

1872.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT UPON LANDS SUITABLE FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS AT TAURANGA,

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

MR. HALCOMBE to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Tauranga, 20th October, 1871.

I have the honor to inform you that in compliance with instructions received from the Hon. Donald McLean, No. 344-1, of date 14th September, 1871, I proceeded to Tauranga at the close of the month of September, and arrived there on the 5th instant, since which date I have been entirely occupied in making myself personally acquainted with the whole of the lands lying between the Waimapu river and the northern boundary of the Kati Kati purchase.

I have been most fortunate in meeting here with Mr. Heale, Inspector of Surveys, Mr. Floyd, of the Telegraph Department, and Mr. Commissioner Clarke, from all of whom I have been able to obtain valuable information and much assistance.

I confine my present remarks entirely to the block of land lying within the boundaries of the original confiscation, and shown in the tracing accompanying this report.

This block includes the whole of the Tauranga military settlements, the Te Puna, and Kati Kati purchases, and the lands re-granted to the Maoris, in accordance with Sir George Grey's promises to the surrendered Ngaterangis in 1864.

This block has an average length of thirty-two (32) miles by twelve (12) miles in width, and lies between the Tauranga harbor and the centre of the wooded ranges which is the watershed between the Upper Thames Valley and the Tauranga harbour.

With the exception of the wooded slopes of the range, the country is rich, light, rolling fern land, lying in ridges more or less steep, separated and intersected by innumerable small streams which cut through the light soil and form deep ravines inland, and soft, boggy mud flats when the sea level is reached.

This conformation makes the country peculiarly difficult for overland communication, as a main line of road from Te Papa to Katikati must run across all the lines of drainage. Transit by water is almost as bad, being exceedingly expensive and uncertain, owing to the shallowness of the main channel of the harbour, and could not possibly satisfy the requirements of an ordinary agricultural population.

Between Te Papa and the Oangatete river the land is very much broken by the intersecting watercourses, but thence almost to Katikati lies an extensive flat. The whole country is beautifully watered, and judging from the very favorable results produced whenever any attempt at cultivation has been made, I consider the district as one of the most easily available for agricultural operations, and likely to yield a more satisfactory and immediate return for a small outlay than any other district of similar extent I have met with in the North Island.

The whole block contains an approximate area of two hundred and fifty-four thousand acres, which for the purposes of my report I have classified and sub-divided as follows, viz:—

1. <i>Maori Land</i> —	Acres.
(a) Open land between Wairoa and Ruangarara River ...	5,000
(b) Bush block behind Oropi and Kaimai to boundary of Te Puna, and Katikati purchase ...	56,360
(c) Grants made by New Zealand Commissioner in Te Papa, Te Puna, and Katikati blocks ...	10,000
(d) Land between Waimapa River and southern boundary of con- fiscation ...	43,000
	114,360

	Carried forward	Acres.
					114,360
2. <i>Military Settlements and purchased land—</i>					
(a) Te Papa and Wairoa	22,450
(b) Te Puna, Oangatete	12,000
					<hr/> 34,450
3. <i>Land at disposal of the Government—</i>					
(a) { Unselected land Te Papa, Wairoa block	6,000
Reserves	"	"	"	...	4,500
(b) Paengaro, Oropi block	10,000
(c) Wairoa, Te Puna block to Ongatete River	19,000
(d) Katikati block, including University Reserve	66,000
					<hr/> 105,500
Total estimated area	<hr/> 254,310 acres.

Of the Maori lands, the block (a) between the Wairoa and Ruangarara rivers, of about 5,000 acres, is rather broken, but good open fern land, and it has an especial value as lying on what will be the main line of road *via* Kaimai to the Upper Waikato. I am informed that there would be little difficulty in acquiring this from the Native owners, and its acquisition would give the Government a compact and extensive block for settlement between the Wairoa and Te Puna rivers.

The bush block (b) is an extensive block of most valuable land, extremely well adapted for the settlement of a body of men accustomed to a bush country. There is some good sawing timber scattered over the block. It is much cut up by streams, and would have to be made accessible by the various roads formed, or in course of formation, up the several ridges centreing at Te Papa. The main road to Taupo opens a large part of this block, and a main road by Kaimai would again intersect it. I am informed by Mr. Commissioner Clarke that the Natives are open to negotiate for its sale, and its acquisition and occupation would be of the greatest importance in forming the future of Tauranga, for so long as it remains in Native hands Tauranga and the Upper Waikato are effectually separated.

