

Report of the Chief Waste Lands Commissioner to the Superintendent of Otago upon Native Reserves.

Waste Land Board Office,
Dunedin, 14th April, 1858.

SIR,—I have the honor in accordance with your Honor's request to report upon the subject of the Native Reserves in this Province. I regret that the matter should have been so long delayed, and that the required information could not at once be placed at the disposal of the gentlemen appointed as Commissioners under the provisions of the Native Reserves Act, 1856, but the State of the records in the Land Office relating to the Native Reserves is so defective that I have been at great difficulty in ascertaining the actual state of the legal position of many of the Reserves, and my Report is therefore not so entirely satisfactory as I could desire.

In the first place the Commissioners request to be furnished with maps of all the Reserves. This has hitherto been an insurmountable difficulty from the fact of the Survey Department being unable to overtake the amount of work required of it, but the strength of the Department having been increased I have every hope that maps of such of the Reserves as have been surveyed and recorded will shortly be furnished.

The Reserves appear to have been numbered with reference to the several purchases from the Natives, thus those Reserves which were made in the Northern District, the Native title to which was extinguished by Mr. W. Mantell in 1848-9, commence with the number 9, the Reserve so numbered although recorded in the Otago Land Office is in fact in the Canterbury Province, and appears to be the consecutive number of Reserves made further to the North, a system which is carried on, by the most Northerly Reserve within the Province of Otago, being numbered 10, whilst the Reserves in the Murihiku District, the purchase of which was effected by Mr. Mantell in 1853-4, commence with number 1.

I consider it will be more convenient to notice the Reserves in the order of their number, in preference to their date of reservation, although this plan has some inconvenience.

Reserve No. 1 was made by Mr. Commissioner Mantell at the date of purchase of the Murihiku purchase, it was surveyed by Mr. Kettle. It is situate on the East Bank of the Mataura. Its contents are 287 acres, and it is partly open land and partly bush, the exact quantity of each has not been accurately ascertained, but it is presumed that about one-third of the land is covered with timber. There are but few Natives residing on the spot, I believe but one family and its connections. The Reserve is situate in the best place for a ferry over the Mataura on the present known route to the South. The soil is good and well adapted for cultivation, both upon the Native and European plans.

Reserve No. 2 was reserved at the same period as Reserve No. 1. It is situated at Omahui, on the East head of the entrance to New River, and comprises 1686 acres, about one-half of which is covered with bush, the soil is mostly good and is well suited to Native cultivation, as in all the Native Reserves at the South, it combines all the advantages of situation, being near to the mouth of the New River, which will ultimately become the main channel of communication with the interior country, and being on the Coast the Natives can easily supply themselves with fish. In the selection of all these Reserves the Natives were consulted, they are therefore the best suited to meet the wants of the Natives, and combine the advantages of being situated in a position which will ultimately acquire commercial value by the number of inhabitants, or the state of their cultivations. I have no means at hand of forming an estimate.

Reserve No. 3 is in the same position as to the period of its reservation as the previous Reserves; it is situate at Owe on the West Head of the New River, within the lower harbour, and comprises 176 acres, partly bush and partly open land, in about equal proportions, it is well suited for cultivation and has a commercial value from its situation.

Reserve No. 4 is similar to the above, and is situate at Aparma, East Head of Jacob's River, and contains 527 acres, about one-half of which is bush land; the soil is good and the place well adapted for cultivation. It has a high position value as it abuts upon the Village of Kiverton, being doubtless part of the land which would have been set apart for the Town had it not been reserved for the Natives.

Reserve No. 5, the same as the above, is situate at Otaka, Hinetin Point, Colacks Bay, it comprises 1132 acres, mostly bush land well suited for Native purposes. If the country were generally occupied it would have a position value.

Reserve No. 6 is in the same legal position as the foregoing Reserves. It is situate at Ra Waka Putaputa, on Waka Patoo Point, and comprises 977 acres, chiefly bush land. It is much of the nature of the other Southern Reserves, but no accurate information can be obtained at Dunedin relative to it.

Reserve No. 7 is in the same legal position as the foregoing. It is situate at One Tota, and is a promontory projecting into the sea. It comprises 90 acres and is entirely open land. This appears to be the last Reserve made at the time of the Murihiku purchase.

There appears to be no Reserve numbered 8.

Reserve No 9 is situate on the North side of the Waitangi, and is therefore in the Province of Canterbury.

Reserve No. 10 was reserved by Mr. Commissioner Mantell, 11th November, 1848-9, and was surveyed by Mr. Alfred Mills, Surveyor to the New Zealand Company. It is situate on the South Bank of the Waitaki, about 14 miles from the mouth of the river, and is called "Te Pund Pundomaru, or Penomaroo." It comprises 376 acres, and is open land; it appears to have been set aside for the family of a particular Chief named "Huru Huru." Its agricultural capabilities I have no means of