

PROVINCE OF TARANAKI.



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PROCLAMATION.

Superintendent's Office,

May 28, 1875.

THE "New Plymouth Harbour Board Ordinance, 1875," reserved for the assent of the Governor, having been laid before His Excellency, he has been pleased to assent to the same.

F. A. CARRINGTON,

Superintendent.

TENDERS.

Public Works Office,

Wellington, May 17, 1875.

THE following list of successful and unsuccessful Tenderers is published for general information.

EDWARD RICHARDSON.

WAITARA TO WANGANUI RAILWAY.

BRUNSWICK CONTRACT.

Accepted.

Pierce Lanigan, Auckland	...	31,552	0	0
Declined.				
J. Brogden & Sons, Wellington	...	31,662	0	0
A. Nathan & Co., Wanganui	...	33,978	0	0
O. McKirdy, Wellington	...	37,904	10	10
W. F. Oakes, Wanganui	...	38,122	2	8
R. S. Low, Wanganui	...	39,207	0	0
Frazer & Roberts, Pakuratahi	...	65,736	9	0

REPORT OF THE EXPLORATION OF THE COUNTRY BETWEEN THE PATEA RIVER (MOUNTAIN ROAD) AND THE MOKAU RIVER.

New Plymouth, June 1, 1875.

SIR,—I have the honour to report that in accordance with your instructions, I proceeded on the 1st April last to the Mougonui River on the Mountain Road, where I found that the whole of the party had not arrived. On the following day I went to the Patea River, and pending the arrival of the whole party, I started the line about three chains from the Patea River (north side), bearing 75° mag. We cut about 60 chains in the afternoon, and returned to camp on the Mountain Road.

On the 3rd (Saturday), with a party of four packers and two cutters, I started the exploration, continuing the track at the same bearing as previous day (75°). We camped nearly four miles in, at an old camp of Mr. Skeet's, Surveyor in connection with the Native Lands Purchase Department. Not to make this report too lengthy, I will briefly state the line of route taken in our exploration, leaving notes of soil, timber, minerals, &c., to the end of this report.

We continued running at the same bearing as stated above, some twelve miles, crossing two large tributaries of the Patea River—viz., the Tako and Makuri Rivers, the latter river running up a broad, flat valley, with high land on each side, and bearing northerly.

I decided to follow its course, which took us on our road, some eight or ten miles, of fine valley a mile wide in places, and composed in some parts of kabikatea swamp. Owing, however, to the river taking a decided turn towards the north-west, I deemed it expedient to leave it and cross over a low watershed into another valley. I did this as it was of importance that I should keep as much east as possible to avoid the Ngatimaru country, which from information received from surveyors who had been in that locality, was very rough in character.

After passing over the watershed mentioned above, by following a small creek a short distance easterly, I came upon some old Maori clearings, and shortly after struck a river about 50 links wide, called the Mangaotuku River by Mr. Skeet, who has just surveyed a block of land embracing these clearings, which are in a valley in which the river runs.

I followed the course of this river to its source, passing through a chain of clearings for a distance of about eight miles, with an average of thirty to eighty chains in width, in some places branch creeks ran into the main river, and these also had fine valleys with clearings in them. I estimate the amount of clearings at about six thousand acres, not including a wide piece of open swamp land about four miles in length that we crossed after passing through a belt of bush from the last clearing. This land can hardly be called *swamp*, inasmuch as the bottom is hard, and only in places where small watercourses crossed our track, did we sink up to our knees, the rest of the ground bearing the packers with heavy "swags" on their backs without sinking over their boots. This land could be easily drained into the river that runs through it, and would be admirably adapted for a root or grain country.

After running up this river to its source we came to another watershed with a low saddle, passing over which, we descended by a gentle declination into a small watercourse in a flat valley a few chains wide, this valley gradually widened out, and the creek increased

in size, running north for about three miles, when it suddenly turned due east and afterwards south-east, evidently running towards the Wanganni River, and being a tributary of that river.

