

gold fields, and advantageously brought under the operations of the Hundreds Act; as, for instance, in the case of the proposed hundred of Strath Taieri, where no actual mining operations are going on, and where no reasonable gold prospects exist. In this and similar cases the Hundreds Act may very properly, and was no doubt intended, to override the Gold Fields Act, but under no other circumstances.

In conclusion, the Commissioners beg to direct attention to the fact that the same demand for land exists within the limits of the gold fields as elsewhere in the Province, and that there is plenty of available agricultural country, if judiciously selected, to meet the demand; but they are satisfied by their recent investigations, that while the Hundreds Act may be very usefully applied for the purposes of settlement in many portions of the Province, the more effectual means of conducting to the permanent *bonâ fide* settlement of the mining population in the vicinity of actual working, and attracting other classes of settlers to auriferous districts, is by opening up land in those localities under the agricultural lease system, which appears to be very well adapted to their special requirements, and most in accordance with the wishes of the people as declared by the evidence.

We have, &c.,

THOMAS CASS, }
FRED. WAYNE, } Commissioners.
W. C. YOUNG, }

The Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

REPORT ON STRATH-TAIERI HUNDRED.—PLAN NO. 5.

As regards the requisite agricultural area, the proposed hundred far exceeds the requirements of the Act, and the weight of evidence is in favor of opening up land in this district for the purposes of settlement.

The Commissioners, therefore, have no hesitation in recommending this hundred to be proclaimed, but are of opinion that a modification of the western boundary may be advantageously made.

The present boundary, as proposed in the plan, must give rise to endless disputes, on account of the impossibility of fencing, except at a very heavy outlay, and the consequent certainty of cattle straying on to the adjoining runs. The best natural boundary would, without doubt, as suggested in the evidence, be the watershed of the western ranges; but, since the extension would exceed the limits of the prescribed maximum area, the road line may be adopted as the next best boundary on the west, without disturbing to any great extent the boundary as laid down on the plan.

THOMAS CASS, }
FRED. WAYNE, } Commissioners.
WM. CARR YOUNG, }

EVIDENCE.

Dunedin, 8th December, 1870.

Mr. *David Grant*, being duly sworn, states: I am an authorized surveyor, and am acquainted with the country in the proposed hundred, having surveyed about 10,000 acres of the northern portion. About two-thirds of the proposed hundred is agricultural land, and the remainder good pastoral country. The bulk of the land in the proposed hundred is not more than 750 feet above the level of the sea. I am not aware of any land being open for selection in the vicinity of the proposed hundred. I have had a good many inquiries as to whether the land in proposed hundred will be open soon for sale, by parties who I have every reason to believe would purchase if the land were thrown open. There is a passable dray-road through the proposed hundred, but no bush available for fuel or building purposes upon it. The nearest available bush is from twenty to twenty-five miles off.

Thursday, 15th December, 1870.

Mr. *Edward Humphreys*, being duly sworn, states: I am pastoral tenant of 213A Run, and have known the land in the proposed hundred for six and a half years, which includes about 7,000 acres of my run, as shown on the plan. One-third of the whole proposed hundred is in my opinion ploughable. I paid to get my wool down to Dunedin, last season, guaranteeing the carter twelve tons more or less of back load, at the rate of £4 10s. per ton each way. For fuel I use imported coals brought from Dunedin. Peat is obtainable in the vicinity, but is more costly than coal from Dunedin. There is no land open for selection in the vicinity of the proposed hundred. The nearest land open for selection is in the Traquair Hundred and Waihemo Block. A very considerable portion of the lower part of the proposed hundred is subject to floods. The township of Blair Taieri, as marked on the plan, is on the low ground, and to my knowledge has been four times under water within the present year. There is ground at a convenient distance from the proposed township, elevated above the reach of all floods, on the ridge of a stray terrace. I know of no one in the neighbourhood likely to purchase land in the hundred if proclaimed.

Mr. *W. P. Gordon*, being duly sworn, stated: I am pastoral tenant of Run 213B, of which 13,000 acres is included in the proposed hundred. Of the whole 20,000 acres in the proposed hundred two-thirds may be considered agricultural land. If thrown open for selection I know of no one likely to buy. The present current rate of cartage to Dunedin, guaranteeing a back load, is £4 per ton, both ways; in the winter months it is £6 per ton. The plain is liable to be flooded on an average of half a mile from the river, the whole length of the proposed hundred, but there is high sound ground about three-quarters of a mile square, within a mile north of the township of Blair Taieri, which, in my opinion, would form a safer site for said township. I consider the western boundary of the proposed hundred, in its present form, undesirable, because stock would constantly trespass from one side to the other, and the cost of fencing would be very heavy; in some places, where only stone walls are practicable, it would be impossible to fence, except at a ruinous outlay. In my opinion it would be better to make the top of the ridges the western boundary, and if that was adopted, the Doughboy Creek might form a good natural southern boundary, instead of Sutton Stream. This would cut off about 6,000 acres of