



SOUTHLAND
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
GAZETTE.

Published by Authority.

VOL. 2.]

SATURDAY, 2ND APRIL, 1864.

[No. 12.

CHIEF SURVEYOR'S REPORT ON
STEWART'S ISLAND.

February 15th, 1864.

SIR,—I proceeded on the 26th ult. to explore Stewart's Island with a view to obtain some general knowledge of the character of the land on it, and to ascertain what steps it would be necessary to take for the survey of the whole, or portions of it.

For these purposes I went round the Island in a boat, landing at a great many points and striking inland, and ascending the hills wherever the extremely difficult character of the country permitted. The broken and irregular outline of the shore, and the many islands which fringe it, afford boat harbours on almost every part of the coast, which greatly facilitate such an excursion, though the great strength of the tides, and the prevalence of westerly gales, cause such a heavy sea off the salient points, especially off the Southern Capes, as to make it hazardous, except in a very good boat, and with skilful management.

The whole island consists of primary rocks, felspar being by far the predominant material. Some of the hills of the interior I found to consist of granite (in one case a singularly beautiful red syenitic granite), and the hills generally have the conical form and boldly rounded outlines common to the granite hills of Europe; but near the coast large dykes occur, of almost pure felspar, intersected by veins of quartz, and with a few small crystals only of mica and hornblende thinly scattered through it. In some parts, especially in the south, mica and talc abound so much that it might be called talcose rock.

Rocks of this character are by no means unlikely to yield gold. Everywhere I found embedded in the felspar minute crystals of zircon, and the sands contained titanate of iron and a number of small green gems, which from their form, and from their having a specific gravity much greater than that of quartz, I take to be euclase.

As might be expected, the decomposition of these rocks gives rise to a very

fertile soil, and everywhere the surface is covered with a dense and luxuriant scrub, which, having never been burnt off, or broken down by cattle, and being composed of quick-growing shrubs of no great strength, subject to be blown down and replaced by new growths, the dead and the living form an impenetrable jungle, so as to make walking to any distance altogether impossible. On the west coast the land is so much exposed to the prevalent winds, and the hills are so steep and broken that, for the present at all events, it may be set down as absolutely unavailable, except a few hundred acres at Mason's Bay; but, on the east side, and north of Port Pegasus, especially in the vicinity of Lord's River and Port Adventure, the ridges become longer and rather lower; the size of the timber increases; the Rimu, Totara and Kahikatea appear, and the whole country becomes rather more practicable, though still steep and broken, and everywhere covered with dense scrub to the water's edge.

At Port Adventure there is a small settlement, now chiefly peopled by half-castes. Portions of the hills have been more or less cleared, and the extreme luxuriance of the grass which has spontaneously grown up, attests the productiveness of the soil and climate. Proceeding on towards Paterson's Inlet, the land again becomes rather higher and steeper, but still carrying forest trees, though of no great size. A little land in the south arm of Paterson's Inlet seems capable of cultivation, and a few small spots all along the extensive shores of the harbour, might hereafter invite settlement (aided, as these spots will be, by the convenience of communication by water) but the area of available land is very small.

The principal arm of Paterson's Inlet receives a considerable river, the Ohokia, which flows through the only plain in the island. This valley is full ten miles long, with an average breadth of about three miles, and contains 12,000 or 15,000 acres of flat land, and about half as much more of the easy slopes of the hills on each side; a great portion, perhaps one half of the flat is void of scrub, apparently having been burnt off at no very remote period; the remainder of the scrub would no doubt easily be destroyed by fire, and by feeding cattle, but the character of the land in the flat is very inferior; it is, in fact, a mere sand-drift covered with a thin peaty soil. The summits of the long, low parallel ridges are dry but poor, and every bottom is occupied by swamp. The slopes at the side, however, have a good soil, and will make some desirable farms, and no doubt by frequent

burning and close feeding, with perhaps a little labour here and there in clearing the water-courses, the flat will so far improve as to afford good feed for stock.

On the north side of Paterson's Inlet, three saw mills have been erected, and one of them has been worked pretty extensively. The timber sawn is exclusively Rimu, and of very small size. The trees are thinly scattered among the rata and scrub, but as the land rises steeply from sheltered and easily navigable waters for many miles, the timber is easily got down and floated to the mills.

The two peninsulas which narrow the mouth of the harbour seem to have been the favourite haunt of the hardy adventurers who, attracted by the whales and seals which formerly greatly abounded on these coasts, took up their lonely abode, nearly thirty years ago, on this spot. Many of these still remain, though the original object of their advent has long since disappeared, and the growth of the Colony in their vicinity has increased their disabilities without adding anything to their wealth and comfort. The original settlers are now aged men, but they are generally surrounded by half-caste families, who constitute a little community which has grown up entirely without aid or care from the Government, and which is remarkable for the general good conduct of its members. I find that very few of these old residents have prosecuted claims to the land on which they reside, which they originally occupied by the consent of its native owners, and which they have always considered as their own. Though they cannot now assert any legal title, I trust that whenever the native title to the island at large is extinguished, steps will be taken to secure the inheritance of these spots for their families. It would indeed be unfortunate if the advent of the Government should have the effect of depriving of their homesteads these earliest colonists; and if these numerous half-caste children should be left landless in the land which their fathers were the first Europeans to explore, and of which their maternal ancestors were the sole possessors.

North of Paterson's Inlet, a belt of one or two miles in depth from the coast, extends, with few interruptions, to Saddle Point, consisting of ridges generally of no great height, and of which the greater portion might be brought into cultivation.

