

story. The roof leaked like a sieve in wet weather and flooding was by no means infrequent.

Flaxbourne was established during 1847, the move being prompted by the success of Wharekaka, the expansion of pastoralism in the Wairarapa Valley, and the increasingly precarious nature of the informal leasehold tenure. After an exploratory expedition in 1846, the partners laid claim to some 200,000 acres stretching from Kekerengu in the south to the Blind River in the north. When applications for a depasturing licence were granted by the New Zealand Company agent in Nelson in 1849, the station was cut to a more realistic 78,000 acres. There are two paintings of Flaxbourne in public collections. That in the Canterbury Museum shows the small homestead from the back. '“The white rocks” & Waipapa point from Flaxbourne anchorage' (Turnbull Library) gives some idea of the coastal situation of the station, a vital feature when sea communications were so important for supplies, access and the despatch of the wool clip. A Flaxbourne-related painting in private hands depicts the homestead from the front. The latter is the only known painting to show the gardens that Weld developed with such care. His journals and correspondence relate the process by which the wooden house was built in Wellington, dismantled, shipped across the Strait and then reassembled on the site. They tell, too, of his plans for a vineyard in the valley behind the house; of extensive daffodil, orchard and oak tree planting; of the frequent visitors, including Thomas Arnold, who enjoyed Flaxbourne hospitality. Officers and crew of *HMS Acheron* survey ship made a timely visit in 1849. The sailors assisted in the yards and were rewarded with tobacco, fresh meat and potatoes. As surveying commitments permitted, the officers went shooting on the nearby lagoon. The ship returned to Wellington laden with a Flaxbourne bounty of ducks, woodhen and rabbits, the latter something of a rarity on the station until the 1880s.

Weld was always to feel much more at home on Flaxbourne than at Stonyhurst. This was partly the consequence of his partner's actions. Charles Clifford took a much more active part in the founding and actual running of the Canterbury station than had been the case with the two earlier ventures. Moreover, during the 1850s, Weld was more often out of the colony than in it. He went home in 1851, returning in time to be elected Member for Wairau for the first parliamentary session of 1854. With James Edward Fitzgerald and Henry Sewell, he was involved with the shortlived mixed ministry of 1854, an experience which disinclined him to be over-active in politics during the rest of the decade. On his third trip within seven years he achieved an unspoken ambition and returned to New Zealand a married man. His desire to provide a suitable