

SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT

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Abstract: When negotiations for the Crown purchase of the Aroha Block were nearing completion in the late 1870s, some Englishmen sought land on which to establish special settlements. Local responses ranged from those wishing to see new capital invested and skilled farmers developing new districts to those who feared their apparently philanthropic motives disguised speculation in land. The temperance 'Broomhall Settlement', proposed in 1876, was opposed by many colonists, especially Thames miners, who wanted this land for themselves, and by politicians who detected a speculator. Drawn-out negotiations ended with the collapse of this scheme.

In 1879, the 'Grant and Foster Settlement' was proposed. It would bring experienced farmers from Lincolnshire, along with farm labourers who would receive small plots of land and be expected to work for their betters. Land was selected at what became known as Shaftesbury, upstream from Waiorongomai, for this evangelical Christian and temperance settlement. As much of the land was of good quality, in time the farmers who remained there profited, but many departed, notably the labourers, who found better prospects elsewhere.

In the late 1880s, when the Waiorongomai goldfield was fading, a settlement was established at Gordon, further upstream, for miners. These under-capitalized and often part-time farmers had a great struggle to develop their sections, and some forfeited their land for not complying with the regulations requiring them to live on it and improve it. But once again, some were able, in time, to create profitable farms.

THE PROPOSED BROOMHALL SETTLEMENT

When the leading New Zealand advocate of temperance, William Fox,¹ was in England in 1876, his promotion of the temperance cause led to his becoming acquainted with Benjamin Whitworth, a leading businessman who was also a parliamentarian. At Whitworth's house he was introduced to John Broomhall, an 'intimate friend' who was 'more or less connected' with Whitworth's business ventures. Because Fox constantly extolled the magnificence of New Zealand, Broomhall approached him on behalf of Whitworth and their friends, who wanted to found a temperance settlement.

¹ See G.H. Scholefield, *Notable New Zealand Statesmen: Twelve Prime Ministers* (Christchurch, 1947), pp. 64-65.

Anticipating a large injection of capital into the colony, Fox encouraged Broomhall, who arrived in New Zealand later that year and had a discussion with Sir Julius Vogel, who accepted his proposals ‘in a general way’.² As a result, at the end of October the Waste Lands Administration Act included a clause permitting the sale to him of any land he selected, up to a limit of 100,000 acres, on condition that the price was not less than that of similar land.³ On 3 November Broomhall informed the Premier, Henry Albert Atkinson, that he had visited Northland and the land between the Waikato and Waihou rivers, an area that gained his ‘general approval’.⁴ He inspected the Aroha district with an interpreter,⁵ John William Richard Guilding.⁶ Unable to hold a public meeting in Auckland as intended, in mid-November he wrote to the press thanking residents for ‘the genuine and universal kindness’ he had received and explaining his desire to provide an opportunity for English workmen to settle:

Our object is especially commercial; the Good Samaritan does not enter into our intentions. We must have security for our capital in the land which we purchase, and we must have a reasonable return for our labour and interest on our capital. These are the essentials of all undertakings, profitable to the State and to the individual. Find us the land, and the obligation of the State ceases, the return must depend on our own common sense and prudence.

The intention was to sell or lease farms,

taking payment of interest and principal by instalments. We shall do everything to induce a large population, convinced that the greater the number of settlers and the greater amount of capital expended, so much the more valuable to us will be the land unsold, and from that we shall expect a return of our capital.

² Speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, 26 October 1878, pp. 1128-1129.

³ *Statutes of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1876), p. 273.

⁴ John Broomhall to H.A. Atkinson, 3 November 1876, ‘Te Aroha Block and Mr Broomhall’s Proposed Special Settlement (Papers Relative To)’, *AJHR*, 1878, D-8, p. 1 [hereafter ‘Te Aroha Block’].

⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 November 1876, p. 3.

⁶ See paper on his life.

A large block was needed. ‘We are a clan, and our strength will be in our proximity to each other. Separation into small and isolated localities is an element of weakness which we cannot entertain’, and he sought 100,000 acres in one block, enabling the establishment of 100 farms each of 1,000 acres.⁷ A columnist anticipated that, as they would be able ‘to dispose of the second half of their land at a price which will leave a handsome profit’, they were ‘acting wisely, for, as a rule property easily acquired is seldom too highly esteemed’.⁸ Immediately, 33 Thames residents protested to the government that ‘we, the old colonists, who have borne the burden and heat of the day, ought not to be placed in a less advantageous position for acquiring land than strangers’, and asked for their own special settlement.⁹

Later in November, Broomhall applied to the Waste Lands Board to purchase 45,700 acres, comprising part of the Aroha Block and two other blocks. ‘Self and friends’ would ‘reclaim and bring into cultivation’ land suitable for farms and seek purchasers ‘among men of intelligence and capital’ in Britain, ‘directing our attention to a class of men known as total abstainers from alcoholic liquor, but not restricting ourselves to that body’. A town would be established. They were prepared to pay cash for the Crown grant, and ‘at great expense’ would drain ‘a very considerable portion of swamp’. Once this land was granted he would seek elsewhere in the province for the remainder of the 100,000 acres. He mapped out suggestions for how purchasers of 50-acre farms would be required ‘to send out’ emigrants, and explained that ‘the purchaser will not be placed in possession until he has proved to having imported the fixed number of emigrants’.¹⁰

The board delayed making a decision for fear that his application would absorb all the available land, leaving none for other settlers, and sought information about other purchases in the district.¹¹ Alexander

⁷ Letter from John Broomhall, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1876, p. 20.

⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 November 1876, p. 5.

⁹ Samuel Stephenson and others to Colonial Secretary, 23 November 1876, printed in *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1876, p. 19.

¹⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 December 1876, p. 8.

¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1876, p. 2; Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 December 1876, p. 8.

Brodie, a leading member of the Thames community,¹² immediately wrote to it:

On behalf of the miners of the Thames, I desire to bring under your notice the injustice that would be done to miners and other small capitalists at the Thames if large blocks of good land were granted by the Auckland Waste Lands Board to applicants or to capitalists. Many of the working population here have for years been waiting for the blocks of land in the neighbourhood to become the property of the Government with a view of purchasing any small patches of 50 to 100 acres each, and becoming permanent settlers, and I would submit that the men who have done the State good service by following the highly dangerous and unhealthy avocation of gold mining should be allowed first the privilege of selecting what land they require for homesteads before the stranger and capitalist is allowed to purchase large tracts of the best land. I trust, therefore, your Board will assent to the blocks asked for by Mr Broomhall being opened for selection by the Thames miners.¹³

The *Waikato Times* had grave doubts about the ‘one sided’ nature of the arrangements of this and similar proposals. It noted that the company Broomhall represented would ‘sell the land again in England, but guarantee to introduce an emigrant for every 50 acres sold’. Whilst it wanted ‘population and capital introduced amongst us, and the waste lands of the North settled and colonized – for it means additional wealth and prosperity secured to those already settled here’, there was ‘no guarantee whatever that the immigration’ would be ‘worth anything at all’, for the immigrants might be unsuitable, even ‘the off-scourings of the parish workhouse’. That Broomhall and his company were ‘simply speculators’, intending to resell the land in England for a profit, was an ‘objectionable feature’, and it wanted future schemes to guarantee that settlers would be of ‘sterling value’.¹⁴ The *Auckland Weekly News* responded that there was plenty of land available for Thames miners and it was ‘absurd’ to suggest that the company would not bring in ‘true workers’.¹⁵ It reprinted Broomhall’s letter

¹² See editorial, *Thames Star*, 16 April 1894, p. 2; *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: vol. 1: A-L*, ed. G.H. Scholefield (Wellington, 1940), pp. 95-96.

¹³ Alexander Brodie to Chairman, Auckland Waste Lands Board, Auckland, 29 November 1876, printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1876, p. 3.

