

Invercargill, 10th September, 1899.

Land for Landless Natives, Alton District.

HAVING now completed the survey of land for landless Natives in the Alton District, I take this opportunity of making a short report thereon.

Roads.—The roads in nearly every case are laid off over fairly level country, and, excepting that in many places the land is wet and boggy, no great expense need be incurred in their construction.

There should be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary gravel, as, although not appearing on the surface, indications of its existence are plainly visible in most of the creeks.

The beach is again available for such sections as have a frontage to it, and at low tide a better road could not be found. All the sections in this district which have frontage to the beach have also frontage to the main road at the back, so that the high terraces which overlook the beach need not prevent an outlet.

Soil.—All sections fronting the beach are good, and are capable of growing any of the crops generally grown in Southland. The land, however, deteriorates as it goes back, but not to such an extent as in the Rowallan District.

Along the eastern boundary the timber is very good, chiefly rimu and matai. The trees appear sound and of good shape. In the bush sections the timber is again chiefly white-birch, with a few black-birch. Ironwood is plentiful along the coast and for some distance inland.

Character of Country.—The country in this block is generally of a broken nature, although by the larger streams there are extensive flats.

Reserves.—Reserves have been left where thought advisable, and surplus areas exist in ten cases along the northern boundary.

Streams.—The Rowallan Stream and the Grove Burn run through the block; most of the available water in the Grove Burn is diverted into a water-race and carried to the coast, to be used in the mining claims there. The length is about fifteen miles, and another one is being constructed on the opposite side of the same stream.

Mining.—There are several claims being worked on the coast by ground-sluicing, and fair returns are being obtained.

General Remarks.—Pigeons and kakas are fairly plentiful, but there are no ground-birds. There are also a few cattle and pigs.

Although this last season has been a very fair one, I am informed that generally the district is a very wet one, and I should judge so by appearances.

JOHN A. ROBERTSON, Surveyor.

SIR,—

I have marked the sections I consider suitable for settlement, and have marked prices on sections which I consider are quite high enough, as want of access and market for produce in my opinion make sections of very little value. There are one or two sections more that could be settled upon, but taken as a whole the country is not at all suitable for farming purposes, as the ground is pretty broken and the timber very mixed, while a great portion of the land is covered with moss to a depth of from 6 in. to 18 in., and the soil is mostly clay. All the sections are well watered, but the climate is very wet and burns hard to get, and I consider the land unsuitable for the purpose for which it was set aside, being far too rough and broken and soil of a poor nature.

As it is some years since I was on the ground, and I did not cut up the land into sections, I may be slightly out in my recollections of the country, but I think my valuation a fair one. The portions along the coast originally had some grass on the open portions, but a great portion of this has been washed away by mining, and a good many of these sections are greatly cut up by water-races which run through them. The timber is very mixed, but there is some good red-pine on portions, but want of outlet and soft nature of ground make it of little marketable value.

J. H. TRESEDER,
District Road Engineer.

John Hay, Esq., Chief Surveyor, Invercargill.

SIR,—

Wallace County Offices, Otautau, 13th July, 1903.

In answer to your request for a report on the land that has been surveyed for landless Natives on the west side of the Waiau-Clifden Main Road, I have to state that I was employed by Mr. Treseder on the triangulation and road surveys, and afterwards by Mr. Robertson in cutting up the different blocks, and have therefore a knowledge of the ground.

With the exception of sections marked on plan (portions of some of which are first-class land) the bulk of the land is, in my opinion, not fit for settlement, being clay subsoil covered with moss.

The country is very broken, and the cost of roadmaking would be considerable; across some of the larger streams it would be impossible to make fords on account of the height and steepness of the banks, they would in consequence require to be bridged.

I have marked what I consider a fair price for sections, which are with few exceptions as I have described. For settlement purposes I consider they are almost useless, and I am of opinion that were the Government to offer them for nothing, and undertake to give tenants access to the different sections, it would be impossible for settlers to make a living.