Following this tributary some four miles further, we struck a branch coming from a northerly direction; and, as it was not desirable to continue south-easterly any longer than we could help, I determined to run this creek out to its source, which we found in a very high, steep watershed—the worst watershed we had passed. The country about here looked very rough and broken, and it was from this watershed, and only at this place, we saw the three mountains—Egmont, Tongariro, and Ruapehu—at the same time. We spent a day or two at this spot, prospecting for some valley to carry us on our journey northwards; and on the second day we were rewarded by seeing a valley running, to all appearances, in a northerly direction, and we determined to try it.

I may here remark that it was just a week previous to this date (Friday, 30th April), that we dismissed the party of packers that came in with us, owing to the inability of the parties packing food from the Mountain Road to supply us. We were now about sixty miles in, and it took the packers about six days to travel that distance; and we found that they did not carry much more than sufficient for their own consumption; consequently the exploring party had but little of the food brought in from the Patea River. It was this state of affairs that caused us to come to the decision to dismiss our own packers, and, after receiving all the food we could from the last party expected, to push on with that as far as possible, to try and get through to the Mokau. With reference to the Commissariat Department, I would beg to refer you to a report by Mr. Robinson, who had this department under his charge.

To return to my report. It was on the 30th April that we started, each man heavily laden, and, crossing the watershed before mentioned, we struck a small stream, and following this, soon found ourselves in rough country. The bed rock, being a soft sandstone, had been worn by the action of the water, into a deep but narrow gorge, too narrow to get through with our "swags." We had therefore to keep on the top of these sandstone walls, and in some places we crept along the base

of sandstone cliffs, with a sloping wall of sandstone of about one hundred feet and a drop into the creek of about forty or fifty feet. This portion of our route was the roughest and most dangerous of the whole journey, as a single false step would have been certain death to the unfortunate individual.

By careful climbing we managed to reach the creek, only to increase our discomfort; for the creek ran between two high walls of sandstone, and there was no possibility of our leaving it, which in some places opened out into pools of water two or three chains in length, through which we had to wade up to our waists, wetting the bottoms of the swags. After wading through six of these pools, we thought it time to try and reach the range above us, which we did with great difficulty, climbing up a steep place where there had been a slip.

From this point our progress was uninterrupted by any great difficulties, for as the creek widened out, we were enabled to keep on its banks, and following it down some five miles we struck a river about a chain wide and very deep, flowing very sluggishly, which at first we took to be the Tongaporutu, but afterwards found was the Waitara River.

We followed this river up some ten miles, with a general bearing northerly and north-westerly; but as we made only six miles due north in ten miles of traverse, we thought it advisable to leave the river and drive due north over everything, and try to reach the Mokau River. After about four miles of this course, we again crossed the Waitara River for the last time, when it was bearing north-east; and from a tree on the summit of a high range the course of the river might still be traced north-easterly for some five or six miles farther. The river itself had not diminished in size very much, and seemed as if it would run another twenty miles, at least.

After leaving the river we ascended a high ridge, and following the ridge bearing north-westerly, struck the junction of two creeks at the base of the spur, running nearly north-west. We were now on another watershed, and thought perhaps it would lead to the Mokau River, but we again crossed yet another watershed, and coming on some very broken country where it was impossible to drive in anything like a direct line, we were forced to

follow the spurs and ridges. It was on the summit of one of these ridges that we heard the sound of firing, which seemed to come from a westerly direction over a high ridge about two miles distant. It was generally supposed that the sound was caused by Maoris firing volleys at the funeral of some chief. We determined, therefore, as our food was running short, to drive the track in the direction of the firing, and on reaching the ridge in question saw no signs of settlement, but in all directions a succession of high steep ridges as far as the eye could see. We afterwards were informed that the firing was at Pukearuhe Redoubt, distant about twenty miles in a straight line, and by the Mimi Valley considerably further. At our feet we saw a valley running a little west of north-west, and on reaching it we found a good-sized stream of water about ten links wide. We followed this stream, and thought it the Tongaporutu, but as it struck westerly, then south-westerly, and southerly, we were uncertain as to what river it could be, but at the end of the fourth day from the time we struck it we came out to the sea coast at the mouth of the Mimi River.

