

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 Waiiau Survey District and Southland Land District. The land offered consists of Sections 39 and 40, Waiiau 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 Waiiau 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