

High Production on

a South Canterbury Downland Farm

In a report of a survey of the South Canterbury foothills region in the "Journal" in August 1954 the statement was made that the region has been South Canterbury's marginal area but is now one of the main areas in the district where increased production can be expected. In this article H. Tocker, Research Officer, Department of Agriculture, Christchurch, describes the methods adopted by a father and son in developing and managing this class of country and the results which have been achieved.

MR. D. G. BAKER is farming 1183 acres of clay downland in the Maungati-Cannington district about 17 miles west of Timaru. The farm is typical of the South Canterbury foothill country in that it has similar soil types and has had a history of excessive cropping. The first block of 395 acres was purchased by Mr. Baker's father in 1919, in 1939 an additional 432 acres of tussock land was leased and subsequently purchased, and in 1943 a further block of 356 acres alongside the original holding was acquired. Mr. Baker, sen., has retired and Mr. D. G. Baker has managed the property since 1948.

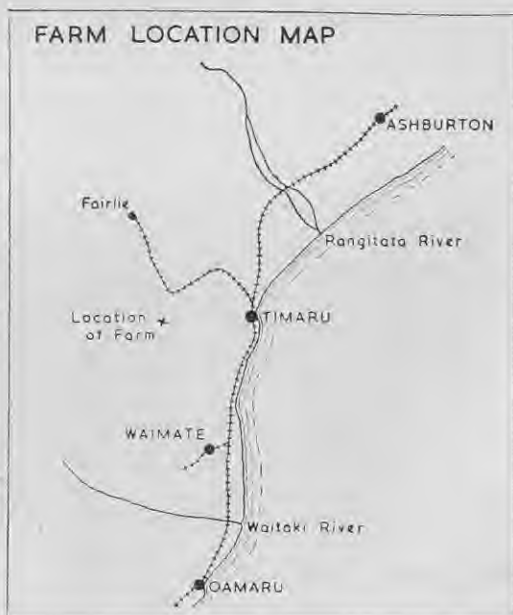
Development

When the original 395 acres was acquired it had no internal fences, but only a house and a dilapidated stable. Though the property had been excessively cropped in the past, for the first 9 years of his occupation Mr. Baker continued with a modified cropping programme, reducing the annual wheat acreage to about 100 acres. In addition he grew

some barley or linseed as well as oats for the team of horses and turnips for the flock of 300 crossbred ewes. Under this system of management no headway was being made and in 1928 he decided to change from cropping to purely pastoral farming.

With the adoption of a vigorous liming policy good pastures have been established on the home-
stead area of 750 acres, 180 acres of the tussock block have been giant disced and also sown to improved pasture, and it is intended that in the next 2 years as much of the remaining 250 acres of this block as can be covered by a tracklaying tractor will be similarly developed. The home-
stead area is well subdivided by good 7-wire fences with well-hung gates and a water supply system, including large concrete tanks holding 6000 gallons, has been installed. This supplies water to every paddock on the 750-acre block as well as the house, shearing shed, and dip. A 2-stand shearing shed and yards and a large shed which houses a full range of implements as well as two wheeled tractors and one tracklaying tractor have been built. Two large Dutch barns have also been constructed for the annual supply of 6000 bales of hay. Several miles of shelter

FARM LOCATION MAP



HEADING PHOTOGRAPH: Typical rolling country on the farm.