

whereabouts of Mount Owen, are a plan prepared under the direction of Mr. Julius (now Dr.) Haast, and a Report by the same gentleman of an exploring journey from Nelson to the West Coast, undertaken in 1860.

On the plan referred to, Dr. Haast has expressly marked a point of a mountain range lying to the westward of the junction of the River Owen with the River Buller, and between the Rivers Owen and Matiri—as so named by himself.

On the tracing enclosed, this point is marked as Mount Owen, and is in accordance with his own plan.

Now, if a straight line be drawn from that point to Mount Arthur (as fixed by Mr. Lewis's survey), the reef and purchased land are some miles outside the gold fields, and the question may be considered settled.

The objectors, on the other hand, claim for some peak or peaks at the head of the valley of the River Owen the name of Mount Owen, and from which they say it takes its rise, and appeal to a map of the Provinces of Nelson and Marlborough, published in London, in the year 1864, by Edward Stanford, in which a point at the head of the said valley is so named. Now, if a line be drawn from a peak so situated to Mount Arthur, it becomes then a matter of accurate survey as to the exact position of the reef, &c., with reference to such line.

In support of the officially-recorded position of Mount Owen, I beg to refer you to Dr. Haast's Report (a copy of which I enclose), in which, on page 12, he describes the position of Mount Owen, and his naming it; page 14, his naming the River Owen; page 55, the position of the mountain as looking from the West Coast, from a point just North of the Buller; page 73, the source of the River Owen, as not being from Mount Owen, but from another chain of hills altogether; page 74, the position of Mount Owen, when looking towards the West and North-west; and page 75, where Mount Owen is described as situated near the Eastern branch of the Matiri.

Finally, in support of the official view of the position of Mount Owen, I may adduce the testimony of Mr. Alexander Mackay (the Commissioner of Native Reserves), and Mr. James Burnett, both of whom were associated with Dr. Haast in his exploring journey, and who say decidedly that the plan in the office indicates the position of the true Mount Owen.

Another question has been raised in the local papers, which is, Why has the district of the Wangapeka, known for many years to be a gold-bearing district, not been closed to land sales and leases long ago?

The district of the Wangapeka and its tributaries, together with other valleys trending eastward from Mount Arthur, have been proved to be auriferous, but, as yet, only to the extent of what is termed "a poor man's diggings"—a diggings or field capable of supporting a limited number of men who, by much hard labour, can procure a sufficient quantity of gold for their own support, but not in such quantities as to draw a rush of miners, and render necessary the establishment of machinery required for the management of larger and richer fields.

For nine or ten years past, as you may remember, men have been thus quietly working, and though from time to time large bodies of men from other fields have visited these districts, nothing has turned up to warrant their remaining, or that would show an opening for a large mining population.

Accordingly, gold mining in those districts has been quietly going on, and the gradual settlement of the land by more permanent occupiers, for the purposes of grazing and cultivation, been advancing also, the miners in many cases becoming settlers; and others of their class, as the lower parts of the valleys became settled or worked out, have pushed further back.

The Land Leasing Act, which has proved a great boon to the Province generally, by enabling settlers to push back from the more available districts amongst the hills and outlying valleys, was quickly taken advantage of by persons residing in the districts referred to above; several leases having been issued in those localities already, and several applications (say eight or ten) are awaiting the completion of the surveys to enable them to be issued also. Most of these applications have been lodged many months, but the Waste Lands Board has decided to suspend their issue for the present.

In one instance an application was objected to, on the ground that the land comprised in it was auriferous, and therefore the application was not acceded to. Even in this case, the men objecting did not remain long on the ground.

The applications for leases under the Leasing Act, are always published for one month prior to issue.

It is known that some of the leaseholders wash for gold, as well as follow grazing pursuits, and thus make out a living; but without any disparagement to the gold-digger, either as to character or occupation, the Board has considered that the country generally was more benefitted by encouraging permanent settlement, than by shutting up those isolated districts to settlers of that class, and leaving them open only for the few miners who might find merely a present support, and after taking out the gold (their only object of pursuit), then abandon the district or province for other fields.

In short, the Board considered the question of granting leases in those districts, as one of present and proved benefit in opposition to an uncertain and doubtful one, and decided in favour of the former.

Of course in the case of gold being found in such large quantities, either in the shape of a payable auriferous quartz reef (as the present one is supposed to be), or in that of rich and extensive alluvial diggings, the question of most benefit would preponderate in favour of bringing such district under the full operation of the Gold Fields Act, &c., and the Board would take action accordingly; but, hitherto, though rumours of good finds were heard from time to time, the Board thought it right to wait for something certain and definite, before closing the district in question to further permanent settlement.

The enclosed tracing shows the auriferous districts now to be included in the South-west Gold Fields, together with the relative position of the quartz reef; also the sold land coloured yellow, and the leased lands bordered yellow; also, the previous line of the South-west Gold Fields, from Mount Arthur to the Mount Owen as laid down by Haast.

The Secretary for Crown Lands,  
Wellington.

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Commissioner.