of the Merton Stream. With the exception of being fenced on two sides, it is in its natural state, crab-hole and with snow-tussock, requiring to be ploughed and worked to sweeten the soil, which is strong and good.

There are some well-cultivated farms close up to the boundaries of the Otahu Estate, and the Merrivale Settlement is almost alongside. The settlement of the Otahu Estate would be practically an extension of the Merrivale Settlement and of the settlement around the Limestone Gorge. It is desirable to extend the number of settlers in the Waiau Valley so as to have a community numerous enough to have dairy factories and other industries set going.

JAMES MCKERROW, Land Purchase Inspector.

Government Buildings, Wellington, 13th April, 1897.

For Cabinet.—J. MCKENZIE, 21st April, 1897.

In Cabinet.—26th April, 1897.—Purchase of 6,049 acres, at £1 5s. Approved.—A. WILLIS, Secretary.

THE BOARD OF LAND PURCHASE COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

We, the members of the Board of Land Purchase Commissioners, appointed under "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894," for the Southland Land District, in compliance with the directions contained in your memorandum of the _____, have the honour to report, as regards the land mentioned in the schedule below,—

1. That the land is good and suitable for settlement in farms of 500 acres upwards.
2. That the Board believes there will be a demand for this class of land.
3. That the Board recommends the Government to acquire the land at a price of £1 5s. per acre.

JAMES MCKERROW, Chairman.

D. BARRON,

S. PERCY SMITH,
ANDREW KINROSS.

Given under our hands, at Wellington, this 12th day of April, 1897.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

Schedule.

Southland Land District.—All that area containing 6,049 acres, more or less, known as Otahu Estate, offered by Messrs. Batger and Menzies.

REPORT on part of property offered by Messrs. Batger and Menzies, being part of their Otahu Estate, in the Waiau Survey District and Southland Land District. The land offered consists of Sections 5, 15, 9, 10, 13, 24, 1, 97 (P.R.), 17, 31, 2, 14, Waiau Survey District. Area, 4,799 acres and 29 perchès, or thereabouts:—

This property is situated on the flat terraces on the eastern side of the Waiau River, a few miles to the north of the ferry at Clifden, and at the south end adjoins part of the Merrivale Estate acquired by the Crown and cut up and let in farms of small areas. Its distance from Otautau Township and Railway-station is from twenty-two to twenty-five miles. The main road-line up the Waiau Valley passes through the property.

Hitherto this has been a pastoral district, portions of this property having been improved by cultivation of the best parts of the land, with the object of increasing its stock-carrying capacity. No industries except rabbit-trapping for their skins.

Flat terrace land, gravel formation; soil light, dry, and fertile over the greater portion; growing in its natural state, white-tussocks, fern, &c., and in parts large flax-bushes. The eastern boundary skirts the foot of the ridges. The portion through which the Merton Creek runs is the best of the land, being rich, fertile, strong land, capable of growing heavy crops and good grass; part of this is

at present wet, growing strong rushes, culgrass, and large flax near the ridges. The northern part of Section 5, between the main road and the creek, is the cultivated portion, there being this year about 45 acres oats (a very good crop) 70 acres of very good turnips, and 100 acres inferior; 250 acres have been sown down in new grasses by the present owner. There are several hundred acres of old grass, some very good, but a good deal of inferior and run out. There is no cultivation west of the main road, nor on the portion south of the cross-roads which goes to Section 31.

The homestead is on and about Section 2. There being a ten-roomed dwelling-house and out-houses, roofed with iron, and brick or stone chimneys, old, but well painted and in fair order—a comfortable residence. Stables, three stalls, loose-boxes, &c.; good loft, iron roof, water-wheels, &c. Three thatched sheds (stable, cow, and cart-shed). Woolshed, old, shingle roof, holds eight shearers and three hundred sheep. Three huts, sheep-dip, and yard. The house is well sheltered by hill and bush on the north, and there is a garden, orchard, and small plantation. There are about eighteen miles of fencing on this property, post and wire and barb, and a great deal of rabbit-netting has also been used. Most of the fencing is old but in serviceable condition. A new fence round three sides of Matheson's, Section 108, and across to the main road is a very good, strong, and substantial post, three wires, barb, and rabbit-netting, and has cost from 15s. to 17s. 6d. per chain.

The portion of the property east of the main road is of very good carrying-capacity, growing good feed for cattle and sheep. The oat-crop has been good, estimated at 40 bushels per acre. Part of the turnip-crop is very good and large, and part small, having been put in probably late and with less guano. Prices of stock about on a par with that obtained at the Otatau and Wairio Sale-yards. There were about a hundred head of cattle on the place, which are looking and doing well. The sheep and lambs also look well and healthy.

