

Sheep were purchased in the Poverty Bay and Wairoa districts, 608 wethers, 2,160 breeding ewes, 338 ewes for mutton, and 59 rams. The cost delivered at Ruatahuna was £1,393. Wire and staples were also supplied, which brought the liabilities on this scheme at the 31st March, 1932, to £1,421. None of this, however, came to charge before the end of March, 1932.

It was known that the Ruatahuna lands were covered with pumice deposits, probably of the Taupo shower, which extend eastwards as far as the sea at Mohaka. The farm-history of the valley, where sheep had been depastured in former years, did not indicate any stock troubles arising from bush sickness, but on the point there was no certainty. The Farm Supervisor of the district, Mr. Scott, made frequent visits to the valley. During the summer and early autumn a careful watch was kept, so that at the first sign of sickness steps might be taken to remove the sheep. At the beginning of February, 1932, Mr. C. M. Wright, Farm Supervisor of the King-country schemes, was instructed to visit Ruatahuna and to note the condition of the sheep, more particularly of the lambs. He reported that there was no sign of bush sickness.

Ragwort has taken a firm hold of the Ruatahuna lands, and, being at the head of the Whakatane River, will always be a menace to the valley watered by that river. An extension of sheep-farming will do much to control the spread of the weed.

Ruatahuna occupies a position of some advantage, if it were intended to transfer stock from schemes in the Wairoa and Mohaka districts to Rotorua and Waikato. It is well out of the drought area, and sheep can be delivered from there to Rotorua in a week or eight days.

From these two Urewera schemes this review passes on to Opotiki and thence to Cape Runaway. Within a few miles of the east boundary of the Ngatiawa scheme is situated the Wainui Reserve, of 600 acres, which Parliament set aside in 1923 for the adherents of the Ringatu Church, founded by Te Kooti. This was brought under section 23 of the Act of 1929 on the 14th January, 1931. Between Kutarere and Opotiki, at Waiotahe, are sundry Native allotments comprising 325 acres, which were also brought under the provisions of the said section 23. But the largest area in the Opotiki district, which was made the subject of a development scheme, was the Opape Block, situated about seven miles east of Opotiki, its total area being 16,512 acres 3 roods 11 perches, which includes what is now known as the Opape Base Farm (1,070 acres 1 rood 16 perches.) The latter was purchased from the European lessee in July, 1931, and dealt with as a separate scheme under the title, Opape Base Farm.

The name, Whakatohea Development Scheme, was given to a group of blocks comprising the Wainui Reserve, the Waiotahe Allotments and the Opape Block, excluding the Opape Base Farm. Nothing has been done on the Waiotahe Allotments, and no further reference will be made to them.

(c) WHAKATOHEA.

For practical purposes the scheme named Whakatohea may be confined to the Wainui Reserve and the Opape Block. It takes its name from that of the tribe, which occupies the Opotiki district.

i. Wainui Reserve: The Native Land Court appointed twelve Trustees to administer this reserve for the Ringatu Church. These Trustees had all the powers of a Management Committee of an incorporated block, including power to farm and develop the estate. They were empowered by Order in Council to borrow £250 from the Waiariki Maori Land Board. Part of this money was used to purchase a strip of land of nearly eight acres to provide access from the reserve to the main road. In June, 1931, the amount owing to the Waiariki Board was £215.

There was no expenditure from the Native Land Settlement Account on this reserve up to the end of March, 1931, but some clearing was done, which required seed and fencing. During the following financial year the expenditure was £623, which included grass-seed and sowing £234, clearing £222, fencing-material £80, and fertilizers £39.

ii. Opape Block: This land participated in the compromise effected with the local body in regard to outstanding rates, while outstanding survey charges were remitted. A section of the owners was, however, suspicious of both consolidation and development by a State Department. The Whakatohea Tribe has not forgotten the confiscation of the Opotiki lands by a former Government, and suspects some ulterior motive in Government attempts to simplify land titles or in Government offers of financial assistance.

Advantage was taken of the preliminary surveys undertaken for the purposes of the consolidation scheme to demarcate the areas suitable for settlement, and to outline a plan of roading and subdivision to which the readjustments of the locations might conform. This preliminary topographical work has proved of great value in the subsequent development of the territory.

In some respects Opape was very similar to Ruatoki. Between thirty and thirty-five Maori settlers were in occupation of small dairy farms, while a few were milking large herds. The former were receiving some assistance from storekeepers and mercantile firms, and the latter had obtained advances from the Native Trustee. The first report on the position of the Maori farms made by the Supervisor, Mr. Rutledge, stated that the majority of the holdings were between fifty and seventy acres in extent, made up of disconnected pieces; in some cases the component parts of the dairy farm were so far apart as to make it inefficient. The return for butterfat per cow was low, due not so much to the quality of the stock as to poor pastures, overstocking, and failure to provide winter feed. There was a poor supply of farm implements.

Many portions of the block were leased to Europeans, and a few to Maoris, themselves owners, who sought an escape from the difficulties of title. The largest leasehold was held by a Mrs. Ferguson, and affected an area so situated as to completely sever one-half of Opape from the other.

It was not till the winter of 1931 that conditions became favourable for launching the development scheme. Mr. Orr, one of the supervisors employed by the Native Trustee, reported upon all lands between Opotiki and Cape Runaway, which were considered fit for settlement. He was assisted by