¹⁴ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 2 December 1876, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 December 1876, p. 20.

stating that making money by re-selling the land was ‘our object. In my letters and public remarks I have pointedly stated that the Good Samaritan does not enter into our enterprise’. They would send ‘vast numbers of steady and industrious people’, and ‘we despise the idea of sending them other than on commercial principles’. If they made a profit, they would apply for another 100,000 acres. Unlike Waikato landowners who had offered him land, they would ‘improve it and then take it to a market never failing of people or capital, and we shall not allow it to remain barren for year after year’. As the ‘best proof’ of his belief that New Zealand was ‘a place where every honest and industrious man may get a comfortable living, if not a moderate competency’, his youngest son would remain in the colony ‘to acquire a knowledge of farming, which appears to me one of the most free and enjoyable of all pursuits, and which, were I 40 years younger, I would follow’.¹⁶

Two leading Thames residents attended the next board meeting ‘and protested against Te Aroha and other blocks being sold’ to Broomhall. ‘They represented it as a great injustice to Thames miners, who, nearly five years ago, were promised part of the same block. Members of the Board said it was impossible they could be guided by indefinite promises made long since’, and accepted Broomhall’s proposal, requiring him to bring ‘610 adult immigrants or upwards’. Thames residents who applied for land were informed that it was not yet under the board’s control.¹⁷ Before 1883 Broomhall would have to erect ‘not less than 150 houses of weatherboards or other more permanent materials, each house to contain not less than three rooms’, provide land for schools, and cultivate one-fifth of the land. As a guarantee that these conditions would be met, he had to deposit with the government ‘£11,425 in cash, being at the rate of 5s per acre’; it would be refunded if the conditions were fulfilled, and forfeited if not. The total purchase price was £22,850.¹⁸

Shortly afterwards, Samuel Stephenson, a Thames hotelier who was selling land in the Aroha district,¹⁹ asked Frederick Whitaker, ‘the resident minister in Auckland’, to set aside land in the Upper Thames for ‘occupation by Thames residents on the deferred payment system’. He claimed to represent ‘families numbering nearly 200 adult settlers, most of whom are

¹⁶ Letter from John Broomhall, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 December 1876, p. 20.

¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 December 1876, p. 3.

¹⁸ ‘Resolution of the Waste Lands Board, Auckland’, ‘Te Aroha Block’, p. 2.

¹⁹ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1877, p. 2.

old colonists, desirous of settling down on some decent block', and stressed that their applications had been made 'many months' before Broomhall and other English speculators. He was told that the board would inform him when the land was purchased, to enable those he represented could make fresh applications. As the land purchase officer James Mackay was preparing deeds of cession,²⁰ it was expected that the board would 'be put in possession of the land within a few weeks time'.²¹ The government was unable to interfere in the board's decision.²² In mid-December, it was reported that the balance of Mackay's purchases in the Aroha and Piako districts, 'comprising 17,000 acres in the Aroha block and 249,000 in the Piako', were to be 'thrown open for sale on deferred payments to Thames residents'.²³

At the beginning of January 1877, Broomhall accepted most of the conditions.²⁴ Mackay, who understood that all the Aroha Block would be handed over to Broomhall, told the Commissioner of Crown Lands in Auckland, Daniel Austin Tole,²⁵ that he should not be granted more than 50,000 acres, as 'a large area will be required for Native reserves for residence and occupation'.²⁶ The press reported that 'difficulties' had 'cropped up at the last minute' because Mackay required reserves 'covering a very large area'.²⁷ When the board extended the grant to this size, 'the additional area being almost wholly made up of swamp land', Broomhall accepted its revised offer.²⁸ Mackay assured him that he would 'take care that they are selected so as not to injure the block'.²⁹ Dole told the board that the 40 Maori families living on the block 'had not an inch of land upon which to support themselves' and that, under the terms of the Native Lands Act, 'each man, woman, and child, was entitled to 15 acres'. A member hoped that reserves 'would be so laid out as neither to detract from the

²⁰ See paper on the Aroha Block to 1879.

²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 December 1876, p. 3.

²² *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1876, p. 19.

²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1876, p. 3.

²⁴ John Broomhall to H.A. Atkinson, 2 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', pp. 2-3.

²⁵ See *New Zealand Herald*, 13 September 1904, p. 5.

²⁶ James Mackay to D.A. Tole, 16 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 3.

²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 January 1877, p. 3.

²⁸ John Broomhall to D.A. Tole, 18 January 1877; D.A. Tole to Frederick Whitaker, 17 January 1877, with enclosure, 'Te Aroha Block', pp. 3-4.

²⁹ Speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, p. 1130.

value of the property, nor to prove annoying to the European occupiers'.³⁰ Broomhall complained that reserves had not been mentioned previously; whilst assuring the government that he would 'ever seek their welfare', should the Governor be asked to lease or sell the reserves he wanted to receive the first offer, 'because I and my friends strongly object to the introduction of an element which may be hostile to the foundation of our enterprise'.³¹ He was told that the arrangement could not be approved until the reserves had been created; before any agreement was made to lease or sell them, 'due care will be taken that such sale or other disposal will not interfere with the improvement and occupation of the other land within the block'.³² On this understanding, Broomhall returned to London, leaving an agent, Joseph Newman, was a land agent and stockbroker as well as a leading temperance advocate,³³ to protect his interests.³⁴

Broomhall understood that when he received a plan showing the reserves he would pay £25,000 for the land and provide deposit bonds amounting to £15,000 as security. Upon arrival in England he offered to give the money and the bonds to Vogel, now Agent General, who 'refused to accept them, and said the matter would have to stand over for the present'.³⁵ Josiah Clifton Firth, a board member who speculated in land himself,³⁶ thought Broomhall's proposal 'looked too much like a speculation', and believed he should have brought a letter of credit enabling him to pay the entire purchase price by 30 April.³⁷ As another speculator, Frederick Whitaker, the Attorney General, wanted to 'avoid complications and

³⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 January 1877, p. 3.

³¹ John Broomhall to Donald Reid, 24 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 4; speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, p. 1130.

³² Donald Reid to John Broomhall, 27 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 5.

³³ For Newman as stockbroker and agent, see *Thames Advertiser*, 12 December 1872, p. 3, 8 January 1884, p. 2l; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 January 1892, p. 5. For his involvement in the temperance movement, see *New Zealand Herald*, letter from Joseph Newman, 15 October 1880, p. 6, 20 October 1880, p. 6; *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 February 1882, p. 8, 8 December 1888, p. 14, Supreme Court, 4 July 1891, p. 20.

³⁴ John Broomhall to Donald Reid, 27 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 5.

³⁵ Speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, p. 1130.

³⁶ See paper on the Battery Company.

³⁷ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1877, p. 13.

compensations', he decided he should 'pay nothing till all difficulties removed'.³⁸

In early 1877 some Thames residents sought land at Wairakau, reputedly 'the choicest selection in the vicinity', to the disapproval of others.³⁹ William Rowe,⁴⁰ who held the Thames seat in parliament, complained that the government had promised he would be permitted to form a special settlement, but the board accepted Firth's opinion that it was not bound by this promise.⁴¹ Rowe protested that Firth's reasoning was 'exceedingly strange and unsatisfactory', especially in the light of his own behaviour. 'Why not set apart 10,000 acres of the Te Aroha block, cut it up into farms of various sizes, and sell it by public auction? Personally, I have no love for special settlements; I believe it would be better to put up all lands for public sale. All parties would then have a fair field and no favour'.⁴² In February, Thames people interested in this land called a meeting to put pressure on the board,⁴³ and when 30 of them petitioned it for 10,000 acres on similar terms to those imposed on Broomhall it urged the government to purchase and survey land nearby that could be made available to them. At this board meeting, Firth urged the speedy determination of the reserves to end the 'agitation'.⁴⁴ The Auckland press sympathized with those seeking land, fearing continued loss of valuable colonists to Australia.⁴⁵ The government land purchase system was criticized severely, again.⁴⁶ Some members of the Thames County Council criticized the lands board, 'the greatest land sharks and jobbers in the country', for failing to open the district for settlement.⁴⁷ After visiting Ohinemuri later that year, a journalist argued that 'If the lands of the Upper Thames had been opened for settlement to the miners and others of the Thames instead of letting them fall into the hands of land-sharks, with

³⁸ Frederick Whitaker to Donald Reid, 27 January 1877 (telegram), 'Te Aroha Block', p. 5.

³⁹ Letter from 'Reform', *Thames Advertiser*, 26 January 1877, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1877, p. 3.

⁴⁰ See *Thames Advertiser*, 2 July 1886, p. 2.

⁴¹ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1877, p. 13.

⁴² Letter from William Rowe, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1877, p. 15.

⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1877, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 February 1877, p. 15.

⁴⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 February 1877, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 March 1877, p. 12.

⁴⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 March 1877, p. 15.

the knowledge and consent of the Government', colonists would not be leaving the colony. He hoped that 'the large blocks of land that we have been told of' would be at 'once opened to the settlers of the district', who were 'as much entitled to a portion of the lands' as colonists sent out by Broomhall and others.⁴⁸

Also in February, Newman complained that reports of conflict between Ngati Rahiri and Ngati Tamatera⁴⁹ would convey 'a false impression', being merely 'a little *bounce*'. These reports would discourage English colonists, who would not perceive it as 'a *canard* [false report]⁵⁰ fraught by designing parties for the purpose of obstructing the peaceful settlement of the district'. He insisted that any dispute was unlikely, for even if 40 Maori owners remained, they would not object to the Broomhall settlement.