The grants referred to under (c) have nearly all fallen into the hands of Europeans, either by purchase or lease, and therefore cannot be held to interfere in any way with the settlement of the district.

With reference to the lands under (d) I gather from Mr. Clarke that, under a distinct agreement made with Sir George Grey by the Ngaterangi in 1864, the grants of these lands, as also of the Island lands, are made inalienable; they are not, therefore, open to purchase. Much of this land is, moreover, under profitable occupation by the Maori owners, and what they do not use themselves they will probably make some arrangements to let temporarily to Europeans. Judging from the facility with which they part with the bulk of their lands so soon as an individualized title has been granted it appears to me a wise provision that they should be restricted from pauperizing themselves and their descendants.

The Military Settlements, which cover an area of nearly 34,000 acres, are, as military settlements, entire failures. The causes of such failure are not far to seek. Primarily, the original grantees were not, as a whole, men likely to succeed as farmers. In the next place, they never had a fair chance of occupying their lands. Maori hostility, and the want of any inland communication, being quite sufficient to prevent successful settlement. As the natural result of the operation of these causes, we find only a few hundred acres immediately around Te Papa in actual occupation. But time and adverse circumstances have worked a process of natural selection, and a few of the best men have remained about the town, who have the means and are willing and anxious to occupy their country sections as soon as they shall be made accessible by a main line of road. I learn, also, that there are a large number at the Thames diggings who would return to occupy if they could gain access to their blocks.

These men should meet with every encouragement as they will be the most valuable pioneers. Their settlement will, I believe, have the effect of inducing occupation either *per se* or by agents of many of those into whose hands the other grants have fallen and whom it is at present impossible to trace. I do not think that any special legislation or Governmental interference is necessary, even if it were possible to force the occupation of those lands. If a passable road line be formed and settlement is once started the lands will acquire a value which will ensure their being turned to account. I would, however, strongly recommend that road districts should be proclaimed, including all these military grants. The operation of Road Boards which the resident settlers are interested in working, would not only foster actual occupation, but it would gradually overcome a great present difficulty experienced by *bonâ fide* settlers, by forcing owners of neighbouring lands to declare themselves and take their legitimate share of the expenses of fencing, payment of road rates, &c.

The Government lands (a) are intimately mixed up with the military settlers, grants, both town and suburban, being a number of unselected, condemned, or reserved sections of more or less value. They are by no means all of them bad land, being mostly blocks rejected when the selections were made, because swampy or inaccessible, but to which a more full experience or an alteration of circumstances have now given a higher value than was formerly set upon them. I recommend that all these lands, which it is not deemed necessary to reserve for public purposes, should without delay have a price fixed upon them and be thrown open for public sale at the Land Office at Tauranga. They can be of no use for special settlements, and they only hinder the operations of adjacent settlers who would in many cases purchase and immediately improve them.

From the Paengaroa Oropi bush block (b) a Maori reserve of about 2,300 acres has to be taken, its exact locality being as yet undetermined. The balance, viz., 7,700 acres is very rich land not very

heavily timbered, and it is partly opened by the Taupo road. I have before suggested the purchase of the adjacent Maori land, and if a purchase were effected to such an extent as to suffice for a special settlement, a large body of men could be located here with every prospect of success. If neither additional purchase nor such special settlement were found to be probable, this block should not, I think, be kept back from possible settlements, but it should be offered at such a price and on such terms as would secure actual occupation and induce men of sufficient means to occupy it profitably.

The position—on the border of disaffection—might make it a prudent step to seek occupants from among men who know the district and its real dangers and difficulties rather than to place upon it a body of men whose inexperience of the Maories might lead them into unnecessary danger or make them yield to causeless panic. The formation of a main line of road from Tauranga to Tapapa *via* Kaimai would have a great influence on the settlement of much of this bush block and by uniting Cambridge and Tauranga, give great additional security to both places.

The Wairoa.—Te Puna block (c) put down as nineteen thousand acres, may include, perhaps, twelve thousand or thirteen thousand acres of good available land, some of the high ranges being comparatively poor soil. The land, however, is generally very good, though somewhat broken. In common with the military settlement beyond Te Puna, this block is absolutely worthless till made accessible, as it must be settled out from Te Papa as its port. I can see no use in continuing the farce of a township at Te Puna, as the main road must be inland, and the harbour of Tauranga at the Te Puna point is quite impracticable for any useful navigation.

