

495. Have they had any offers more recently?—Another man named Bremer made an offer.
496. Where does Bremer live?—He is living alongside Ross's lease.
497. How much did he offer?—He told us that if we would lease to him he would give us 10s. an acre for this block of land called Otauto.
498. When was that?—About four years ago.
499. Does William Gower hold a lease?—Yes; he holds two leases.
500. Did you know these properties at the time they were leased originally?—Yes; we were residing on those pieces of land.
501. What was the condition of them at that time?—Some portion was in fern, some in timber, some in grass.
502. What improvements have been made since?—He cut down some forest, but the greater part of the forest is still standing; he put up a fence on one-half of one boundary-line, and over the whole boundary alongside the road: I could point it out better on a plan. I have a plan here. [Produced map, and pointed out boundaries, &c.] The whole of one portion was in grass and fern together; another portion was bush; another portion was forest. Gower also bought a piece of land outside this boundary shown on this plan.
503. Do you call Waipuna a portion of Otauto?
- Hon. the Chairman*: Which is that—No. 43, which contains 75 acres; or No. 44, which contains 165 acres?
504. *Mr. Levi*.] No. 44. Will the witness describe it?—There was about 85 acres in bush; then there were 5 acres struck off for a cemetery. It was arranged that he was to pay 4s. 6d. for the bush part; for the open land, 5s. 6d. But the 5 acres that were struck off as a cemetery he has taken possession of. He found out that the portion struck off for a cemetery was in his lease. We told him that all we agreed to lease him was 160 acres. That was all there was in the piece, besides these 5 acres for a cemetery. We were only receiving rent for the 160 acres, although he was in possession of the other 5 acres. Afterwards he said he would give us 10s. an acre for these 5 acres. He paid that one year, but he did not pay any more down to the present. He fenced this portion in order to crop it, leaving the remainder for grazing purposes.
505. Were there any other improvements?—None further than what I have mentioned, only he saved a little grass. When he cut the bush down he put in a crop; then he ploughed and laid it down in grass.
506. Any house on it?—No; there was no house on it.
507. Had he any other lease from a European?—There was a European residing on it. That European was a cripple—that is, he had no hands: his hands were cut off. He wished to lease. His cattle were grazing on it. He offered to lease it from the Natives; but Gower told them not to let him have it, as he had no hands to pay the rent with.
508. How much did the crippled man offer?—He said he would pay 5s. an acre, the same as Gower offered. He left two head of cattle on account of the rent.
509. When did the European without hands make that offer?—It was before Gower made any offer for the land. This crippled man lived in a small whare there which we had built.
510. Do you know about William Gower's other property?—I know another piece called Oturangatuhia.
511. Is that leased from the Maoris?—Yes; a Native named Pawhare and some others leased it to this European.
512. Do you know the place well?—Yes.
513. *Mr. Peacock*.] Is this other place No. 43?—Yes.
514. *Mr. Levi*.] What is the state of it?—Some portion has grass on it, a portion has fern.
515. Has he done anything with it?—He ploughed it up and put it in wheat; it was only a small portion that he did not put under crop; the greatest portion was put in wheat and oats.
516. There is no house on it?—There is only one line of fence, which is the fence on one side of the river. We enclosed the piece he put into wheat and oats. Allington, a European, also offered us 10s. an acre for this land; so Gower gave us 12s.
517. Do you know George Gower?—Yes.
518. How many leases has George Gower?—Two—the name of one is Matukuroa; Patari is the other.
519. What was the condition of Matukuroa when George Gower leased it?—It was about the same as the others—a portion in grass, a portion in fern, and a portion in forest.
520. What improvements have been made on Matukuroa?—There is a weatherboard house on it, a sheep-dip, a stable, and fences.
521. When were these put up?—The buildings were put up by the first lessee—by Alfred Gower.
522. How long ago is that?—I think all these buildings were put up about four years after he took the lease. He was about getting married.
523. When was the fencing put up?—They were put up prior to the buildings being erected.
524. Are there any improvements on it?—Yes; he cut down forest, and where he cut down the forest he put in grass.
525. Now, take Patari: what condition was that in when it was leased?—It was in about the same condition as the others: a large portion was sown with grass just before the lease; other portions were growing grass.
526. What improvements have there been since?—There have been two short lines of fences put up. A portion of the bush was cut down and sown with grass.
527. Any building on it?—No.
528. How long ago were these improvements made?—I think, about four years ago, and some were made before. There were improvements made on the part bordering on the river.