Climate good and genial, capable of growing all crops to perfection. Rainfall generally sufficient. The eastern side of the property is supplied with water by the Merton Creek, on the west of the main road. I doubt if there is permanent water in the dry season, except in the Waiau River. This is a question to be ascertained and considered when cutting up the property into small areas.

This property could cut up suitably into farms of about 500 acres each, the division running from main road to eastern boundary. The land on west of the main road being divided into good-sized blocks, as this portion is inferior in quality. Section 24 (70 acres), a long narrow strip of land, I would suggest should be let to the owner of the sections on either side, as the expense of fencing it would be considerable for a piece of inferior land.

Rabbits are plentiful, but nothing to what they previously were on this property, as the present owners have had large numbers killed by poison, &c. Still, their present numbers on this and adjoining lands are sufficient to very considerably affect the value of the property. When riding round one evening in a drizzling quiet rain I was able to see that the pest was out and about in numbers, particularly in the vicinity of the bushes and in and about the rough fern-land. United, vigorous, and continuous action will probably require to be stringently enforced when this land is divided into a number of farms in order to keep the pest down. There is no gorse or broom on the property, except a hedge near the house.

I believe that this property, if divided as I have already stated, would readily find occupiers in areas of about 500 acres each.

Employment limited at present to general farm-work, sheep-shearing, harvesting, fencing, or contract road-work.

Rents on the Merrivale Estate range from 9d. to 6s. per acre.

Present proprietor has held the land about four years, during which time the place has been very considerably improved in many ways; it previously had been in a rather neglected and unprofitable state.

Fencing and firewood can readily be obtained from the bushes on the estate; sawn timber, bricks, and coal from Otatau by cartage; stone from Merrivale. There is a small sawmill on one of the bush sections of Merrivale, but I do not know if it is working at present.

Value per acre: 2,707 acres east of main road, £2 10s. an acre; 2,091 acres west of road and next river, 10s. 6d. an acre. (Rabbits have reduced the value of this lot.) Letting-value in small farms at rentals from 7d. to 4s. Average price per acre, including "Top Block," £1 10s. 1½d., on 6,048 acres.

Very little expenditure is required at present on roads, unless gravelling should become necessary. I would suggest that a flood-water channel and drain be cut to carry the waters of Merton Creek. This would be of great service to a considerable portion of the land, and enable some of the best of the land (at present wet) to be brought into cultivation, leaving the tenants to make the smaller ditches into it. If it is not deemed advisable to make this ditch prior to subdivision, I would strongly recommend that land should be reserved through each holding so that the work could be done at some future time. The work could nearly all be done with plough and scoop. There is a drain at present, but it is neither wide, deep, nor long enough.

The property contains several small bushes, growing good and valuable timber for fencing and firewood. This is a valuable asset on the land, as a large quantity of fencing will probably be required when the property is divided. At the same time, it should be remembered that the bushes are a great harbour and cover for the rabbits, and add to the difficulty and cost of keeping them down. Were it not for the number of rabbits on part of this property I would be justified in putting a higher value than I have upon this property. This is a property that will require careful handling in stocking and in cultivation, if good results are looked for, as careless or slovenly farming would easily depreciate its value. Settlers of the proper stamp with some little capital and experience should be able to do well on it.

5th April, 1897.

C. C. SPROULL, Valuer.

ROUGH ESTIMATE FOR ROADING, DRAINING, SURVEY, ADMINISTRATION, ETC.

Roading.—It might be found necessary to form the main road, a road across the block, and part of the frontage of Section 40. This would entail, say, 500 chains of formation only, at £1 per chain £500

Draining.—Main channel through block along (generally) the line of creek, 300 chains 300

Survey, say 200

Administration, &c. 150

Total £1,150

D. BARRON, Chief Surveyor.

REPORT on part of property offered by Messrs. Batger and Menzies, being the Top or Ridge Block of their Otahu Estate, in the Waiau Survey District and Southland Land District. The land offered consists of Sections 39 and 40, Waiau Survey District. Area, 1,250 acres.

This property is situated on the ridges about two miles and a half from Eastern Bush Townships, and about twenty miles from Otautau, the nearest railway-station. There is a good clay road from the property to the main road. The land is about three miles from the Merrivale Block recently cut up and settled upon.

This is chiefly a pastoral district, the land in the vicinity being occupied in areas from two to four hundred acres. Farming operations are mainly confined to growing oats and turnips for winter feed and the sowing-down the land with English grasses. There are no industries at present, unless the killing of rabbits for their skins can be called one.

This land is undulating and flat-topped ridges, broken by gullies containing small creeks and narrow flats. The soil on the northern portion of Section 40 is dry, warm, and fertile, lying on loose gravel formation. On the southern portion, including Section 39, the formation is different, the soil being more clayey and colder, and the gravel red and bound together. There has been no cultivation, the land being in its natural state, and growing white-tussock and other small grasses; fern is also growing on a considerable portion. There is no bush on this part of the estate.