They do object to Europeans, hostile to the proceedings, being allowed to get possession of so-called "Native Reserves," and benefiting by the improvements in drainage of the land in the settlement of a large European population. All true friends to the natives as well as the Europeans must see that the proposed Broomhall settlement is calculated to benefit all who are settled in the district, and should do all they can to promote the speedy settlement of this vexed question of reserves.... To the natives working on the block the advantage will be patent to everyone.⁵¹

Which did not accord with Broomhall's implication that it would be best if Maori left the area.⁵² The *Thames Advertiser*, in defending its report, noted Newman's suggestion that it either supported or had been duped by those 'interested in frightening Broomhall's people away from the district'. It described Newman as 'a land and commission agent, who always takes a deep interest in men of capital and land speculators arriving in Auckland. It is one of his weaknesses to be found at the coat-tails of such people'.⁵³ Two weeks later, Newman explained to John Davies Ormond, the Minister of Public Works, that the final settlement and payment depended on the area

⁴⁸ Own Correspondent, 'Agricultural Interests in Ohinemuri', *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 August 1877, p. 21.

⁴⁹ See paper on this conflict.

⁵⁰ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 173.

⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1877, p. 3; letter from Joseph Newman, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 February 1877, Supplement, p. 1.

⁵² John Broomhall to Donald Reid, 24 January 1877, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 4.

⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1877, p. 2.

granted and the siting of Maori reserves, and asked how long this would take, for if there were problems Broomhall's emigrants would settle in California instead.⁵⁴

Answering criticisms that he was tardy in concluding negotiations, in early June Mackay explained the 'difficulties' created by Broomhall, whose actions had been in 'direct contravention of his promise to me not to move in the matter until I had completed the purchase of the block on which I was then actively and successfully engaged'. The board, anxious to 'introduce large capital', had 'unwittingly and illegally dealt with lands which were not in their power to dispose of'.⁵⁵ At the end of July, he wrote to Ormond condemning Broomhall's behaviour:

The purchase of the Aroha Block was progressing most favourably, and a very large majority of the owners had executed the deed of conveyance to the Crown, when unfortunately Mr Broomhall arrived at Ohinemuri, to inspect the lands in that neighbourhood. I very foolishly gave him every facility to visit Te Aroha Block, and, to prevent him having to ask questions from Natives there about the land, despatched my own Interpreter (Mr Guilding) with him. On his return, he expressed himself pleased with the country, and said he would like to acquire it for his special settlement. I then drew his attention to a few points: Firstly, that the Native title was not extinguished, but believed it soon would be. Secondly, that the Natives who were living there would require some reserves. Thirdly, that the public would not be satisfied at the hill lands being granted to him, unless the right to mine for gold was reserved by the Crown. Fourthly, that there were several persons at the Thames who had been promised land for settlement there. Fifthly, if he wished to apply for the block he had better not make his application public or it might very materially interfere with the cession of the block. Mr Broomhall thanked me for the information, and promised to be very careful not to make his application public. He proceeded to Auckland, and forthwith made an application to the Waste Lands Board for 47,000 acres of Te Aroha Block. The Waste Lands Board illegally dealt with him, and agreed to his proposals; overlooking the fact that they had no right to deal with lands over which the Native title had not been extinguished, and which were not under their control until declared by the Governor, by *Gazette* notice, to be waste lands of the Crown. Reports of the proceedings of the Waste Lands Board were duly published in the Auckland

⁵⁴ Joseph Newman to J.D. Ormond (Minister of Public Works), 19 February 1877, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

⁵⁵ Letter from James Mackay, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1877, p. 3.

newspapers. The Maoris were informed by interested Europeans that the Government had sold 47,000 acres to Mr Broomhall at 20s per acre, and I was not paying them 5s for it. Some twenty-five Natives of Ngatirahiri refused to sign the deed, and the purchase remains incomplete to this day.⁵⁶

The following year Mackay again complained about the ‘great difficulties’ Broomhall had created. ‘I had paid the purchase-money to four of the native parties in Shortland, and I was arranging with the fifth’, clearly Ngati Rahiri. ‘But when I was doing so one of them came in and said, See here, the Government have sold 47,000 acres of land for 20s per acre. Mr Broomhall himself had caused all the difficulty’. He had told Broomhall ‘that he had bought the land subject to the extinction of the native title’, but Broomhall claimed to have ‘bought it absolutely’.⁵⁷

In Ohinemuri, it was believed Broomhall’s plans might be thwarted by some members of the government, who wanted the land for themselves.⁵⁸ If that was their intention, it failed because of the change of government in October. The following month, Newman complained to the board and the new Native Minister, John Sheehan, about the delay. The board hoped the purchase would soon be completed to enable Broomhall to have his land.⁵⁹ ‘The Chairman said the delay in the matter was no doubt vexatious’, and, heeding the protests, it unanimously asked the government to be ‘placed in a position to supply the numerous demands made for land in that district’.⁶⁰ When a deputation of Thames residents met Sheehan at the end of December, Rowe spoke of ‘the shame and the scandal, that we who are settlers and colonists cannot get land for ourselves and our children’, whereas men like Broomhall and George Vesey Stewart at Katikati⁶¹ were buying ‘the very choicest lands in the country for a mere song’. He asked whether the government would ‘really carry out this most scandalous bargain, and give to Mr Broomhall lands which were promised to me and to others here present’. When Sheehan said he could not repudiate the board’s

⁵⁶ James Mackay to Minister of Public Works, 31 July 1877, *AJHR*, 1877, G-7, p. 8.

⁵⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1878, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 August 1877, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1877, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 December 1877, p. 15.

⁶¹ See *Bay of Plenty Times*, 4 March 1920, p. 2, 5 March 1920, p. 2, 6 March 1920, p. 4; Arthur J. Gray, *An Ulster Plantation: The story of the Katikati Settlement* (Wellington, 1950).

contract with Broomhall, several people pointed out that ‘very little good land would be left’ there; he assured them that he would attempt to open other areas.⁶²

At the beginning of 1878, Newman sent the prospectus of the New Zealand Land and Agency Company to the *Thames Advertiser*. Broomhall had agreed to sell his agreement to it for £5,000, this sum to pay for his visit and ‘expenditure of time and trouble’. In Broomhall’s report, included in the prospectus, he stated that

I was assured when in New Zealand, by competent judges, that the land would realize £2 per acre in block, and a much higher price if cut up; and when in Melbourne a semi-proposal of £3 an acre was made to me for the entire block, but considering myself honourably bound to cut it up and encourage settlement in the colony I declined to think over the proposal, convinced that a sale in lots will realize in the gross a much greater average than £3 per acre.⁶³

Newman explained that three directors of this company were also directors of the Temperance and General Life Assurance Society, which would ‘mostly’ select the settlers. This society had ‘induced’ Broomhall to visit New Zealand, ‘his expenses being guaranteed by a number of influential friends; and having ample funds at their disposal, it has been decided to extend their operations in New Zealand by forming a new loan company’, which would take up Broomhall’s purchase.⁶⁴ The capital was to be £100,000.⁶⁵

Critics continued to hope that Broomhall, who was ‘merely jobbing in land’, would not receive anything, for the settlement was unfair to existing colonists.⁶⁶ In mid-March, when a deputation from Thames, Ohinemuri, and the Bay of Plenty met Sheehan, they complained that all the available land would be ‘swallowed up by Mr Broomhall and his friends’. They noted that Broomhall, who had claimed to represent ‘an organisation of 30,000 or 40,000 people’, had offered to float a company when he returned to England

⁶² *Thames Advertiser*, 31 December 1877, p. 3.

⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 January 1878, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Letter from Joseph Newman, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 January 1878, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, 26 October 1878, p. 1131.

⁶⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 January 1878, p. 8.

and had asked for a bonus of £5,000. He was to pay £1 an acre whereas members of the deputation had offered £3, and some of it was ‘well worth £5’. Dole advised Sheehan that Broomhall had carried out all the conditions ‘up to the present’, and had until 1 January 1883 to complete the purchase; Sheehan noted that Broomhall could not be given his title until the Crown had completed the purchase.⁶⁷ A Thames meeting unanimously wanted the agreement cancelled, the mover of this motion ‘denouncing the Broomhall bargain, which though legal was wrong’; the seconder complained that ‘large firms’ were taking up land everywhere.⁶⁸ When another Thames deputation met Sheehan he warned them to ‘deal tenderly’ with the Broomhall question: ‘They had the money-market in England to consider, and if they threw up a bargain once made, their reputation would be stained. He certainly regarded the acquisition as illegal’, because the land had not been purchased. ‘If Government saw their way clear for its reconsideration, they would be prepared to do so’. Members of the deputation described the agreement as ‘a gross injustice’ and ‘a most iniquitous matter’; ‘in the opinion of many persons “Broomhall” meant Auckland speculators’.⁶⁹

Early in the year, Vogel warned the directors that their agreement to pay Broomhall £5,000 for his agreement within a few days of the shares being allotted was inappropriate, for he had only very ‘bare’ terms that might be amplified. The directors saw his point, ‘and, notwithstanding Mr Broomhall’s disinclination, insisted upon a modification of the agreement by which the Company’s money would not be paid till the land was secured’. Vogel believed the government would not oppose Broomhall transferring his interest to the company, but would not want him to receive the profit before it ‘had an opportunity of satisfying itself as to the intentions of the Company’. Despite being ‘constantly in communication with’ Broomhall and assisting him to prepare the prospectus, Vogel had not seen his agreements with the government and the company and ‘constantly’ told him to ‘refer to his lawyers for a precise opinion as to the nature of his agreement’. He expected the government was likely to amplify it, especially ‘in respect to

⁶⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1878, p. 16.

