

aliens the license fee was fixed at £1 per annum, and the holder of such license was restricted from digging for gum on any Crown land included in any kauri-gum reserve. Subsequently, by the amending Act of 1910, the annual license fee for aliens was increased to £2.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESERVES.

From the passing of the Kauri-gum Industry Act, 1898, up to the present time a total area of 276,210 acres has been set apart as kauri-gum reserves. There have been many areas withdrawn from the reservations from time to time for various purposes under the authority of the Land Act, 1892 and 1908. The total withdrawals up to date amounted to 48,849 acres. In addition to this there is an area excluded from the operations of the Kauri-gum Industry Act by the Kaitaia Land Drainage Act, 1913. Of the areas so withdrawn it will be seen by a return supplied by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, that 30,424 acres have been selected up to the present, that 610 acres are still open for selection, and that 2,724 acres are now under survey for settlement purposes.

The original reservations seem to have been made in rather a haphazard manner, and your Commissioners found during the course of their inspection large areas of land which never had been gum-bearing included in the reservations. A notable instance of such occurred at Waipapa, north of Ohaeawai, where inspections disclosed areas of 14,000 acres of such land comprised within kauri-gum reserves. In other instances large areas of good bush land were included in the reserves.

With the exception of the one on the Great Barrier Island, every reserve has been carefully inspected by your Commissioners, and they now have to recommend that reservations comprising a total area of 71,164 acres be uplifted. Full details of these areas are given in the schedule and delineated on the various county maps hereto appended.

Several matters of importance incidentally arising during the course of your Commissioners' investigations, materially affecting the kauri-gum reserves and the industry being conducted thereon, are deserving of consideration.

The subjects now to be discussed relate to the past management of the reserves; the future management, development, and settlement of the gum lands; the sand-drift now threatening to submerge large areas of the reserves and other valuable lands; and the kauri-gum industry generally.

NEGLECT OF THE CROWN GUM LANDS IN PAST YEARS.

If there is one outstanding fact that has made itself more and more manifest to your Commissioners during their travels and investigations it is the apparent disregard of the interests of the State which has been displayed in regard to the administration of the gum-bearing lands of the Crown. This remark applies not only to what are known as kauri-gum reserves, but also to the gum-bearing Crown lands.

The total area of the gum-bearing lands, which are all in the Auckland Provincial District, was estimated in 1898 at 814,000 acres. Of this area 435,000 acres were then Crown lands, the balance being represented by privately owned lands and Native lands which had not been adjudicated on by the Native Land Court. Here, then, was an area of Crown lands amounting to nearly half a million acres which was simply left to the gum-digger to use in his own way. He could wander at will over those large areas, dig for gum where he liked, make as many holes as he liked and as deep as he liked, burn the scrub and vegetation, and generally destroy the value of the land for subsequent development, without let or hindrance. Nor do your Commissioners think that there is any blame fairly attachable to the gum-digger. He was simply out to get the gum. He had no security of tenure of any particular area of the land. The only protection he had of his interests was the unwritten law prevailing on the gumfields.

The ultimate effect of such proceeding never seems to have been appreciated by those whose duty it was to watch over the interests of the State, and the steady and sure depreciation of this large area of land has been allowed to go on even to the present day.