

APPENDIX C.

NORTH AUCKLAND SCENIC RESERVES.

OWING to the extensive Ministerial visits to my district, the necessity of making many personal inspections of farms held by discharged soldiers, and to an exceptional number of special Commissions, I was unfortunately not able this year to devote to the scenic beauties of my district the personal time that they deserve.

As outlined in my previous report, a special survey was made of a spot as near as possible to the actual place where the Governor sat when signing the Treaty of Waitangi. It not being considered wise to sign the Treaty inside the house of Mr. Busby, a table was brought out on to the lawn, around which the Native chiefs assembled, and the site surveyed off for a tablet is fixed as near to this actual spot as is convenient to the present occupants of the house.

Trounson Park: The work put in hand last year to safeguard our magnificent area of kauri and other forest known as Trounson Park was continued. All fallen timber was removed, also dead and uprooted trees, and the ground ploughed and sown down with turnips and grass, and fed off by sheep to keep down the fern. Until recently one could motor up to the northern end of the park, where the caretaker's cottage is, but to get round to the southern end, where the railway-station is, by motor a long detour was necessary, and *vice versa*; now, owing to a gift by Mr. Trounson, subsidized by the Department, it is possible to motor right along the edge of the forest from one end of the reserve to the other; and when the Kaihu Railway is linked up with the Northern Main Trunk at Waiotiria, and Kaihu Valley Road improved, I anticipate that thousands of people will visit this beautiful place, whereas only a few favoured ones can now do so.

Mangamuka Gorge: Now that the route from the railhead at Okaihau is almost completely metalled to Kaitaia this is becoming a most popular route, and the wisdom of preserving the forest from the Mangamuka Gorge across the range to Victoria Valley is becoming apparent to all. Not only is the scenery most beautiful upon a sunny day or moonlight night, but the presence of the forest holds up the steep mountain-sides, which would otherwise overwhelm the road upon every exceptional downpour.

Historic Oak, Waima: The question of procuring the Historic Oak of Waima, and an area adjacent, was gone into with the trustees, and will, I hope, end in it being secured and put under our charge.

It was also desired to obtain a most beautiful spot upon the banks of the Taheke River, but before negotiations could be arranged the Native owners saw fit to chop down the bush.

Ruapekapeka Pa: A special visit was made to the Ruapekapeka Pa with the honorary committee in charge, when it was decided to cut and burn the fern that was choking up the trenches, and sow with danthonia.

Waiomio Cave, Kawakawa: I also visited the Waiomio Cave, near Kawakawa, which, though small, is very grand of its kind, and may some day be acquired when a reasonable price can be fixed by the Native owners. Adjoining this cave are some most wonderful rocks, similar to those recently acquired at Waro, and, being *tapu*, are likely to remain untouched by any vandals.

In the ancient township of Leigh, which has now been opened up by a good road, I found some most beautiful pohutukawa-trees on small education reserves and vacant sections, and an endeavour should be made to preserve these by exchange and otherwise before it is too late.

Parr's Park: The control of Parr's Park at Swanson, acquired in 1924, and comprising 16½ acres of mixed bush, has been vested in a Scenic Board of which the Commissioner of Crown Lands is a member *ex officio*. A grant of £100 for fencing was made, and tenders are being called to have this beautiful piece of bush properly enclosed.

Kirk's Bush: During the year a grant of £50 was secured for renewal and repairs of fencing and erection of suitable entrance-gates to properly enclose Kirk's Bush, an interesting scenic reserve of 7½ acres at Papakura, which was acquired in 1922. This reserve comprises for the most part taraire bush, with a few kohekohe, tawa, and pungas. Steps have also been taken to set up a Scenic Board to control the area.

Waitakerei Falls: The Waitakerei Falls reservation, to which the State contributed £14,000 last year, is now under the control of the City Council, and they have signified their deep appreciation of the gift by purchasing most of the adjacent bush, and bid fair in time to possess one of the finest native parks adjacent to any city in the Southern Hemisphere.

Okuratopo Pa: Negotiations to secure the Okuratopo Pa are still in hand, but the Native owners are very slow. This is one of the most famous pas in the North, where the Natives entertained the well-known missionary, Mr. Samuel Marsden.

Smith's Bush, Takapuna: A visit of inspection was paid to Smith's Bush at Takapuna, as the inhabitants of that borough desired to acquire it. Unfortunately, cattle have destroyed most of the ferns and undergrowth, and let in blackberry, but the puriri-trees are some of the most ancient in the land. Its principal charm, however, is the fact that it is a beautiful shady place within the easy reach of all who visit the beaches near by.

An earnest endeavour was made to secure from the late Miss Outhwaite by gift a most beautiful area of bush just beyond Helensville, on the North Main Trunk line, but, unfortunately, she died before we could accomplish it, and now it is too late. She, however, kindly left the State the Hen Island.

H. J. Lowe,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.