Port William being a good harbour, very easy of access, and a most convenient port of call for vessels wind-bound in Foveaux Straits, presents greater induce-

ments for immediate settlement than any other part of the island. There is an excellent situation for a small township, and it seems probable that colonists would be induced to settle there if the land should be thrown open for sale. Here, as elsewhere, the land is thickly wooded, but many of the trees are suitable for sawing, and the scrub would not be very difficult to fell and burn. When once cleared there is no doubt the soil would be very fertile, and would produce excellent crops of potatoes and other vegetables; or if laid down in grass would afford very abundant pasture.

From all the enquires I made with regard to climate, and from my observation, I am inclined to think that on the east side of Stewart's Island, north of Port Pegasus, the temperature will be found to be considerably milder than at Invercargill and its immediate vicinity. Certainly, the westerly winds will be much less felt, from the shelter afforded by the mountains in the interior, and from the slopes of the land to the north-east; but it is undoubtedly very wet. It is not probable that the actual rainfall is greater than on the main land, but small drizzly rain is very frequent. The harbours on the east coast are certainly excellent, being both safe and convenient of access; and all the coast from Saddle Point to Port Pegasus, with its deep indentations, presents every facility for communication by boats or vessels of every kind, and the great abundance, and the excellent quality of the fish, will make that a considerable resource. The quality of the Stewart's Island oysters has long been celebrated, and I carefully examined the condition of this fishery. These oysters occasionally adhere to the rocks a little above high-water mark, but they have for the most part been dredged up from certain limited banks, which were found far up the Harbours, in about three fathoms water. The few banks hitherto discovered are pretty nearly exhausted; no doubt numbers of other banks will be found, but it is hardly probable that the oysters on them will be found, when taken, to be in so good condition as they were on the old banks, for these last were just in the sort of positions in which oysters are artificially bedded, near the heads of bays at the mouths of small fresh-water streams. At all events, it is certain that this fishery can never be a considerable object of industry until the oysters are regularly bedded and tended here as at home. It is impossible that the facilities for doing this should be greater than at Stewart's Island, and there is no doubt that with good management and some little capital,

this may be made a profitable and considerable branch of industry.

Ship-building is another pursuit for which this island affords peculiar facilities. The Rata timber, which grows everywhere abundantly, of the most suitable sizes and forms for this purpose, makes the best possible frames for vessels. On the whole, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the colonization of Stewart's Island presents very great difficulties and drawbacks. It will, ultimately, I have no doubt, form a very important and valuable part of the colony, but so much labour will be required to be expended before any portion can be made available, that it would be quite idle to attempt to people it by the same means as are applicable to the level, accessible, and well-grassed plains of Southland. If Stewart's Island is to be peopled at all, it must be done by offering special inducements to ~~the~~ suitable class of colonists to settle there. The Nova Scotian Highlanders are the only colonists likely to attempt, and to succeed in, such an enterprise. To these skilful axe-men the forests would present no difficulties, and the facilities for fishing and ship-building would be a great inducement to them. In comparison with ~~the rocky surface, and the bitter winters~~ of Nova Scotia, the soil and climate of Stewart's Island would be genial and inviting; and when once the great difficulties of clearing and settling were over, such a community could not fail to become prosperous, and the remainder of the Island would then acquire value.

The proximity of such settlers would be of the greatest possible advantage to Southland, both by the increase of trade which it would involve, and by the great supply of labour which it would provide. But to effect this it is clear that a special land law will be required, and as this cannot be done for some time, it would be premature to take any steps for topographical survey on an extensive scale.

The Admiralty survey gives a very fair outline of the Island, and as any surveys which will be required for many years will be on the east coast only, there can be no difficulty in connecting them, either by main traverse lines across the points, or by a minor triangulation according to circumstances; and the only steps that I conceive it will be necessary to take at an early period, will be the laying off a small township, with a few 20 acre Sections immediately around port William: and perhaps defining and marking the Reserves it may be necessary

to make, for native purposes and the portions of Land which may be appropriated to the present inhabitants of the Island.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

THEOPHL. HEALE.

To His Honor the Superintendent.

IT is hereby notified that I have appointed

WILLIAM F. TARBTON, Esq., M.P.C.

to be Provincial Treasurer of the Province of Southland.

J. A. R. MENZIES,
Superintendent.

Superintendent's Office,
Southland, 2nd April, 1864.

IT is hereby notified that a Writ issued for the Election of one Member of the Provincial Council of the Province of Southland, for the Electoral District of Invercargill, has been returned with a certificate to the effect that

JAMES HARVEY, Esq.,

has been duly Elected.

J. A. R. MENZIES,
Superintendent.

Superintendent's Office,
Southland, 1st April, 1864.

INVERCARGILL TOWN BOARD.

ELECTION OF ONE MEMBER.

IN pursuance of the provisions of the "Town Board Ordinance, 1863," I, the Superintendent of the Province of Southland, do hereby appoint the electors entitled to vote for members for the Town of Invercargill in the Provincial Council of Southland, to assemble upon Wednesday, the thirteenth day of April, in the office of the said Board, for the purpose of electing one legally qualified person, who shall be a Member of the Town Board, under the provisions of the Ordinance aforesaid, in the room of Samuel Beaven, resigned. And I hereby appoint Robert Mitchell, Esq., of Invercargill, Returning Officer, to preside at the said meeting, and in the event of a poll being demanded, I hereby appoint the polling to take place in the office of the said Board, on Thursday, the fourteenth day of April, ensuing.

J. A. R. MENZIES,
Superintendent.

Superintendent's Office,
Southland, March 29, 1864.

Invercargill Public Pound,
27th March, 1864.

IMPOUNDED 1 Black Horse, branded D C near shoulder; if not claimed, to be sold at the Pound here, on the 22nd day of April next, at 12 o'clock noon.

JAS. T. PETRIE,
Poundkeeper.