

originally surveyed as part of the Town Belt, but since 1852 known and set apart as the "Wesleyan Reserves," was, on the 13th March, 1874, conveyed by the Superintendent of the Province of Wellington to the Botanic Garden Board for the same purpose as the original Botanic Garden.

In 1873 the Town Belt, which since 1861 had been managed by Commissioners appointed by the Superintendent, was, in exercise of power conferred upon the Superintendent of Wellington by the Acts of 1871 and 1872, with the exception of certain portions which were reserved as sites for the purpose of Hospital, Lunatic Asylum, College, and Signal-station, conveyed to the Mayor, Councillors and burgesses of the City of Wellington in trust, for purposes of public utility to the town of Wellington and its inhabitants, and with power to let the same for depasturage only. The revenue from such rents was by the Act of 1872 directed to be expended as follows: One-half towards the construction and maintenance of roads through the Belt, and the other half towards the ornamental planting of the lands referred to in the Act, but one-third of the last-mentioned half thus derived was to be paid to the Board of Governors of the Botanic Garden, to be spent by them in the ornamentation and utilisation of the land conveyed to them by the deed of 1874.

In March, 1875, a further extension of the area under the control of the Board was obtained by arrangement with the Cemetery Trustees, but this arrangement is entirely a matter of good-will, the land being neither conveyed or leased to the Board.

The area thus secured under the foregoing conditions has a total extent of ninety-three acres.

During the past twenty years the Board has expended, in the development of the garden, as a local domain and as a centre of distribution for forest growth, the sum of £7,627 5s. 10d., derived as follows: Government grants, £4,432 5s. 9d.; produce of sales and for services, £714 13s. 4d.; share of Town Belt rents since 1874, £2,539 17s. 9d.

The details of the receipts and expenditure during the period specified are hereto appended, and it will be found that in its operations the Board has always kept in view the fact that its resources are both local and colonial, and has, in the expenditure of the funds at its disposal, always allocated a fair proportion towards the ornamenting and utilising of the land granted to it by the deed of 1874.

During the above period a report of the operations of the Board and balance-sheet has been presented annually to Parliament, and published.

The chief works of improvement have been 250 chains of fencing for boundary and subdividing purposes; 400 chains of paths, graded and formed; 70 fixed seats, substantially made of totara; and cottages for the gardener and ranger; a nursery-ground, with shelter-houses, water supply, and other appliances, in which about 200,000 trees and shrubs have been raised from seed. Fifteen thousand of these trees have been planted in the gardens, and the remainder distributed, either free or at a small charge to cover the expense of packing, to various public domains and private persons throughout the colony. Experiments in the growth of various economic plants have been conducted and reported on. A native garden, botanically arranged, containing indigenous flora, has been laid out.

These constitute the chief items of initial outlay which have been incurred, and the current expenditure is chiefly for the cleaning of shrubberies and walks and maintenance of the paths and fences.

From the foregoing it appears that the city never has had vested in it any portion of the land occupied by the garden; nor has the city out of its revenues ever supplied any portion of the funds. That more than two-thirds of the expenditure which has created the valuable property now vested in the Board has been derived from general colonial and not from local sources, the citizens of Wellington, as such, having never contributed to the maintenance of the garden, while they have enjoyed its use.

The opinion expressed by the deputation that the garden is neglected and falling into decay is contrary to the opinion of visitors who are qualified to judge of such matters. It is probably founded on an imperfect apprehension of the direction in which the funds should be expended under the circumstances.

The Board is, of course, not in a position to express any opinion respecting the promise of the deputation that the Borough Council will increase the expenditure on the garden if it is transferred to its control. If it is contemplated to provide such increase by a further charge on the Town Belt rents it must be borne in mind that during the last seventeen years the Borough Council, as trustees for these rents, has collected the sum of £17,095 8s. 10d. Deducting the sum of £2,539 17s. 9d, which has been received by the Botanic Garden Board, there remains the sum of £14,555 11s. 1d., which has been expended by the Borough Council on the Town Belt, and a contrast between the work done by this expenditure on the Town Belt with that on the Botanic Garden might raise the question of which management has been most efficient and economical.

From inquiries which have been made it does not appear that in any case has a Domain or Botanic Garden been vested in any city Corporation. In the case of Auckland and Dunedin, the Corporation has been, by Proclamation, made a Domain Board under the Public Domains Act. In Christchurch, as in Wellington, the Domain is in charge of a Board appointed under special Act.

The following is a comparative statement of the position of the four principal city Domains:—

—			Extent.	Revenue.	Source.	Management.
			Acres.	£		
Auckland	...	...	196	400	Rents	Borough Council as Domain Board.
Wellington	...	...	93	180	Rents	Board under special Act.
Christchurch	...	...	430	462	Rents	Board under special Act.
Dunedin	...	...	41	450	Borough funds	Borough Council as Domain Board.