

REPORTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

No. 11.

Major HEAPHY, V.C., to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

REPORT ON THE NATIVE RESERVES IN THE PROVINCE OF OTAGO.

Dunedin May 31, 1870.

THE lands reserved for the use of the Natives on their sale of the territory to Mr. Commissioner Kemp, are as enumerated in the margin.*

A subsequent reservation of land appears to have been made by the action of the Native Land Court in 1868, when, with the approbation of the Provincial Government, and in fulfilment of engagements made on original purchases of the territory, the following additional lands were ordered to be granted to the local Natives, viz:—Section 12, Waitaki River; Sections 13 and 14, Papakiao; Hawksbury Village Reserve; Section 6, Waikouaiti River, and Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4, Long Beach.

The Tautuku Reserve of 1,000 acres, and a fishing easement at Lake Hawea of 100 acres, were also ordered to be granted; but in the case of these the local Government appears to have been unaware of the action of the Native Land Court, until I made mention of the circumstance.†

The large Reserves at Waikouaiti, Taieri, Otago Heads, and Mount Charles have been individualized in title, and Crown Grants issued. This has enabled the respective owners to let, and obtain an income from such portions of the land—especially at Otago Heads and Mount Charles—as are not required immediately for their own uses. This is a great benefit; but I would draw attention to the very disadvantageous manner in which the boundaries of the estates at Otago Heads have been surveyed. Many of the sections are so narrow in respect to their length, as to appear in the plan more like roads than country sections; and fences upon them could only be maintained at great disadvantage.

Such lands would not be attractive to a tenant, unless several sections could be clubbed together within an external fence; nor could interior fences be maintained by the Natives, if cultivating the lands themselves. In either case the advantage of individualizing the title is annulled, and the evils of common holding must operate.

In reference to the disputed Princess Street Reserve, I may observe that the matter has obtained dimensions that almost put it beyond the limits of my report. I am informed, however, that there is accumulated from rents a sum of money amounting to £6,908 18s 9d, in the possession of the Provincial Government. If this money, or the major part of it, could be obtained and invested for the benefit of the local Natives, it would, I think, be more to their advantage than awaiting the contingency—tedious and uncertain at the best—of an appeal to England.

I believe that a sum of £400 was used from funds derived from West Coast Native Lands, in carrying this case before the Supreme Court. It appears proper that this money should be replaced as soon as possible to the account of the Trust from which it was drawn, and that whenever the matter is settled interest ought to be paid for the use of it.

I append a map of each Native Reserve in the Province, with an index map to shew relative position. I have made copies of 14 maps of the Reserves, as well as 10 tracings for the use of Mr. Commissioner Mackay.

I received great assistance from His Honor the Superintendent and the Chief Surveyor of Otago, as well as from Mr. Watt, Sheriff, who has local charge of the Natives.

I have, &c,

The Hon. the Native Minister,
Wellington.

CHARLES HEAPHY,
Commissioner of Native Reserves.

* To Awamoko or Puneomaru, Moeraki, Waikouaiti, Otepopo, Parakaunui, Otago Head and Port Charles, Port Chalmers Reserve, Princess street Reserve Dunedin, Taieri, Clutha and Tuturau.

† This is incorrect, see Mr. Mackay's letter to His Honor the Superintendent, of 29th May, 1868, which appears to have been lost sight of.