We were all very much disappointed that we could not get through to the Mokau River, but when we first struck the valley we determined to follow it to the coast, owing to the small amount of food left. For ten days we had subsisted on two meals a day (morning and evening), consisting of broken biscuit and butter, and the last five days our diet consisted of half a pannikin or a pannikin of biscuit dust from the bottom of the sacks, mixed with pepper and salt, and some hot tea poured on it to make it a kind of porridge; and even this could not last for ever, for after breakfast on the last day of our sojourn in the bush we had about a pannikin and a half of "dust" left, which, owing to our reaching the coast in the evening, was fortunately not required.

We think, after all, that we adopted the wisest plan in keeping down the Mimi Valley to the Coast, for the uncertainty of the exact position of the Mokau River and the extreme roughness of the country to be crossed, coupled with the small amount of food left, and the weakness to which we were reduced through hard work and low diet, made it extremely hazardous to undertake driving straight across country with the prospect of striking

the Mokau River. Another great cause of anxiety was the unfavourable weather. For more than three weeks we had but two or three fine days, every other day it rained more or less, and during the whole of the time we had no dry clothes to our backs, but were wet through every day. I think when these things are considered, that you will at least give us credit for doing our "level best" to get through to our destination in the face of great difficulties.

With regard to the nature of the soil, minerals, timber, &c., I have to report—

That for the first ten miles the soil seems to be of the same nature as that in the neighbourhood of the Mountain Road. A light soil of a loose, friable nature, more suitable for grass than ploughing. The first indication of a change of soil was noticed at the Makuri River, where there is an entire change. Instead of clear water and strong boulders, as seen in all the rivers flowing from Mount Egmont, the river has a sandy bottom, and the banks a mixture of clay and sand, and from this point to the banks of the Waitara River, some fifty miles, we noticed the entire absence of stone in the rivers, and the same stiff soil eminently suitable in the valleys for fruit trees and root and grain crops.

The timber varied as we proceeded on our route. For the first twenty miles very little change was noticed, except the increase of red pines (*rimu*), and in the valleys, white pines (*kahikatea*); also *mairis* were more numerous. About thirty miles in, we noticed some fine totara trees on the ridges, which continued throughout the journey. On the banks of the Waitara River we found many fine matai trees, and on the very highest and steepest ridges some fine black birch trees, but in no case did we see any "*patches*" of any of the above-mentioned trees, except the *kahikatea*, which abounded on the flat lands in the valleys.

I have also to report the entire absence of minerals of every description. We found in some places near the Patea River, quartz pebbles with mica, in fact, mica is to be seen in every creek however small. But from the Patea branches to the Mimi River we saw no sign of quartz or any other stone except on the Waitara River, where we saw some hard blue stone, suitable for ballasting or metallurgy.

On the Makuri River, about thirty miles in from the Mountain road, we saw a mass of conglomerate, composed of quartz and shells embedded in the rock. The same conglomerate formation was noticed at the mouth of the Onairo River on our return journey by the coast, and also, I believe, the same formation is to be found at Taupo. With these exceptions there was a great dearth of anything in the shape of minerals or any valuable product of nature, the mass of the hills being composed of soft sandstone; and the beds of the small creek was composed of soft sandstone boulders. I may mention that on the Mangaotuku River and on some of the creeks, some small seams of fine blue clay were found, very suitable for pottery works.

To summarise the whole report, I may state that the first sixty miles is undoubtedly a good line for railway. Starting from the Patea River at the Mountain Road, the line would run nearly due east for twelve miles, and from thence up the Makuri River, over a low watershed into the Mangaotuku River, following this river to its source, and over another watershed into a tributary of the Waunganui River. Again, over another watershed into the Waitara River, which if followed would, I think, lead into the watershed of the Mokau—a few miles from the Mokau River itself; but this portion of the country will require a thorough prospecting to find an easy route, owing to the broken nature of the country—being the watershed of the Mimi, Tongaporutu, Waitara, Mokau, and Waunganui Rivers. I am fully satisfied that there are no great difficulties in the way of a line being taken along the route I have just mentioned, and which you will find sketched on the plan accompanying this report. I do not profess to have found the best line of route, for my instructions were simply to report on the practicability of a line through this so-called impassible country; and I had no time to prospect at any difficult places along the track. But although I can see many places where deviations would be advisable, yet I do not think a more successful line of route will be found, even after a careful survey.