⁶⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 March 1878, p. 15.

⁶⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 April 1878, p. 14.

transfer or assignment'; all the directors apart from Broomhall agreed with Vogel.⁷⁰

In March, Broomhall requested an extra year in which to fulfil the conditions, and expressed concern at possible extra conditions limiting his ability to sell farms.⁷¹ By this time his projected New Zealand Agency and Land Company had been 'discontinued'.⁷² He insisted that it was intended that those who bought their 50 acres, not the company, were to meet the costs of emigration, for it was 'not for the interests of the colony that we send out paupers or men who have no capital'. He appealed to the government for 'a Crown grant free from all restrictions but those specified' in the original agreement, expressing his firm opinion that New Zealand offered 'great advantages for the employment of the surplus capital and labour' of England, and that 'a properly organized body will direct both'. He was 'equally convinced that one is of no use without the other; and I will be no party to sending a single man to the colony who is unable to pay his own passage money at the least'.⁷³

In mid-March, Newman intended going to Wairakau to lay off the settlement and resolve the difficulties over Ngati Rahiri reserves, but Sheehan asked him to stay away, 'as his presence might have an injurious effect on the native mind'.⁷⁴ The following month, the Attorney General, Robert Stout, announced his opinion that the sale was illegal and, consequently, invalid, as the board had no power to sell land not acquired by the Crown. His opinion raised the possibility of Broomhall being entitled to compensation because the agreement was not carried out.⁷⁵ At the next meeting of the board, Firth rejected Thames claims that some of its members were 'interested' in the settlement and were trying to keep the land closed.⁷⁶ When its June meeting was told that efforts were continuing

⁷⁰ Julius Vogel to Robert Stout (Minister of Lands), 14 March 1878, 'Te Aroha Block', pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ John Broomhall to Julius Vogel, 12 March 1878; John Broomhall to Secretary for Crown Lands, 12 March 1878, 'Te Aroha Block', pp. 7-8.

⁷² Julius Vogel to Robert Stout, 14 March 1878, 'Te Aroha Block', p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1878, p. 3.

⁷³ John Broomhall to Secretary of Crown Lands, 27 March 1878, 'Te Aroha Block'. p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1878, p. 3, 18 March 1878, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 April 1878, p. 12.

⁷⁶ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 April 1878, p. 18.

to extinguish the Maori title, Firth said he wanted it to prevent Broomhall or anyone else speculating in this land.⁷⁷

At its October meeting, Firth referred to a proposed Act to validate the sale, for Broomhall's proposal to 'transfer his interest' gave 'a new current to the transactions. Some strong comments on the subject had been made in the London *Times*'. The board required that the original conditions be enforced.⁷⁸ Shortly afterwards, Stout introduced a clause into the Special Powers and Contracts Bill to enable the government to carry out the agreement. Although he 'strongly denounced the sale', for 'thousands of miners had left the Thames because they could not obtain land, although they were prepared to pay four times as much' as Broomhall, as 'the credit of the colony was at stake' the agreement 'could not be repudiated'. The Premier, Sir George Grey, 'strongly opposed the new clause' because of the 'injustice' it would inflict on Thames residents, and there were sharp comments by other members. The Minister of Works 'believed no action had been taken in England by Mr Broomhall', whilst a government supporter said that he had come 'in the guise of a philanthropist, and not as a speculator', but 'had a remarkably good eye for land', and recommended negotiating with him over compensation. Sheehan agreed that there was no evidence that Broomhall 'had taken any steps to confirm the contract', although he had tried to form 'a speculative company' and obtain £5,000. 'He had not even sent anyone to spy out the goodness of the land'. Sheehan recommended that Stout's clause be withdrawn and a special bill introduced; if it turned out that Broomhall 'had been riding a waiting race for merely speculative purposes, Government should refund him whatever money he had paid, with fair expenses, and keep the land'. He understood 'there was not a single Broomhall settler representing the company'. The clause was withdrawn.⁷⁹

Broomhall's son, who was living at Papatoitai, near Auckland, responded to these 'unwarrantable aspersions' about his father, who had never hidden that 'the first object' was 'the profitable investment of capital'. No settlers had been sent out to represent the company because there was no title; when a representative attempted to 'spy out the land', he was prevented by Mackay 'or some other Government official'. Any breach of

⁷⁷ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 June 1878, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 October 1878, p. 8.

⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 October 1878, p. 15; as this was debated in committee, the speeches were not recorded in *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*.

faith was on the part of the government, which had not transmitted the title as arranged.⁸⁰

On 26 October, when parliament debated the bill for the last time, Fox gave a lengthy justification of Broomhall's behaviour. He accused Sheehan of changing his views, and claimed that after the land court had dealt with the last claims the 'very eyes and heart of the block' were taken out to make reserves. Broomhall had, 'with the best of motives, commenced to get up a company, to which it was understood the whole transaction would be handed over as soon as he received the grant'. Having no title, 'he was advised that it was useless to go on with the formation of the company, and the whole matter dropped through'. There was nothing untoward in his receiving £5,000, 'an arrangement that is made every day in the Stock Exchange and the money-market'. Broomhall had informed him that his travelling and other expenses, along with 'the loss he had incurred as a man of business', amounted to £2,500, which Fox did not believe would cover all the expenses. 'For some time past I have been receiving very melancholy letters from Mr Broomhall relating to the prospects', and because of the long delay the 'zeal' of those associated with the undertaking had 'gradually cooled down, and now they do not care about the matter at all'. Instead of compensation, Broomhall was willing to accept an amount covering his expenses. Had he received the land, he would have settled his family on it, and the company would have participated in 'all kinds of undertakings in every part of the colony'.⁸¹

Sheehan expressed satisfaction that the scheme was at an end, doubting that Broomhall would have provided any settlers, as he did not believe he would make good his contract. Broomhall was 'entirely responsible for all that trouble that has arisen', and title 'might have been settled but for this very matter'. Sheehan had used his influence with Maori to sort out the ownership and complete the title to enable the Crown to fulfil its promise to Broomhall, 'a speculator in land'. Broomhall knew that within 12 months the block 'would be worth double the money he was going to pay for it', and Sheehan was glad that it would now be purchased at £2 an acre by miners and other colonists.

⁸⁰ Letter from A. Broomhall, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 October 1878, p. 19.

⁸¹ Speech by William Fox, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, 26 October 1878, pp. 1130-1132.

Mr Broomhall is a man who knows his own business, and, depend upon it, he has reckoned up all his chances at Home. You may be sure that, when he met the Agent-General the other day in London, and talked the matter over with him and agreed to take £3,500, he left the room smiling all over his face. I think, on the whole, we let him out of a difficulty in which he was, because he could not have carried out the settlement he had promised. From the time that he went from the colony there was no practical evidence of his intention to complete the transaction.

For that reason, Broomhall had taken the £3,500, and New Zealand was not damaged by his disappearance.⁸²

One newspaper considered that colonists would have paid more and done ‘as much or more’ than Broomhall had promised to do. His contract ‘received a great blow’ when it was discovered he had sold the land ‘conditionally to a trading company’ for £5,000. ‘Anybody in Auckland with the Broomhall block in his possession on the terms offered by the Waste Lands Board, could have done the same in Queen-street any day, and have secured better settlers’. The land would ‘no doubt meet with a ready sale, and be occupied by an excellent class of settlers. It is of good quality, and the situation is superb’.⁸³ For his part, Firth ‘did not concur in the wisdom of the Legislature in this matter. It had the appearance of repudiation, and would shut out men of capital from the country’.⁸⁴ John McCombie,⁸⁵ writing after the opening of the goldfield, regretted that Broomhall had not been permitted to retain at least ‘a small proportion of the land he was negotiating for’, as he represented ‘several English manufacturing firms, who would have been only too eager to expend a little of their immense wealth in mining’ once gold was found, thereby introducing ‘a large number of most desirable settlers’.⁸⁶

THE GRANT AND FOSTER SETTLEMENT

⁸² Speech by John Sheehan, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 30, 26 October 1878, pp. 1132-1134.

