

blunt, able, wealthy but without any of the interests of his colleagues.

Ronald Campbell Gunn (1808-1881), prison superintendent, administrator, politician, estate manager, and above all botanist, perhaps met with more response from New Zealanders of similar background interests. The son of an army officer at Cape Town, he emigrated to Tasmania in 1830 at the suggestion of an elder brother then in the colony, where his abilities, range of interest, understanding of people, humour and engaging personality ensured his success. Like Colenso in New Zealand he was for decades a collector for the Hookers at Kew to whose insatiable expectations he once penned a bantering letter of defence worthy of an anthology. For some seven years he was the editor of the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*, Australia's first scientific serial.<sup>16</sup>

The Commission, of course, needed a secretary, the choice being Frederick J. Eaton (1839-1881), a former London War Office clerk who emigrated to New Zealand to take up farming. In view of the Waikato War he was happy to accept a temporary place in the Colonial Defence Office at ten shillings per day, two months before the Commission's arrival. As the latest appointee he could be spared with least dislocation and was seconded accordingly.<sup>17</sup> The commissioners were each paid £5 5s. per day, and Eaton £1 1s., both parties plus expenses.

In view of the communication delays of the period the act was brought together in remarkably short time. Despite local rumours of several ships from various ports by which members might be expected individually the party sensibly assembled in Sydney and crossed to Auckland in the *Prince Alfred*. The ten days between their arrival on 23 July and their departure for Wellington on 3 August were occupied in the formalities of their appointment and a visit to the Waikato. Press detail on their Auckland activities is understandably meagre. The province, after all, had asked them not to come. There certainly would have been a meeting with Grey who as Governor had signed and presumably handed over the formal commission of 29 July<sup>18</sup> authorising them to nominate a site in accordance with the quoted resolution.

The ever facetiously superior *Daily Southern Cross* honoured them with a leading article of two columns on how their task appeared from the capital:

These gentlemen of high character and position have been chosen by three Governors of equally high character and yet more lofty position... some of us may feel a shade of disappointment at the thought. Dear me, these men are, after all, very like our selves... heroes... [to] face the terrors of Cooks Straits in winter... of all places the least likely to become the seat of Government in New Zealand...<sup>19</sup>