

ORGANISED SETTLEMENT OF CANTERBURY . . .

potatoes, yielded between 60 and 70 bushels per acre. Subsequently more seeds, livestock, fruit trees, and implements were bought on trips to Sydney.

Interest on the part of the New Zealand Company in the Canterbury Plains was aroused as early as 1841, when Colonel Wakefield dispatched Captain Daniell and George Duppa to inspect the country around Port Cooper, and in 1844, Frederick Tuckett made a brief survey of the plains for the promoters of the New Edinburgh settlement, finally deciding that they were suitable only for pastoral purposes and not for a compact agricultural settlement, which the New Edinburgh promoters envisaged.

Shortly after his first meeting with John Robert Godley, who had already displayed a keen interest in emigration, Wakefield began detailed discussions with him on the subject of the Canterbury settlement. At the beginning of 1848 Godley formed a committee of management, which in March of that year issued a plan of the Canterbury Association and a list of the members. The association, a board of trustees rather than a company, took an option of purchase over 300,000 acres held by the company.

High Price of Land

The land taken over by the association was to be sold to selected immigrants for the unusually high price of £3 per acre, of which one-sixth (10s.) was to be paid to the New Zealand Company, one-sixth was to be devoted to surveying and public works, one-third was to be devoted to religious and educational endowments, and one-third to financing the emigrant fund. Some 1000 acres were to be reserved for the capital city, in which public reserves were marked out, and 1000 acres for suburban land alongside. Rural land was not to be sold in lots of less than 50 acres, and exclusive rights of pasturage over unoccupied land were to go to land purchasers.

The first task of the association was the selection of a site on the land held by the company in New Zealand, and in July, 1848, Captain Thomas was sent out to make a decision in consultation with the Governor and the Bishop of New Zealand. The Governor suggested the Manawatu and the Wairarapa, but Thomas himself preferred Port Cooper, and he was strengthened in his opinion by the success of the Deans brothers in farming the plains. The Deans farm had already been favourably reported on to Colonel Wakefield, but the deciding factor was the Deans Report on the Condition of the Plains, which was a reply to a number of queries of Captain Thomas. Although the Deanses had at the time been only 6 years in Canterbury, they had acquired a thorough knowledge of the methods required on the plains, and their letters can be regarded as a brief guide to farming. They described the weather, suitable crops, the breaking in of land, and the stock and farm implements most suitable. They considered the land most fertile, wheat crops of more than 60 bushels per acre having been obtained, and that no part of the plains should be difficult

to break in at reasonable cost. Fine-woolled sheep from Australia were felt to be most suitable for stocking the country, but it was considered that Durham and Galloway cattle should be brought from England.

Agreement with N.Z. Company

The association finally obtained a charter from the Government and concluded an agreement with the New Zealand Company, giving it an option over 2,500,000 acres of land for 10 years, though the surrender of the New Zealand Company's charter and the tardy response of the land buyers handicapped the association for some time. With the departure of the Randolph, Charlotte Jane, and Cressy from Plymouth on September 7, 1850, and the Sir George Seymour the following day the first phase in the



[From the Alexander Turnbull Library photographic collection.]

John Robert Godley, founder of Canterbury. Though he spent only 3 years in Canterbury from April, 1850, to December, 1852, his sound administration enabled the settlement to be established on a firm basis.

settlement of Canterbury was completed.

INITIAL SETTLEMENT

Reactions of the settlers to their first view of the plains varied greatly, their hopes and fears being often both confirmed. The featureless landscape seemed to have struck everyone, and the small areas of cultivation around Christchurch in later years seemed only to accentuate it.

At the beginning of 1851 the first land purchasers among the Pilgrims took over their estates, practically all of which were in the immediate vicinity of Christchurch. Most of them comprised a modest 50 or 100 acres, and with the limited number of horses and bullocks available, nearly all hired from the Deanses at Riccarton, they set to work to cultivate their properties and supply themselves with wheat, oats, and potatoes. Though much of the land was covered in flax and toi-toi and was rather swampy, the Pilgrims did not have the back-breaking work of clearing the bush

that their predecessors in the North Island had to face. They were able to break in the land as soon as sufficient horses and bullocks were available, and in the second year of settlement there were 500 acres of wheat sown within a short radius of Christchurch.

In 1853 W. G. Brittain, the Land Commissioner, gave some details of a crop which he grew near the present Barbadoes Street bridge: "I had thirteen acres laid down in wheat. The land, which was originally covered in tutu, fern and grass, had been broken up the previous year, and had borne a first crop, partly of wheat and partly of potatoes. The land was ploughed about the latter end of March, and remained fallow until the last week in May, when, having been lightly harrowed, it was sown with wheat broadcast with two bushels to the acre. The soil being very light, the plough followed the sower and covered the seed to a depth of about three inches. In the spring when the young wheat was about two inches above ground it was well rolled with a heavy horse roller. The crop thrashed at seventy bushels to the acre."

Scarcity of Labour

In the first years of settlement the landowners did not have to exert themselves unduly, as there were sufficient labourers to do the heavy work. But the labourers were not particularly happy with this state of affairs and endeavoured where they could to jump the hurdle of the Wakefield land price or moved off to the recently discovered Australian goldfields. The "Canterbury Almanac" (1854), lamenting this situation declared, "During the early part of the year some of the labouring class, tempted by the goldfields, emigrated to Australia. . . . The consequence was that a scarcity of labour began to be sensibly felt and capital was chiefly invested in flocks and herds, while all tendency to refinement was genuinely checked by the want of leisure from manual work."

From the opening up of the country for pastoral runs from 1852 to the discovery of gold in Otago in 1861 agricultural farming remained very much of secondary importance, the local market being so limited and the profits both immediate and prospective from sheep so much greater that all but the stolid and unenterprising took to squatting. Cultivation was confined during the 1850's to limited areas around Christchurch and Kaiapoi, though the total area under crop, including sown grasses, rose from 802 acres in 1851 to 13,900 in 1858, which included 4200 acres of wheat, 2500 acres of oats, and 4200 acres in grass.

By 1858 a small export trade in wheat had developed, but at that time the incipient conflict between the squatter and the small farmer was coming to the fore and the squatter was effectively asserting his claims. Wheat prices were fairly high, from 6s. to 7s. a bushel, but primitive transport, inadequate shipping services, and a certain contempt for small-scale farming discouraged much attention to it.

Effects of Gold Discoveries

The effects of the gold discoveries on the Canterbury economy were both immediate and profound, and the first