⁸³ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 November 1878, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 November 1878, p. 21.

⁸⁵ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

⁸⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 December 1880, p. 6.

In mid-January 1880 a meeting of the Thames Land Association decided to form an association to obtain a block in the Upper Thames, each member paying a subscription of five shillings for each 100 acres applied for. A committee would visit 'to gather all information possible respecting the land in the district, and report to a future meeting'.⁸⁷ Nothing came of this possible settlement in the Aroha Block, or of the request by some Thames residents for 'about 10,000 acres at Te Aroha'.⁸⁸

Instead, the Grant and Foster settlement was established. At the beginning of October 1879, the Agent General, Julius Vogel, agreed to provide free passages to and from the colony for Samuel Grant, his son George Lindsay Grant, and John Stovin Foster. Because of the condition of farming in England, hundreds of tenant farmers in Lincolnshire wished them to investigate suitable places to settle, either in New Zealand or Canada.⁸⁹ Late in October, the land board was told by Joseph Newman 'that two farmers from Lincolnshire were now on their way to Australia and New Zealand with a view to selecting land for settling 500 farmers'. Because Newman 'thought their attention would be directed to New Zealand if reasonable inducements were offered', the chairman provided details of land available. Firth supported the idea, having been informed that these 500 people 'would represent a million of capital and agricultural skill, which they much wanted', and the board agreed to recommend legislative amendments to assist special settlements.⁹⁰ At the end of the year, it was reported that a former Waikato clergyman had been lecturing in England to farmers and others about the attractions of New Zealand, attracting 'very wide-spread attention', especially in Lincolnshire. As a consequence, a requisition signed by five or six hundred farmers asked 'two of their number to visit New Zealand and report specially to them'. Grant, 'a gentleman of high standing in Lincolnshire, with three large farms', was 'universally respected', having for many years held 'important offices in the Wesleyan Church'. Foster, who farmed 1,000 acres, was reportedly 'a practical and upright man' with a brother at Te Awamutu. Having received a free

⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 16 January 1880, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 January 1880, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Julius Vogel (Agent General) to William Rolleston (Minister for Immigration), 3 October 1879, 'Visit to New Zealand of Messrs Grant and Foster (Correspondence Relative to the, as Delegates on Behalf of Lincolnshire Farmers)', *AJHR*, 1880, D-7, p. 1 [hereafter 'Visit to New Zealand'].

⁹⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 November 1879, p. 5.

passage to and from New Zealand from the Agent-General, they intended to travel throughout the colony investigating the land.

Should their report be favourable, most important results are sure to follow. The requisition signed to them represents from one to two hundred thousand acres of English farming, and much capital. We may confidently expect, as a result of their visit, a large influx of Lincolnshire capitalists, who are at the same time practical farmers.⁹¹

When the delegates inspected many districts of both islands, in several places 'eager settlers turned up who were very anxious about getting rid of their particular property'.⁹² On 14 January 1880, 'three gentlemen (delegates from Lincolnshire farmers)', visited the Aroha Block, accompanied by settlers and a surveyor. A Te Aroha resident was informed that the delegates were 'well pleased with the lands in this district. Unfortunately, owing to the unusually high flood in the river, many of the best swamps could not be visited'.⁹³ Subsequently, Grant and Foster applied to the board for 'about 10,000 acres', but as this appeared to include the block claimed by Thomas Russell, their request was stood over 'for the present'.⁹⁴ In mid-March, a formal request was made for 10,000 acres of the southern portion of the block. Being 'prepared to pay whatever may be considered a fair price for the land, and also to submit to such reasonable conditions as to residence and improvements' that were required, they wanted an indication of whether their application was likely to be accepted before returning to England to organize 'a party of settlers'.⁹⁵ The board agreed to set aside this area until November, and resolved that the price per acre would 'not be under £2' and the conditions would be similar to the Bay of Plenty settlements.⁹⁶

Grant and Foster then asked for an additional and unsurveyed area on the eastern side of the river. Whilst the 'higher portion' was 'broken land

⁹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 December 1879, p. 13.

⁹² *Lyttleton Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 April 1880, p. 13.

⁹³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 January 1880, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 January 1880, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Samuel Grant and J.S. Foster to Members of the Waste Lands Board, 18 March 1880, 'Visit to New Zealand', p. 2.

⁹⁶ D.A. Tole (Commissioner of Crown Lands) to Samuel Grant and J.S. Foster, 19 March 1880, 'Visit to New Zealand', p. 2.

totally unfit for agricultural purposes', they considered its acquisition would make 'the property more complete' and form 'a background for the houses we propose building on the slopes of the hill'.⁹⁷ The board agreed to their request.⁹⁸ Their agent, William Steele,⁹⁹ pointed out that there had been no previous application for these 7,000 acres, 'nor was there any probability that there would be any'. Firth was enthusiastic about providing this extra assistance, for the public 'would be benefited by the introduction of such a class'. He defended the board from criticism that it had disregarded the application from another man for the same land, for this application had been received after it had accepted Grant and Foster's application.¹⁰⁰ The government not only agreed to this extra land being made available, it arranged to pay half the passage money of all '*bona fide* skilled agricultural labourers' brought to New Zealand;¹⁰¹ it expected to have to pay for no more than 20 or 30.¹⁰²

In late March, at the end of their visit, Samuel Grant and Foster wrote to the *Waikato Times* 'to thank the people generally of your district for the many acts of kindness which we have received at their hands'. In England,

colonial hospitality is proverbial, and we have found it to exceed its reputation; the house of everyone has been open to us, and all without exception have been desirous to show us unreservedly everything which would tend to give a true idea of the country, and enable us to furnish the agriculturalists of England a fair and unbiased report of the condition and prospects of the farming interests here.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Samuel Grant and J.S. Foster to Frederick Whitaker (Attorney General), 29 March 1880, 'Visit to New Zealand', p. 5.

⁹⁸ D.A. Tole to William Rolleston, 12 April 1880, 'Visit to New Zealand', p. 3.

⁹⁹ See *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 752; *Waikato Argus*, 22 September 1898, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 September 1898, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 April 1880, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ William Rolleston to Julius Vogel, 3 April 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement at Te Aroha (Further Correspondence Relative to)', *AJHR*, 1881, D-7, p. 1; Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 May 1880, p. 5.

¹⁰² William Rolleston to Julius Vogel, 27 July 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', p. 1.

¹⁰³ Letter from S. Grant and J.S. Foster, *Waikato Times*, 1 April 1880, p. 3.

In late August, the *New Zealand Herald* received an advance copy of their report on the ‘agricultural condition and prospects’ of the entire colony. Unlike earlier such publications, it was neither exaggerated nor excessively critical, for the authors had written ‘as we would have expected’, they having ‘no interest to deceive’. They had published ‘a plain, unvarnished tale, whose every statement may be accepted without abatement’. They seemed ‘naturally to have taken more kindly to the South, on account of the climate and modes of farming being more nearly akin to those of England’. It quoted excerpts describing the Waikato and adjoining districts, including their view of the Waihou Valley: ‘Altogether, we were well pleased with this district, which though as yet behind its neighbour the Waikato, is, we feel sure, destined at no distant day to equal if not to surpass it’. They argued that in New Zealand ‘any English farmer, of industry and perseverance, possessing a little capital, and a good knowledge of his business, may make a very good living for himself and his family, and will have better opportunities of settling his children than’ in England. Cattle breeding could ‘be done to perfection in the Waikato’, where the warm climate meant farms could ‘be worked at a low cost’; in this district ‘a man of small capital, desirous of carrying on his farm by the united labour of himself and his family only, might do very well’. But their ‘very strong impression’ was ‘that the South Island is the place’ for most English tenant farmers seeking land.¹⁰⁴ This newspaper’s London correspondent described their report as ‘so fair and so truthful, and so reassuring in its tone, that its quiet influence upon capitalist farmers who contemplate the adoption of New Zealand as their home, is very great indeed’.¹⁰⁵

In June, a Thames reporter visited the site of the proposed settlement:

My guide could not point out its exact boundaries. The block is distant by land from Omahu about five miles, and by water ten, and is situated on the western bank of the Waihou. The nature of the country here is very different from that on the other side of the river. As far as the eye can see to the south and west there are vast level plains of pumice-stone soil generally covered with fern, grass, and clover, with patches of forest and extensive swamps. The land, though light, appears to be of good quality.

¹⁰⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 August 1880, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ London Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1880, p. 5 [written on 4 November 1880].

