

The twenty-nine deeds relating to these blocks represent the signatures of 263 persons, a large proportion of whom had to be sought out by myself, accompanied by a Resident Magistrate and Licensed Interpreter, in distant and out-of-the-way settlements.

Table II. shows the transactions nearly completed, being three blocks containing in the aggregate 3,689 acres, at a cost of £330 16s., being at the rate of a fraction over 1s. 10d. per acre, of which £305 15s. has been paid, leaving a balance of £25 1s. to pay.

There have been obtained to the three deeds relating to these blocks 119 signatures out of the 125 persons named in the titles. Of the six who have not signed, four are dead, one is an infant, and one I have been unable after fruitless efforts to meet with, but will, I believe, turn up shortly—thus, with those shown in Table No. I., making a total of 382 signatures obtained to deeds relating to thirty-two blocks of land, of which three only are incomplete.

All the blocks in these two first tables have passed the Native Land Court, and were held under titles thereunder prior to the deeds having been prepared.

Table III. shows the incomplete transactions, and represents twenty-three blocks, of which thirteen are surveyed, and contain 43,687 acres, and ten unsurveyed, estimated to contain 79,900 acres, making a total of 123,587 acres by estimation. Of these twenty-three blocks, only five have been adjudicated on by the Native Land Court, one of which is the portion of the Pakiri Block held under Crown grant but not yet subdivided by the Court, but the portion under agreement for sale is estimated to contain 20,000 acres. I have therefore put it down as unsurveyed, as it practically is, unless it should be decided to purchase the interests of all the parties.

It will be observed by referring to the return that this Pakiri Block has had very large sums of money paid on it by way of advances on the purchase money—namely, £1,920, being within £295 of the whole amount of deposits paid now outstanding on land in the whole district, excepting a small sum paid on Kaipatiki and Onekuri by Mr. John Sheehan, through Messrs. Armstrong and Dignan, for the Provincial Government, the particulars of which I have never been able to ascertain, and have therefore no information to enable me to state what payments have been made thereon.

With regard to the Pakiri Block, I have, by instructions, done nothing in the matter; but, as far as I can understand, the purchase cannot be completed until some legislation takes place by which it and land similarly affected can be dealt with.

The interests of two out of three of the nominal owners (who were adults and are now dead) have fallen into the hands of infants, whose trustees have no power by law to sell, although they have received large sums by way of deposit. This matter was referred to Colonel Haultain for inquiry, as Trust Commissioner under the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act, and he has, I believe, gone fully into the matter and reported thereon.

Kaipatiki Block is similarly affected, by one out of ten persons having died before the transaction was completed; and although the deceased had received a large proportion of his share of the money, the successor had no power to deal with it. Oikura, in Table II., is in the same position. Fifty-eight persons have signed the deed; two died before there was an opportunity for them to sign the deed. Both these men were principal owners, and had received a large proportion of the deposit money. The successor to one has been appointed, and is an infant, and consequently cannot complete for his father, although his family are quite willing for him to do so. No successor has yet been appointed to succeed the other deceased persons, but the probability is the same will occur as in that instance. Although these appear merely matters of detail, I mention them as instances showing the necessity of giving Trustees or the Court, on good cause being shown, power to join with adults in the sale of lands where infants succeed to interests in property originally held by adults.

You will observe that of the incomplete transactions there are surveyed 43,687 acres. The purchase of these would have been complete by this time, and the deeds forwarded to Wellington, had I been able to have got Courts held in Hokianga, the Bay of Islands, and Whangarei during the months of April and May, as I was desirous of having done, and mentioned in my progress report for the month of March. These blocks, and some others which will be ready by that time, can be completed immediately after the Courts are held at the places named; at the same time, I think, as the winter season is not a desirable time for assembling large numbers of Natives together, and as by the spring of the year there is likely to be a new Native Land Act, it would, perhaps be as well to postpone the Hokianga and Bay of Islands Courts until the amended Act comes into force. At Whangarei there are no complications in the titles, so it is not of so much importance.

I see no reason myself why the whole of these incomplete transactions should not be completed in six months, provided there is no delay in having Courts held, and the surveys completed of those yet unsurveyed; but these are matters over which I have no control, consequently I cannot undertake to say how long it may take to complete them.

Of the fifty-one blocks, the negotiations relating to which were initiated by Mr. Brissenden and handed over to me to carry out, thirty have been brought to a successful issue and closed; eight, on which no payments had been made or expense incurred, have been abandoned; leaving thirteen yet on the list and incomplete. Of these, three blocks—Te Mata, Mokau, and Te Whau—£120 has been paid to Natives claiming to be owners. These lands are said to be already the property of the Crown, and they have been from time to time withdrawn from the operation of the Native Land Court by the District Officer, but the Natives still contend that they are the owners.

I have now your instructions to have this question brought before the Court, in order that a proper title may be obtained either in favour of the Crown or the Natives, as the Court may direct.

Three other blocks, Tautoro, Mataki, and Nuhaka, have had advances made on them amounting to £125. I consider the purchase of these impracticable, and I do not think there is much probability of the money being recovered.

Besides these and the Pakiri Block before referred to, there is only one block of Mr. Brissenden's purchases incomplete on which any money has been paid—namely, the Tarairi Block, containing 915 acres, on which £50 has been advanced. This purchase will be completed when the Court sits at Hokianga.