Seeing that so little land within the Tauranga block is open for sale and settlement at first hand to new comers, I would suggest whether this block also might not be best dealt with by putting it up for sale. As, however, so much of the district lies under the baneful influence of absenteeism, it would, I think, be advisable to adopt a system of lease for a limited period, with a right of purchase at, say 10s. or £1 per acre on the fulfilment of certain conditions of actual improvement, rather than to encourage further land speculation by an immediate unconditional sale.

The Katikati block (d) affords the best field for experimental immigration on an extensive scale. The block is estimated to contain sixty-six thousand acres, but the available area, including some bush, cannot be taken as more than forty thousand acres; but of this a large portion is flat and rich, and most beautifully watered. The Kauri point, opposite the Kati Kati head, offers every facility for shipping purposes, as vessels of considerable draught can lie close alongside with perfect safety, and drays could at the present time travel most of the way to the Oangatete. A road and bridge over the Tahawai stream, and some rather expensive work over the mud flats towards Kati Kati, would be necessary to complete the connection between the different parts of the block; but with a very small expenditure the largest and best half of the block would be made accessible from Kauri point. Unfortunately, Maori grants cover the greater part of the point, but a block of two hundred and fifty-seven acres is still available for a township.

Within this block a reserve of twenty thousand acres is marked off on the map as an university reserve. The exact site is not definitely fixed. Such a reserve, situated as at present proposed, would be a serious hindrance to settlement, and I would suggest, if the reserve must be confirmed, that its site should be fixed further north, the northern boundary being made coterminous with the northern boundary of the Kati Kati purchase; also, that both for the sake of the district and the future advantage of the institution it is intended to benefit, the reserve, when fixed, should be subdivided, and let on leases of, say twenty-one years, at low rental. The land being of a character so easily improvable that such a lease would encourage a tenant to put the land into immediate cultivation, and he could hardly fail to leave an exceedingly valuable property at the end of the term.

As the result of my personal observation of the conformation of the country, and a study of the position of the Tauranga district in relation to the other parts of the country, I am of opinion that for the future and natural development of the whole country, three main lines of road should be constructed so soon as the work can be done, viz. :—

- 1.—Te Patipa to Kati Kati 35 miles.
- 2.—Te Papa to Tapapa *via* Kaimai 24 „
- 3.—Te Puna to Ohineroa 11 „

The road from Te Papa to Kati Kati would follow the general direction of the telegraph line laid down on the tracing enclosed, and would make all the Tauranga harbour lands accessible to Te Papa and to each other. The difficulties of overland travel in this direction are at present insuperable to ordinary travellers, and to take a pack-horse from Te Papa to Oangatete is a physical impossibility. Small swampy creeks, thirty or forty in number, and soft mud flats at the mouth of the larger streams, form the chief obstacles to locomotion; but they present no great engineering difficulties, nor would the whole road line be more expensive to form than any other average road of similar length. Some idea may be formed of the hindrance to settlement the want of a road has been, in the fact that certainly not ten people in Tauranga have ever been six miles overland towards Kati Kati; and no one but the telegraph contractors have ever been the whole way.

The line from Te Papa to Tapapa would be about twenty-four (24) miles in length, but only eight or ten miles through the bush would require to be made. Up to Kaimai, on this side of the bush, and from Tapapa to Cambridge a dray could be driven now with very little road work done. The range at this point is very low, in fact, the bush is nearly flat. This road would open up the whole of the Upper Waikato and Thames plains to Tauranga, which is their natural market for export and supply.

The road from Te Puna to Ohineroa would not, I think, be a costly work. A straight pass running north-west to Ohinemutu through the range exists, and is certainly not more than three miles from the open country of Tauranga to the open valley of the Thames. The formation of this piece of road would be all that would be required to connect the Tauranga country with the Ohinemuri and the Thames goldfields; and as this Aroha range is itself reported and believed to be auriferous, being in fact a continuation of the Ohinemuri ranges, the importance of a practicable road by that route can hardly be over-estimated.

If the necessary work on these two road lines were taken in hand now, so far as the land in possession of the Government extends, and if, in accordance with Sir George Grey's promise in 1864, the resident Natives were to be more or less employed upon them. I have no hesitation in expressing my full belief that any Native objection to their continuation would vanish as the work proceeded.