Should the block include the Manawaru bush, on the western side of the river, there would be plenty of timber for ‘fencing and firing purposes’. The delegates were expected to arrive at any moment to decide whether to accept the land. ‘It cannot but be a source of satisfaction that there is every probability of the district receiving such a welcome addition to its residents’, who were ‘thoroughly practical’ farmers and ‘colonists of the most desirable type’, for ‘nearly all, if not all’, were ‘capitalists’. There was ‘every chance’ the settlement would succeed, and ‘being men of substance, and possessed of practical experience, they will do good both for themselves and for the colony at large’.¹⁰⁶

At the end of September, when announcing that the Lincolnshire farmers were to settle near Te Aroha, the *Thames Star* recalled that, several years previously, Thames residents ‘cried loudly for lands for settlement, looking on the country of the Upper Thames as theirs by right’. Although they forced the government to repudiate the agreement with Broomhall, the land was not thrown open but kept ‘dangling’ for so long that, ‘with only one or two exceptions, all the married persons likely to become the pioneers of Te Aroha became tired of waiting and took up land’ elsewhere. When finally opened, it became apparent that Thames residents could not settle ‘the land we had been so long waiting for’.¹⁰⁷

At the end of September, Steele, their local agent, offered to purchase, by instalments, 17,000 acres, including two Maori reserves, at a price ‘not to exceed £1 10s per acre’. They promised to settle ‘none but substantial and moneyed farmers’.¹⁰⁸ The board agreed to sell ‘17,600 acres, more or less’, on condition they ‘introduce from the United Kingdom or elsewhere (save from the Australian colonies) at least 225 adult immigrants’, two people aged under 18 being ‘reckoned as one adult’. Within six months of the first immigrants arriving, 45 families must be settled in good houses containing at least three rooms. Each family was required to live on their section continuously for three years, and within that time bring one-fifth of it into cultivation. The Manawaru reserve of 613 acres was not to be sold but ‘set

¹⁰⁶ Own Reporter, ‘Tour in the Aroha, Waitoa, and Piako Districts’, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 June 1880, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Thames Star*, 28 September 1880, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ William Steele to D.A. Tole, 29 September 1880, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 2.

apart as a township and for other public purposes'.¹⁰⁹ Because the unsurveyed 7,000 acres was 'very broken' with 'precipitous mountains, good for nothing but the firewood on them', Percy Smith, the chief surveyor, recommended that these be sold at 5s per acre whilst the majority of the land be sold at £2 if west of the river and £2 5s on the eastern side.¹¹⁰ An unstated reason for the higher price was reports of gold being found; shortly afterwards it was noted that the discovery of gold had 'greatly enhanced the value'.¹¹¹ Firth disagreed with Smith's view of the land he considered worth only 5s an acre:

That was the only portion of timbered land in the district, and would be of great value in consequence. Besides it was of an undulating surface, and presented sites for residences of unsurpassed beauty, with wooded vales and babbling brooks all around, while stretching away in front were miles of beautiful level land, which would soon be covered with beautiful homesteads.

He considered it worth 'at least as much as the other land, and certainly worth £2 an acre'. It was auriferous, and 'some of the land was the finest in the colony'. He was told that, 'as deferred payment was asked for, the price would of course be increased'. He wanted a higher price than another board member, who 'was very anxious to afford every facility to encourage wealthy farmers to come here',¹¹² and hoped this settlement was 'the first drops of a shower of immigration' that would 'extend all over New Zealand'. Another member noted that the board 'got nothing at all' from the sale. After Steele said that Smith's valuation was 'a most liberal one for the public' and that despite being instructed to acquire the land for 30s an acre he would accept Smith's price, it was agreed to.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Extracts from minutes of a special meeting of the Land Board held on 6 October 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1880, p. 9.

¹¹⁰ S. Percy Smith to Frederick Whitaker, 29 September 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', pp. 3-4.

¹¹¹ *Thames Star*, 5 October 1880, p. 2, 7 October 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1880, p. 6.

¹¹² Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1880, pp. 18-19.

¹¹³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1880, p. 9.

Steele accepted both price and conditions so long as Thomas Russell's claim¹¹⁴ was extinguished.¹¹⁵ An editorial applauded the outcome, considering that 'a good, useful, and industrious class of settlers and small capitalists' would arrive. It accepted that Grant and Foster had 'obtained a good bargain for their clients', but had no quarrel with this, 'believing that there will be a mutual benefit and that it is in our interest to make these men successful'.¹¹⁶ 'A Colonial' protested that the board was encouraging speculation and that colonists should have had 'equally favourable opportunities of making a home'.¹¹⁷ Responding to the first claim, an Auckland newspaper wrote that it would be concerned should Grant and Foster make a 'handsome profit' by reselling land at a higher price, but it presumed that the board had taken precautions to prevent this.

If it were to be conceded that special arrangements should not be made with English farmers desiring to make the colony their home, the result might be that they would not come, and so the disadvantages under which we labour in competing with the United States and Canada would be increased. We should at once have the colony up in arms and asking why the interests of the whole should be sacrificed to the wishes of a few.¹¹⁸

In response, John Lamb, an Auckland miller who was a leader of the temperance movement,¹¹⁹ argued that 'nothing' in the Auckland province had happened that was 'of so much importance for the progress of the country' as this agreement. 'This is a step in the right direction, and I should like to see more such arrangements made, so as to bring a larger area of our waste lands under cultivation'.¹²⁰

Early the following year, it appeared that another settlement near Te Aroha was likely:

¹¹⁴ See papers on the Aroha Block.

¹¹⁵ William Steele to D.A. Tole, 8 October 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', p. 4.

¹¹⁶ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1880, p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Letter from 'A Colonial', *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 October 1880, p. 15.

¹¹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 October 1880, p. 14.

¹¹⁹ See *Observer*, 22 October 1881, p. 90, 18 February 1882, p. 355, 27 April 1895, p. 15; *Auckland Star*, 24 August 1889, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Letter from John Lamb, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 October 1880, p. 6.

It is not improbable that in this part of the island a Teutonic settlement could be found at no distant date. A German gentleman has been visiting here the past two days for the purpose of reporting to his government on the adaptability of this district for settlement, and is very favourably impressed with the fertility of the soil, the situation of the land available, and the price at which it can be obtained.¹²¹

Nothing further was heard of this possibility, and the only other settlement was established upriver at Gordon for Waiorongomai miners, as will be described.

Because it was reducing its expenditure, the government was no longer willing to assist with the passage of agricultural labourers.¹²² In November, Steele applied for Manawaru, as it contained the only timber on the western side of the river and was the most suitable place for a bridge; the board recommended the sale of all but 100 acres, but the government decided to leave this matter in abeyance until the settlers arrived.¹²³ Manawaru, along with another Ngati Rahiri reserve, did not become part of the final purchase.¹²⁴

When Grant and Foster received the terms, they protested to the Premier that they understood, from their discussion with Frederick Whitaker, the Attorney General, that no more than 30s per acre would be charged, that Maori reserves would be included, and the land drained and roads formed. ‘We are now asked to give some 34s per acre; the Native reserves, which form the most valuable portion of the property, are withdrawn; no drainage or roads are to be effected for us; and a clause is introduced, which we are told is quite unusual in the colony, reserving gold and minerals’. They could not accept these terms: although willing to pay the higher price, they wanted the reserves included and the clause reserving gold and minerals ‘struck out. These two matters are absolutely

¹²¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1881, p. 3.

¹²² William Rolleston to D.A. Tole, 26 October 1880, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 6.

¹²³ William Steele to D.A. Tole, 9 November 1880; D.A. Tole to William Rolleston, 17 November 1880; Under-Secretary, Crown Lands Department, to D.A. Tole, 6 December 1880, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, pp. 7, 10; Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 November 1880, p. 13.

¹²⁴ D.A. Tole to Under-Secretary, Crown Lands Department, 2 December 1880, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 8.

essential to our plan'. They also wanted the main road 'roughly formed', at the cost of the road board, before settlers arrived. Should they be able to come to terms over this land, they would settle other parts of the Waihou valley as well.¹²⁵

Whitaker protested at these 'gross inaccuracies': he had not negotiated the terms, and had only seen Grant and Foster before their departure, when they asked him what price would be asked, to be told that the government would accept the decision of a valuer. Percy Smith, who was present, 'was asked, not officially, but simply for Messrs Grant and Foster's information, what he considered about the value of the land they wanted, and, in reply, he said he thought it worth about 30s an acre'. They asked when some drainage would be completed, but Whitaker did not know, nor did he recall discussing roads. He did not understand how they 'could possibly believe that the Government would expend, on land worth at least 30s an acre, some £2 to £3 per acre on improvements, and then sell it to them at 30s'. Ngati Rahiri 'reserves were mentioned, and they expressed a wish that some reserves should be included in the block they wanted. I suggested that they should apply accordingly, and said that if it was Government land, I saw no objection'. They left Steele to arrange this. Whitaker had included the clause reserving gold and silver, for, after Grant and Foster left the colony, gold was found at Te Aroha. As these royal metals belonged to the Crown in all Australasian colonies, he considered the clause would avoid 'some misapprehension, and consequent dissatisfaction', but did not mind removing it.¹²⁶ William Rolleston, the Minister of Lands, explained to Grant and Foster that the government had acted in the only way permitted under legislation.