I cannot conclude this report without expressing my utmost satisfaction with the conduct of the men who went with me on this expedition. Cold, wet, and hunger were endured with cheerfulness. My especial thanks are also due to Mr

G. F. Robinson, to whose energy in looking after the food arrangements our success in reaching as far as we did is mainly due—making himself very useful in trying to forward the work and moreover carrying very heavy loads himself to prevent stoppage of work.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
P. C. CHEAL.

T. Humphries, Esq.,
Chief Surveyor,
New Plymouth.

RESERVING LAND FOR RECREATION GROUND AND WATER SUPPLY.

New Plymouth, June 8, 1875.

SIR,—In looking for a suitable piece of public land within a convenient distance from the town for the site and grounds of a Lunatic Asylum, the fact forced itself on my notice that in the immediate vicinity of the site I have selected, and which I submit for your approval—viz., Mount Herbert—that the interest of the whole community would be well consulted by making the balance of the reserve in the vicinity, by Ordinance of the Provincial Council, an endowment for public recreation grounds. The stream of water which flows through the reserve might be impounded and utilised for the ornamentation of the grounds, for watering the streets of New Plymouth, extinguishing fires, and providing for public baths.

The land to which I refer lies between Carrington Road and the Race-course, and consist of exchanged town sections set apart for educational purposes. The area of this land, including roads which could be closed by Ordinance, is about 35 acres. It has not been a source of much revenue to the Educational Establishment, having only averaged some £15 per year, and is gradually deteriorating in value by the growth of furze, which successive tenants have failed to eradicate, or even keep down.

The reason of this is that the land is of inferior quality and very broken, rendering it unsuitable for cultivation. But it is admirably adapted by nature for forming recreation grounds, as the scenery is diversified, and winding

paths could be made at small costs, and several small sheets of water made by dams of an inexpensive character. Although I propose to divert the purpose of this reserve from education to other public purposes, I do not think it would be desirable to take it without giving to the educational establishment either a money compensation to compensate for the rent lost (£15), or to give, by way of exchange, other provincial lands of equal value; but I think the opportunity should not be lost for securing to the public of New Plymouth for all time these grounds which are capable of being made very beautiful for recreation purposes, and the other public services which I have named. The land is situated less than half-a-mile from the centre of the town, and if suitable paths and foot-bridges were made it would be at once used by a large section of the public on holidays, and by the various public organizations on special occasions—such as Templars' Fetes, Band of Hope, and the various denominational schools for the children's annual parties. Provisions could be easily made for making it accessible from various parts of the town, such as from the Carrington Road, from Liardet, Gover, and Wakefield-streets. While these grounds might be made use of at a small cost to provide rational amusement to the public, the water, while affording a means of beautifying the grounds, could be utilised at a comparative small cost to furnish a supply for watering the streets, extinguishing fires, and providing for public baths; or even for supplying water for domestic purposes for the present population; but I propose to confine myself to the first-named purposes as more within the means of the provincial revenue. The stream which flows through the reserve takes the drainage of about three hundred acres of land roughly estimated, and therefore the annual rainfall, less that lost by evaporation and other causes, could be impounded and made available for the purposes I have named.

Assuming that 6-10ths of our average annual rain-fall could be collected and impounded, this would give a total quantity of 260,000,000 gallons for the twelve months, or a daily supply of about 360 gallons per head on the present population of the town if the whole of the water was impounded and stored up for daily use. The level

nothing would tend more to do so than a good and cheap supply of water. The financial part of the question I leave for further consideration; all that I have at present to urge is that the land be for ever secured to the public for these necessary public purposes during the present session of the Council.—I have, &c.,

His Honor the Superintendent.