

The land has been leased from time to time, and in March last yielded a rental income of £267 17s. 6d. No land has been sold. The landed estate has been satisfactorily administered.

An account of receipts and expenditure, so far as we have been supplied with them, is given in Appendix J. We regret that we have found it impossible to obtain accounts of this trust antecedent to 1867.

The trusts of the Otaki grants were at one time carried out in their entirety, but for some time past there has been a partial failure, there having been no industrial training.

Prior to the date of the grant a school was established at Otaki by the Rev. Mr. Hadfield in 1839, which flourished from the beginning, and later, under the superintendence of the Rev. S. (now Archdeacon) Williams, grew to a large institution, attended at one time by as many as 130 boys, a large proportion being boarders. A school for girls was also carried on for some time. After the troubles caused by the political disturbances of 1863, the school was closed for a time, and afterwards carried on at intervals and with diminished numbers and usefulness up to the present time. There are now on the roll of the school thirty-five Maoris and half-castes, with an average attendance of twenty-five. The children now attending the school are, with two exceptions, day-scholars, too young for any education other than the elementary requirements of the first four standards. The school originally established for some years received substantial grants of money from the Government towards its support, and at that time the land was partly cultivated by the pupils for the benefit of the school. In 1903 the main building was burned down, causing a large loss to the trust, as the insurance was for £400 only, which was considered reasonable on account of its age, and since then the school has been carried on at great disadvantage in a small and unsuitable building.

There are several reasons for the falling-off both in numbers and efficiency: (a) The income of the trust was never sufficient without the Government subsidy for carrying on a boarding-school with industrial training; (b) the reduced Maori population and distracting political causes, such as the wars which took place in the sixties, hauhauism, &c.; (c) Roman Catholic children used to attend the school, but are now provided with a convent school for girls and young children; (d) the existence of a State school at Otaki. Your Commissioners are therefore of opinion that the best has been done that could be done with the Otaki endowment.

Your Commissioners have given to the scheme presented to them by the Natives for the administration of these trusts (a copy of which will be found in Appendix H), to the evidence adduced, and to the argument of counsel respecting it, their very earnest consideration before arriving at the opinion we now proceed to lay before Your Excellency.

Your Commissioners are strongly of opinion that the interest of Natives resident on the West Coast will be best served by the amalgamation of the Otaki and Porirua trusts, and the establishment of an efficient school at Otaki.

An obstacle to the accomplishment of the amalgamation presents itself in the fact that the grantees of the Otaki lands are trustees of the Church of England Missionary Society, an English society now represented in this colony by the Mission Trust Board, while the trustees of Porirua represent the General Synod of the Church of England in New Zealand. The evidence shows that the two bodies have approached each other with a view to bring this union about, but negotiations ceased when the Porirua trustees decided to establish a school in the Wairarapa.

The school which we recommend should be essentially a school for Natives and half-castes, with preference to children of the Ngatiraukawa, Ngatitoa, and Ngatiawa Tribes. While recognising the claims of Europeans to admission, they should not be admitted to the exclusion of available Native children. Children should be admissible as day-scholars from six or seven years to sixteen years of age, and no scholar should be allowed to remain in the school beyond the age of nineteen. The education given should be that of the Board schools up to the Sixth or Seventh Standard, and industrial training should be a special feature of its work, by which we mean instruction in trades and industries, such as carpentering, shoemaking, blacksmithing, book-keeping, or any other useful employment, and also the principles and science of farming as far as practicable. Physical drill should have special attention.

The united accumulated funds of the two trusts on the 31st March last amounted to £10,924 2s., from which an annual income is derived of £541; while the annual income from the landed estate amounted to the sum of £467, giving a joint total income of £1,008.

The evidence we have gathered satisfies us that a sum of from £20 to £25 per head per annum is a full allowance for the education and maintenance of boys or girls of the class in well-managed schools, and taking this as a basis, the present annual income would maintain about forty or more scholars as boarders, and a considerable number of day-scholars could be educated at the same time. As, however, a new building will have to be erected at a cost probably of close on £2,000, which will have to be taken from the accumulated funds, a reduction of income will take place to the extent of £100 a year, and consequently the number of boarders who could be maintained would be proportionally reduced. The number could be considerably increased by scholars being sent up from Government Native or Board schools on the plan followed in respect of St. Stephen's School, Auckland, who would presumably be paid for as is done there.