I regret that any misunderstanding should have arisen on your part as to the terms of the agreement, which appears to have been fully understood by your agent. And I need scarcely say that the Government has been placed in a somewhat embarrassing position by your appointing an agent, and then objecting to the terms to which he has agreed.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Samuel Foster and J.S. Grant to John Hall (Premier), 1 December 1880, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', pp. 11-12.

¹²⁶ Frederick Whitaker to William Rolleston, 17 February 1881, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', pp. 13-14.

¹²⁷ William Rolleston to Samuel Grant and J.S. Foster, 25 February 1881, 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', p. 15.

A month previously, Steele had offered, ‘with a view to settle the difficulty’, to conclude the arrangement on the basis of no reservation of minerals, the Manawaru reserve being included at the same price as the rest of the land, and drains constructed on the western side of the river.¹²⁸ The lands board agreed to the first two conditions but refrained from making any recommendation on the third.¹²⁹ The government then agreed to remove the reservation about minerals, allowed Manawaru reserve to be ‘included in land to be dealt with’ but valued separately, and agreed to make a 650-chain drain, should parliament agree.¹³⁰ An Auckland newspaper disapproved of Grant and Foster rejecting the terms Steele had originally accepted, for it would not encourage the board ‘to endeavour to meet the demands of distant selectors’ if concessions ‘only lead to further exactions’. There had been a feeling that they had been treated more liberally than existing colonists, and it was likely that ‘the feeling of jealousy aroused by the exceptional nature of the terms conceded’ would be renewed. Should they be provided with ‘drainage at the expense of the country in addition to the other benefits conferred upon them, they must be deemed the most fortunate of men, and a good many of us will wish ourselves outsiders, that we might have the advantage of similar importunity’. The newspaper wondered if their motive was speculation rather than assisting settlement.¹³¹ The *Observer* was also critical of Steele’s argument that the government ‘should not dispute with’ Grant and Foster over the land they are good enough to buy at a low price and on exceptionally easy terms’, claiming he considered it ‘would do well if the land had even been given to them. If we were land agents, or landed proprietors anxious to sell, our views would probably be in the same direction. We should cry out for the introduction of capital by all means and at all costs to the rest of the community. But being only journalists’, they rejected Steele’s argument, ‘even though it might bring some very good

¹²⁸ William Steele to William Rolleston, 27 January 1881, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 12.

¹²⁹ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 February 1881, p. 21; D.A. Tole to Frederick Whitaker, 4 February 1881, ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 13.

¹³⁰ William Rolleston to William Steele, 25 February 1881 (telegram), ‘Messrs Grant and Foster’s Special Settlement’, p. 14.

¹³¹ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 February 1881, p. 16.

customers into the country. There are other ways surely of doing this without giving to new comers undue advantage over those who have spent years in paving the way for them'.¹³²

'Waitoa' had been told that government 'representatives' had promised to make drains, and claimed that 'the majority of the landowners in the Waitoa and Waikato districts' hoped the last minute disagreement would not prevent the settlement going ahead. Since Grant and Foster had returned to England they had sent out

capital to the extent of £50,000 to the colony. To lose men of this stamp in the present depressed state of the colony for the sake of an immediate apparent loss of a few hundred pounds would not only be suicidal to the interests of this provincial district, but detrimental to the welfare of the colony as a whole.¹³³

After Steele agreed to the new terms, the deposit was paid in May 1881.¹³⁴ When the board was told that Steele had accepted the agreement, the following discussion took place:

Mr FIRTH: The only question now is, whether we should put ourselves out of the way to encourage these special settlements. My opinion is that we should not – that we have done enough already.

Mr MAY: I think we certainly should not. There have been only two blocks available for some time, and these have been shut out from people living here who ought to have as good a right to be able to select land for themselves as strangers coming into the country.

Mr FIRTH: If the country is not worth coming to without these special advantages, it is not worth coming to at all.¹³⁵

The same newspaper repeated that, through their 'protracted negotiations' and 'constant demand for further concessions' and their rejection of Steele's terms, Grant and Foster did 'not appear to have behaved well'. Being 'treated in a spirit of extreme liberality' only seemed to

¹³² *Observer*, 19 March 1881, p. 277.

¹³³ Letter from 'Waitoa', *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 February 1881, p. 21.

¹³⁴ William Steele to William Rolleston, 26 February 1881 (telegram); Agent General to John Hall, 9 May 1881 (telegram); John Hall to Agent General, 10 May 1881 (telegram), 'Messrs Grant and Foster's Special Settlement', pp. 15, 16.

¹³⁵ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 21.

'induce further demands', and it was not certain that Steele's acceptance of the new terms would be accepted by them. From the documents produced by Whitaker and Rolleston, it appeared that Grant and Foster 'were at one and the same time squeezing the Government and the Board, and the latter were in ignorance of the nature of the negotiations with the former. This is surely a very unsatisfactory way of doing business', and Rolleston should have kept the board informed. In future 'the middleman should be abandoned, and the Government, through its agents in England, make its own arrangements for special settlements, saving the settler the middleman's large profit, and obviating all possibility of misrepresentations, and evasions of conditions'.¹³⁶

Potential Lincolnshire settlers with capital to invest were offered land 'on easy terms of payment, at £2 to £3 per acre, while *bona fide* labourers and workmen' would receive 'a cottage in three acres of land' at an annual rent of £6 'with the option of purchase at a nominal price'. The *European Mail* did not consider this 'any great draw', as there were 'several parts of Scotland' where a labourer paid only from £1 to £2 a year for a cottage and the same amount for each acre.¹³⁷

In December 1882, the Manawaru block, of 662 acres, was purchased for £1,284, which was £2 1s 4d per acre.¹³⁸ By late the following year, Grant and Foster had paid £31,000 for the whole settlement.¹³⁹

In October 1880, a Waitoa correspondent described the land purchased on the western side of the river as consisting, 'for the most part, of swamp of excellent character, which only requires draining to become first-class land, as the grass growing in patches now shows'.¹⁴⁰ The following month, a reporter argued that 'the famous Wairakau, with its English grasses, so long the coveted block of the district', was 'a selection which is worth nearly all the rest' of the Aroha Block 'put together', and regretted it had not been made available earlier, when Thames miners had money to buy land.¹⁴¹ The land was described in detail in December:

¹³⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 March 1881, p. 14.

¹³⁷ *European Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 May 1882, p. 2.

¹³⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1882, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 October 1883, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 October 1880, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Special Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1880, p. 3.

It lies on both banks of the Waihou, the river winding through about the centre of it. The land on the west bank comprising about ten thousand acres, is mainly swamp, the only dry portion being that near the bank of the river. The fall of the river, however, is so great that the swamp is easily drainable, and to men accustomed to the low lying fens of Lincolnshire, with their huge dykes and numberless tributary drains, this will be a matter of small moment. When thoroughly drained, this land will prove some of the best in the district, and in a very few years' time, under the hands of skilful farmers, no land in the colony will surpass it as pasture land. The dry land on this side of the river is medium quality land only, and although it can very easily be brought under the plough, it will require a considerable amount of cultivation to bring it into first-class order. The natural herbage upon it is mostly fern and stunted heath, and, like the generality of this description of land, it will probably be found to be very sour at first, and consequently the first steps in commencing to cultivate it should be to get it into grass as quickly as possible, and that, too, without disturbing the soil too much. The land on the east bank of the river, comprising between 7000 and 8000 acres, is higher than that on the west bank, but much of this is also of a swampy character. That nearest the river is exactly similar to that on the opposite bank but away from the river it falls in a gentle slope towards the hills, and after crossing a stretch of marshy ground, again rises rather quickly until it joins the steep sides of the mountain range. The land lying in the hollow, if it may be so called, between the high bank of the river and the hills, is mostly of good quality, and will be brought into cultivation without much trouble. Near the base of the hills there are several valleys of very rich land, judging from the natural vegetation, and these will no doubt be very quickly taken up by the members of Messrs Grant and Foster's party when they arrive. That the Lincolnshire delegates have made an excellent selection in securing this block of land there can be little or no doubt, and under the hands of good and practical men it will very soon be covered with smiling farms and comfortable homesteads. The whole of the dry land is well watered, either with permanent springs of by the river, and the swamp land is not so wet or difficult to drain but that it can easily be brought into cultivation. It is not covered with heavy bush, which is such an incubus in bringing some land into cultivation, nor is it altogether destitute of bush, for here and there are several nice clumps of bush on the plain, while on the hills there is a considerable quantity of really excellent timber.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 December 1880, p. 6.