There are no buildings or improvements except fencing. It is fenced on the east and south sides; on the west by a fence on opposite side of road-line; no fencing on the north-west and north sides. The fencing is post and wire, a good secure fence in good order.

In its present state the land is good, healthy sheep-country, of average carrying-capacity, which could be much improved by cultivation. Adjoining lands produce good turnips, oats, &c., when properly farmed, and growing good English grasses. The prices of stock are about the same as at the saleyards at Otautau and Wairio, less a small amount for driving, if fat stock.

Climate good, healthy, and genial. Rainfall ample and sufficient. Water in creeks plentiful for stock when land divided into farms.

This property may be suitably divided into three, or even four, farms. I would not recommend smaller areas for land of this quality, as it is best adapted for sheep-grazing. Section 39 (250 acres) as at present surveyed being one of the farms. No township sections required.

On part of the land the rabbits are very much "in evidence," coming up, I believe, from the Weiraki River flats to this land. Poisoning, &c., is used to keeping them in check, with fair results; but it means a continual battle so long as there is so much rough land and cover for them in the neighbourhood. Combined and energetic action is required for their repression. There is no gorse or broom.

Land in the district seems to be readily taken up, if of good or fair quality, in moderate-sized farms. Areas of 350 to 600 acres according to quality.

Employment is limited to shearing, harvesting, fencing, or other farm-work; also road-making by contract at times.

Ruling price of land, 15s. to £1 5s. per acre, unimproved; rents, 6d. to 1s. 3d. per acre.

Present proprietor has held the land about four years.

Fencing and firewood can easily be obtained from bushes in the neighbourhood. Sawn timber, coal, bricks, &c., from Otautau by cartage. Limestone can be got easily on the Merrivale property.

Value for the whole block (1,250 acres), £1 per acre; value to let in small farms, from 1s. to 1s. 3d. per acre.

Very little expenditure would be required on road-making for some time to come. Drainage, where required, would be best left to the occupiers of the land.

Some of the adjoining lands to this block, which were taken up and settled upon during the past few years, have been much improved by their owners, and are growing good crops of turnips and oats, showing that under proper management the results have been satisfactory, and, I believe, profitable. This land should give equally good results in the future.

[For other portion of Otahu Estate, see separate report.]

5th April, 1897.

C. C. SPROULL, Valuer.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 28th November, 1896.

We have the honour, under instructions from Messrs. John Batger and William Menzies, to place under offer to the Board for acquisition under the Land for Settlements Act their Otahu property, which is situated in the Waiau district of Southland, on the banks of the river of that name, about twenty miles from the Otautau Railway-station by a county road. It consists of over 6,000 acres of freehold, of which 1,300 are good terrace land, while the balance consists of the

well-known Waiau Plain. From 1,500 to 2,000 acres of this plain are swamp land of the very richest quality, the greater part of which is drained. The rest of the plain consists of light sharp soil, admirably adapted for growing turnips. There are several hundred acres of valuable bush on the property, chiefly pine and totara. Except the above, there is no bush of any value in the neighbourhood. About 1,200 acres have been cultivated, of which 800 acres are in English grass.

The property is admirably adapted for subdivision, and could be very easily cut up for settlement purposes into farms from 200 acres upwards. We may point out that this property adjoins that part of the Merrivale Estate which was recently taken over by your Board, and we understand the Merrivale Estate so purchased by you—or, rather, that part of it next our clients' property—was sold very readily to settlers, so that we have every confidence in predicting that the property now offered to you will be eagerly sought after by settlers. Our clients propose to offer the property to your Board at £1 7s. 6d. per acre, and in doing so we would point out that the land was previously mortgaged for £11,000, and was, in 1892, valued by a thoroughly-trustworthy and experienced man, who knows it well, at £12,148, or, as nearly as possible, £2 per acre. Since then our clients have put two thousand pounds' worth of improvements on the property. We shall be glad, therefore, if the Board will entertain our clients' offer for the sale of this property. We shall be pleased to give you the fullest information you may require, and supply you with any further particulars. We append a list of the sections and their respective areas:—

Waiau District.—Sections 31, 39, 40, 97, 1,550 acres; Section 1, 88 acres; Section 17, 24 acres 3 roods 16 perches; Sections 2, 14, 1,554 acres 2 roods; part Section 5A and 5B, 1,103 acres; part Section 5C, 404 acres; part Section 5D, 1,122 acres 3 roods 13 perches; Sections 15, part 5E, 132 acres; Section 24, 70 acres.

We remain, &c.,

The Land Purchase Inspector,

McNAB AND WATSON.

Chairman of the Board of Land Purchase Commissioners, Wellington.

P.S.—We may mention that several people anxious to settle in the district have requested our clients to cut the place up, but they prefer to sell it right out as they are dissolving partnership. There is a valuable water-race going through the property.—McNAB AND WATSON.

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