The formation of the road hence to Taupo has had an extremely good effect upon the Native mind, and so far from looking now with jealousy or suspicion on the formation of roads, they are almost clamorous for employment, and readily appreciate the advantages to themselves which the means of locomotion offer. Even the Pirirahau, who occupy at Whakamarama a most commanding position over the Tauranga block, and who have always been the most troublesome of the Natives, would, I understand, willingly join in the formation of roads under the Government auspices.

In making this report I would desire clearly to place on record my belief that now Native difficulties have apparently ceased to exist the formation of roads and the opening up of some of the lands in the hands of the Government to *bona fide* occupation is all that is required to secure the immediate settlement of a very large portion of the block.

Settlement in this district has been kept back by three great causes. First, the fear of the Natives. Secondly, the absence of any means of communication overland. Thirdly, the locking up of the whole of the Government lands. The district, from its position, its climate, its fine harbour, its good soil (so marvellously easily put under English grass), its proximity to the great Waikato plains, and to the market which the goldfields will probably long afford. All these give an intrinsic value to the land which has been, and must be fully recognised. Now that the Government has happily succeeded in removing the Native obstructions to settlement, it only remains for it to remove the other obstructions and the natural settlement of the place will proceed with the greatest rapidity, so soon as a start shall have been once effected; and although I think that the formation of a special settlement of new immigrants at one or two points would be a great assistance to the district, yet it would in my opinion be most injudicious to import a body, however small, of strangers to the country until inland communication between their location and Te Papa had been completed, and the district had so far advanced as to allow them to be supplied with food and seed from Tauranga itself and its neighborhood.

Moreover, I do not think that the country is of such a character that the subdivision into such small blocks as fifty (50) acres is likely to be attended with success. The soil is of too light a character to stand cultivation by successive corn crops, but it readily becomes fine pasture land, and with occasional cropping would be most productive.

The Kati Kati block is of so good a character that I think an effort might be made, with a fair chance of success, to induce a body of small capitalists from England, or elsewhere, to take up the whole, in from 200 to 640 acre blocks, on conditions of actual occupation and improvement, and paying, say £1 per acre for the fee simple of the land.

It must be remembered that the military settlers, or their representatives, and the resident Natives, are likely to afford sufficient labor for the Government works which it is necessary to undertake, and for the ordinary requirements of the district, and that to introduce any large number more of immigrants, without sufficient means to employ themselves upon their land, would be to throw a burthen on the Government of finding employment for them, which it might be most inconvenient or even impossible, to meet.

In conclusion, I may shortly sum up the substance of my report as follows, viz. :—

1. The Tauranga harbour lands contain over 254,000 acres of land, of which 250,000 are not yet profitably occupied.

2. Of these unoccupied lands, 44,000 acres are in the hands of Europeans, 105,000 in the hands of the Government, and 104,000 in the hands of the Maoris.

3. The Government may probably make up their landed estate to 160,000 or 170,000 by purchase from the Natives. Endeavors should be made to effect such purchases.

4. To open lands already acquired by the Government, and by private individuals, the formation of a practicable road to Kati Kati from Te Papa should be immediately undertaken.

5. With a view to the development of lands yet to be acquired from the Natives, and to perfect important lines of inland communication, the dividing range between Tauranga and the Waikato plains should be pierced at two points, Tapapa and Ohineroa. Road work on this side of the range should be done with a view of extension in these directions the first opportunity which presents itself.

6. Now that the obstacles hitherto existing to settlement have been removed, or are in course of removal, the settlement of the district by the ordinary means will probably be very rapid, and the effect of peace and the formation of roads should be allowed a short time to develop itself before any expensive and somewhat experimental means of forcing settlement should be resorted to by the Government, except in the case of the Kati Kati block, which offers a very fine field for special settlement of a superior class of men.

7. A decision should be at once arrived at with regard to the blocks to be reserved for special settlement by new immigrants, and the remainder thrown open for public sale at Tauranga as soon as possible, and on such conditions as will best ensure actual occupation.

The small tracing enclosed is useful as showing the general lay of the country referred to, and the direction of the proposed road lines. A reference to the large map of the district, No. 68A., in the Crown Lands Office, Wellington, is necessary to understand the exact position of the blocks referred to in this report.

I propose to proceed immediately to Opotiki and Wakatane, for the purpose of continuing my enquiries in that direction.

The Hon. Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

A. FOLLET HALCOMBE.



