

opinion Mr. Woodcocks was an exceptional gum-digger at the present time. When he himself was working on the gumfields he could make his £3 5s. per week comfortably, but would not like to have to try and make that on the Wayby Reserve now. He had been moving in the direction of getting the land thrown open for settlement. In its present condition it was bringing in very little in the way of rates. The gum-diggers as a class do not want land; all they want is the gum. He knew all the gumfields from Flagstaff to Whangaroa. As a settler he thought the land should be thrown open.

*To Mr. Stafford.]* The price he got for his gum ten years ago was about £2 10s. per hundred-weight, and nowadays the same class of gum brought £8. He admitted that a man could make as good wages now if he got only one-third of the quantity, owing to the increased prices.

*To Mr. Stewart.]* The class of land would be suitable for fruitgrowing and general farming.

*To Mr. Greville.]* There was very little of the land that was not ploughable—probably not more than 30 or 40 acres. There were not many slips on the land, as it was not steep enough; there were more washouts than slips.

*To Mr. McKay.]* He had ploughed a piece of his land and never had put any manure on it. It was formerly gum land. He had sown it in grass four years ago—tall fescue and danthonia—and never had to put any manure on it.

#### JOHN ROSS MCKENZIE, Farmer, of Wayby.

*To Mr. Greville.]* He was a farmer, residing at Wayby, and a member of the County Council. He owned an area of about 82 acres, and went in for dairy-farming. His land ran close to the reserve. He had lived there for about four years, and had been farming all his life. During the last four years there had not been many men working on the adjoining gumfields. In the course of his duties as a Councillor he had to ride through the district, and he only knew of three or four diggers. He agreed that the Wayby Reserve was practically all ploughable. He knew of some gum land that had been ploughed and brought under cultivation. It had been treated with phosphates. In his opinion, the proper way to treat the land would be to have it ploughed up in the autumn as soon as the rains came, let it lie fallow all winter, work it all the spring, and keep it stirred up during the summer. He would put in swede turnips. He would use about 3 cwt. manure—1 cwt. super., 1 cwt. bonedust, and 1 cwt. guano. The cost would be 15s. an acre for manures, 14s. by contract for ploughing and working—that is, by filling in the potholes himself. He reckoned he could work the land at a cost of £2 per acre. After he had taken the turnips out he would plough it up in the spring and would sow it down the first week in March; with a fair amount of luck he would get enough out of the turnips to pay for the outlay, and reckoned it would be a good investment. He knew several settlers who had ploughed up the gum lands, one of whom got enough gum to pay for the ploughing. From his point of view as a Councillor and settler he thought the gumfields at Wayby were played out. He knew Mr. Brown; he worked for the settlers, who paid him 8s. per day. He also knew several of the men who had come there lately.

*To Mr. Hebden.]* He regarded Mr. Woodcock as an exceptional gum-digger. He had never dug gum himself, but gave his opinion merely as a farmer and Councillor.

*To Mr. McKay.]* He considered that by throwing open the reserve it would benefit the district. In its present state he considered it a blot on the district.

*To Mr. Greville.]* If cut up into farms the Wayby Reserve would support more farmers permanently than it would gum-diggers. If the Government cut it up into fruit-farms 25-acre lots would be required, but 200 acres would be needed for agricultural purposes. He considered the land if ploughed and sown down in grass would be worth £7 an acre.

*To Mr. Stewart.]* He would sow in English grass, a fair mixture. The diggers as a rule were against the reservation being lifted, and in his opinion certain diggers had come there lately for the purpose of having the reservation retained.

*To Mr. Greville.]* The settlers adjoining were anxious to get more land and were coming from other parts for fruit-farms. He still adhered to his opinion as to the reason for the increased number of gum-diggers at Wayby lately.

#### JOHN GILLIES, Farmer, of Wayby.

*To Mr. Greville.]* He was a farmer, residing at Wayby, and had lived there for fifteen months. He owned an area of 495 acres, and had 50 acres of gum land on his property. He had brought under cultivation 30 acres recently. He ploughed it 7 in. to 10 in. deep in the autumn; let it lie fallow for six months, and gave it the usual treatment, to thoroughly work the land up afterwards. He put 15 acres straight into grass, 2 acres into turnips as an experiment, and 12 acres into oats. In regard to the grass land, it took well; he put it down in Italian and perennial rye-grass, and was quite satisfied with the result. He had put twenty-five cows on it for seven months. As regards the oats the result was equally as good as the Waikato lands. (He produced some turnips grown on the land, weighing 12 lb. each.) He had used 3 cwt. of manure—1 cwt. super., 1 cwt. Malden Island guano, and 1 cwt. blood and bone—the cost averaging about 17s. 6d. an acre. It was ploughed when he came there by his predecessor, but he had to fill in the potholes himself. The piece he had put in turnips was as poor land as any in the vicinity. He had had about fifteen years' experience of farming—seven years in the Waikato. The Waikato land was a free loamy soil; the gum land here was of a soft clayey nature. In his opinion the North Auckland was far superior; there were no frosts to check the growth of grass. The climate was altogether in favour of the North. From his experience as a Waikato farmer he reckoned that any man should do well as a farmer in the North Auckland district. The prospects of a farmer in the North Auckland district were better than the Waikato. In regard to the land