

price of £80 18s. 3d. per acre, being more than three times as much as the average price paid by the same firm to the Maoris for land of a similar character. This syndicate consisted of four persons—Messrs. J. R. Blair, A. O. O'Donahoo (surveyor), R. C. Kirk, and E. T. Atkinson. The same land was purchased from Mohi Parai and Te Awe Parai by the syndicate on the 6th June and 4th July in the preceding year for £120.

15. But, apart from the handsome profit derived by Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson as members of the syndicate, and admitting that the full amount stated by them was paid to the several vendors, the account stands thus: Buying-price of 26 acres and 25 perches purchased by Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson, £953 10s.; selling-price of 26 acres and 25 perches sold by Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson to the Government, £2,118 13s. 1d: thus showing that the Defence Department engaged to pay Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson for the 26 acres 25 perches no less than £1,165 3s. 1d. more than the sum for which they purchased it.

16. Your Commissioners have reason to believe that all necessary rights to use the range might have been secured for some years to come without any such serious outlay; whilst, even now, such a right has not been obtained by the costly purchases made from Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson. Nor would such a right have been obtained if the whole 37 acres had been purchased, as even then the Government would have secured no land on the right-hand side of the long range, without which that range can only be used by permission of the occupier of the town reserve which abuts upon it.

17. With regard to the question as to whether any portion of the land acquired by Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson for Government had been offered by that firm to other parties at a large advance on the original purchase-money, the evidence goes to show that Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson have not offered any portion of the land purchased by them for the Government to any other person.

18. Lastly—coming to the important practical question, “Whether, looking at the whole of the circumstances connected with the rifle-range, it is desirable in the public interest that the balance of the lands, if any, should be acquired, and the purchase formally completed?”—your Commissioners find that the two ranges in Polhill Gully are pronounced by those best qualified to give an opinion to have little to recommend them as rifle-ranges except their proximity to the city, which renders them convenient for Volunteer practice and class-firing; and, to make them secure against any possible accidents, further lands would have to be purchased: even now it is found necessary to use for modern rifles and for men qualifying for prize-firing a much better site which exists at Evans Bay, within a mile and a quarter of the present tramway-terminus. A numerously-signed petition has also been presented which shows that the surrounding residents most strongly object to the future use of these ranges, as dangerous to life and detrimental to the value of property in the locality. The owner of the land behind the targets of the long range has also sent in a strong protest against the future use of this range, as he intends to subdivide some of his land for building-sites. A steady increase of population in the locality adds intensity and importance to all these objections. It therefore appears to your Commissioners that it is not desirable to incur any avoidable further outlay on the purchase of the Polhill Gully rifle-range.

19. With this report we forward the evidence of twenty-three witnesses examined by us, a petition, and some letters addressed to the Commissioners, and a sketch-map of the ground, on which the lines of what are known as the long and short ranges are drawn in black; the 26 acres purchased from Messrs. Kirk and Atkinson are coloured blue, the 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of the proposed block which have not been purchased are coloured yellow, and the unsecured reserve adjoining the long range is shown in green.

We respectfully submit to your Excellency this our report.

Witness our hands and seals, this 17th day of May, 1892.

ALFRED SAUNDERS, Chairman.  
T. KENNEDY MACDONALD.  
J. H. BAKER.