

Maoris asked us to include them in their boundaries. The Pukaka River district has been in existence since 1878. We exercised no supervision on the erection of private banks. As far as I know, the Board did not control the erection of private banks. In putting up banks we do not consult engineers. I know the banks are sometimes in the wrong places, but the Board has not sufficient money to expend to move them or to compel them to be put up farther away from the river. *Re* overflow to White's Bay proposed: Judging by the way water percolates through, such a channel would flood all the lower ground lying towards the Maori Drainage Board district and the mouth of the river. On the proposed course we bored for water to a depth of nearly 400 ft., and found nothing but shingle and sand, and ultimately broke or bent the pipes at the full depth in loose sand. The compensation for land would be in the vicinity of £50 or £60 per acre: this refers to the channel from Tuamarina to White's Bay. Going the straightest way, the average would be about £70 per acre. I do not think it would be a cure for the floods, one reason being that the water would percolate through the lower ground, and they would be flooded in the same way; the other reason is that I do not think you could ever keep the mouth of it open, the beach being nothing but shifting shingle. As far as shipping is concerned, in the summer-time I think it would bring that to a standstill by decreasing the scour at the bar.

THOMAS JEFFRIES. (No. 5.)

Farmer, residing at Fairhall. I knew the locality where the Opawa River now enters from the Wairau River in 1858-59. The country from the Waihopai down, the banks were covered with heavy manuka. There was no opening into the Opawa from the Wairau in those days. There was a stream some distance away from the present Opawa, caused by percolation from the Wairau. You could walk across the Opawa River at the Railway Bridge with boots on. It might have been a chain wide. I was in the habit of going from Renwicktown to Onamalutu. There was no Opawa River bed in those days in crossing to that track. The Wairau River ran on the north side. The floods in those days used to take the nearest cut to the sea. 1868, 4th February, was the biggest flood we ever had: you could boat from Blenheim to Tuamarina. I worked at the breach in 1864. That breach which I refer to was the breach made by the Wairau to what is now known as the Opawa. The object of the works constructed in those days was to keep the water in the big river—that is, in the Wairau River. The works were not effective. I think it was the Provincial Government that undertook this work, and I understand the cost was about £13,000 altogether. About six or eight months ago I went to the locality where the big groyne is erected. There was no breach at that point when I first knew the river. Blenheim did not suffer from Wairau River floods in the early days, but suffered from the Omaka and what we call the Mill Creek and Taylor River. The Opawa River was a very insignificant stream before the breach, mostly due to percolation, and the floods gradually formed a channel down the Opawa.

JOHN CLERVAUX CHAYTOR. (No. 6.)

Residing in Marshlands. Came first to Marshlands in 1881, and in the district since 1860. The Pukaka River Board was formed to control the Pukaka River, flowing into a large raupo swamp extending from the banks of the Wairau River on the west to a ridge called by the Natives Tahunaroa, on which Mr Bowler's house stood. There was no watercourse through it. The main outlet was by way of Blind Creek and Schooner Creek, reaching the Wairau at Botham's Bend. In times of floods there were several overflows along the line now known as White's Bay Road—I could show you a patuna (eel-weir) in one of the overflows thence into the Native Reserve and to the Wairau. The River Board was formed in 1878. It cut a drain running through the ridge and through the swamp out into the Marakoka Creek to the White Bridge. The Wairau River affects us only in heavy floods. The record flood of the whole district was the flood in February, 1868. That flood did no permanent damage to the country like the flood of last November, 1916. I never saw the Tuamarina Road in a flood. In 1860, between Grovetown and Spring Creek Hotel, all the country up there and above that was a great deal of flax and raupo swamp practically in a rough state. The 1904 flood was practically the largest flood we have ever had at Pukaka. Robert Bell's sheep were drowned at that time. After that I got Mr. Seymour to run out a line of pegs 18 in. above the highest mark of that flood-level, and we made a bank up to it. That bank is standing now. There was a breach in it shortly after it was erected, but it protected us against the Wairau floods till the flood of last July, when the water came over the top of it. The July and November, 1916, floods came over this. I do not think that the breach could have been made before 1863. I remember the Opawa channel before the flood of 1868. Before 1863 you could walk over the Opawa at Blenheim. Fox dug a ditch and gave the water a lead into the Opawa, intending to make a boundary for his sheep. The Spring Creek Road District was for a long time known as Fox's Island. The aspect of the country was rough, and the water did not come down freely. There was no Wairau gravel at the Railway Bridge. Looking up the Wairau you could not see gravel from the Peninsula. There has been a constant accumulation of shingle in the Wairau River. Looking up the river, the gravel could not be seen standing on the Picton Road side—the river was tidal at the Railway Bridge in the seventies. The tide rose 2 ft. 6 in. at the Railway Wairau Bridge, but no tide there now—much gravel has raised the bed. My opinion is that the river should be fairly divided between the Wairau and the Opawa, but I cannot suggest a proportion. I have always noticed that when the rivers have been unfairly divided the damage by floods begins. I suggest cutting the Peninsula on the Native Reserve. I have no faith in the White's Bay channel. In the eighties there was considerable work proposed to be done by the Pukaka River Board, but I do not think there would be any possibility of keeping a channel up there (White's Bay overflow). It could not be kept open, and I do not think the bank would stand, as foundation is quicksand. I sank a well 300 ft. deep and still got sand.