The first settlers left England in September; Grant's two sons were 'to take charge of the settlement' upon their arrival.¹⁴³ Edward Young Cox led the first party;¹⁴⁴ he was a leading Anglican layman.¹⁴⁵ In December, the Auckland Young Men's Christian Association held a welcome soiree, at which 'between 70 and 80 gentlemen, including the new settlers, sat down to an excellent tea', participated in 'devotional exercises', and listened to several speeches, most by Protestant clergymen. The chairman 'was glad to think that the new settlement was in charge of a gentleman (Mr [Joshua Thomas] Johns) who had experience of the colony, and the knowledge and skill to secure its financial success'. Cox, responding for the settlers, thanked them for the 'kind welcome'.

The primary object was to establish a Christian community. A number of friends were coming out in a sailing ship – the Wellington. He had, with a view to avoid any possible complaint hereafter, that [if] results did not come up to expectations, [he had] conceded to the wish of several who desired to join, that they might do so, but they would be at liberty to withdraw if events did not answer their wishes. These included some heads of families, some young working men, labourers, and mechanics.

Joseph Newman extolled the excellent land and wonderful prospects, including the nearby goldfield, which 'would afford years and years of employment to a great number of people', but warned that 'persevering industry' was required. Johns stated that, after living in New Zealand for 21 years, 'he went to England for a holiday. He often walked through the streets of London with an aching heart that so many thousands of people could not obtain the necessities of life'. Having advised Cox on the basis of his experience, he 'believed that the result would be satisfactory to both parties. He could assure the meeting he felt an enthusiasm in the Christian work before him and in the prosperity of the settlement. (Applause)'.¹⁴⁶ In practice, Johns did not live for long in the settlement. In 1889, when he was an Auckland jam manufacturer, he became bankrupt; in the following

¹⁴³ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1880, p. 16.

¹⁴⁴ *European Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 May 1882, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ See *Auckland Star*, 2 October 1890, p. 5; *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 19 January 1895, p. 4; *Press*, 16 November 1900, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1880, p. 5.

decade he had a small holding in Titirangi, and when he died in 1902, aged 58, he was a farmer at Onehunga.¹⁴⁷

Delayed acceptance by Grant and Foster of the revised terms agreed to by Steele meant that by late April 1881 settlers had still not moved onto the land. Although ‘several families’ had arrived, Steele would not place them on their sections until receiving confirmation that the terms were acceptable.¹⁴⁸ The first settler, Edward Francis Roche, was living on his 1,000 acres in May and preparing to erect a house worth £1,500. He had purchased 200 or 300 young cattle, and, being ‘possessed of considerable means’, was expected to ‘make a very successful settler’; it was expected that similar settlers would ‘make Te Aroha one of the best farm districts in New Zealand’.¹⁴⁹ (After farming at Shaftesbury, Roche settled at Tauranga before his death in 1903, aged 76. He had let his land at Ohineroa, near Shaftesbury, at £428 per annum for ten years, after which it could be purchased for £9 an acre.)¹⁵⁰ Grant and Foster advertised for farmers and farm labourers to emigrate to their ‘fine block of land well suited for pastoral and agricultural purposes’. Each emigrant would select their own section of land ‘on favourable terms’; labourers and their families would have half their passage money advanced, to be repaid within 18 months. ‘A cottage and 3 acres of land will be provided at a very low rent, with the option of obtaining the whole freehold at the end of two years, at a minimum charge’.¹⁵¹ A year later, it was reported that labourers were obliged to work for three years at 6s per day, and during that period were required to pay for their passage, cottages, and land.¹⁵² By special arrangement, ‘capitalists’ with ‘about £200’ would, after making a deposit on from 20 to 60 acres, ‘have a house erected for them at a reasonable rent’, which they could purchase at cost price after two years.¹⁵³

In late September, tenders were called to erect six three-roomed cottages for labourers and their families, shortly to arrive. Part of the block

¹⁴⁷ *Auckland Star*, 8 March 1889, p. 4, 8 July 1889, p. 4; advertisement, *Observer*, 21 May 1898, p. 16; Probates, BBAE 1569/4345, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 April 1881, p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ *Waikato Times*, 17 May 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Death Certificate of Edward Francis Roche, 1903/6706, BDM; *Bay of Plenty Times*, 30 September 1903, p. 2; Probates, BBAE 1569/4898, ANZ-A.

¹⁵¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 September 1881, p. 17.

¹⁵² *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 September 1882, p. 18.

¹⁵³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 September 1881, p. 17.

was being subdivided into three-acre blocks for them, ‘in order to furnish labour for the middle-class farmers’, and ‘a large number’ of these small houses would be erected ‘as the settlement of the block proceeds’.¹⁵⁴ At the beginning of the following year, it was reported that there had been a ‘considerable’ increase in the number of families and single men, who moved into the cottages temporarily; more houses were about to be erected.

A contract has been let for building a Temperance Hotel, 70 feet by 30 feet, on the block. This, in addition to serving as an accommodation house, will be the residence for the young men of the party, and will contain a large room to be occupied as a reading-room on the principle of the Young Men’s Christian Association on week days, and for religious services on Sundays. On Sunday afternoon last a service was held in one of the cottages conducted by Mr Cox and Mr Johns, which was attended by the families of some of the settlers working on the estate. It has been decided to name the settlement “Shaftesbury,” after the noble President of the Young Men’s Christian Association. A landing has already been formed on the river, and this will be known as “The Shaftesbury Wharf.”¹⁵⁵

At the end of January, a visitor to Waiorongomai when standing on the top of Fern Spur admired the first homes, the good land, and the river access. ‘These men have commenced work in a temper which augers well for the future prosperity of the district, no less than their own’.¹⁵⁶ A month later, the Premier, the Attorney General, the local Member of Parliament, and leading figures in the Te Aroha community were ‘agreeably surprised to see the excellence of the land, with its vast area of self-sown clover and grass lands, its proximity to a large goldfield in the future, and its natural highway’. The prospects were deemed to be ‘of the brightest description’.¹⁵⁷ Being ‘some eight miles from the Te Aroha township’, the road to it was ‘considered pretty serviceable in summer’, but being low-lying and crossing two creeks it was ‘impassable’ in winter.¹⁵⁸ Probably in large part because of this problem, the settlers imported three small steam launches.¹⁵⁹ By this

¹⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 September 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 10 January 1882, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ ‘On the Aroha Mountain’, *Waikato Times*, 31 January 1882, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1882, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 February 1882, p. 7.

time there were ‘some seven or eight houses’ on the eastern bank, and the ‘very handsome and commodious temperance hotel’ being erected included ‘a large assembly hall’. Only one settler had started cropping, but ploughing had commenced.

All the settlers have expressed themselves highly pleased with their lot, and in every respect they are perfectly satisfied and contented. The township laid out by Government has not been occupied as such, and Shaftesbury ... upon which the settlers are at present located is to be the township. From the practical manner in which these few men have gone about forming their settlement, and brought what was lately a comparative wilderness into a state of advanced civilisation, the earnest nature of their endeavours, and the advantage of their exertions to a new country will be seen.¹⁶⁰

For an example of ‘the earnest nature’ of their hard work, see the paper on John Squirrell.

Advertisements in England for another 150 settlers received applications ‘far in excess of the number required’. According to a letter Cox sent to Samuel Grant, members of the first party was ‘well pleased with Te Aroha and their prospects’. It seemed that Grant did not intend to settle on this land, for it was reported that he had exchanged his Lincolnshire farm for 10,500 acres in the South Island carrying 12,000 sheep.¹⁶¹

A correspondent pointed out that the large drains being made by contractors on the western bank of the river were being ‘laid off against, and not with, the “natural fall”’, ending ‘in creeks which naturally flow in the opposite direction, thereby bringing water down the drains which they ought not to carry’. He anticipated that, as the drained land settled, these drains would become too shallow. The soil from the drains was used to form roads alongside them.¹⁶² Tenders for more large drainage works were called in May.¹⁶³

At the end of that month, the Hamilton newspaper editorialized that the ‘steady progress’ of the settlement provided ‘much satisfaction’, proving ‘the wisdom of the government’ assisting its establishment, for the founders

¹⁶⁰ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *European Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 May 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶² Hamilton Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 February 1882, p. 23.

¹⁶³ *Waikato Times*, 27 May 1882, p. 2.

were ‘doing all in their power to carry out their contract’ with it ‘faithfully and well’.

The settlers are wasting no time in getting forward with the work of ploughing and seed-sowing. Arrangements are also being made for the establishment of a punt on the Waihou at the settlement, with the object of shortening the distance to Waikato, the present route being down the river, via the Aroha township. The drainage works which the government have undertaken are proceeding at a satisfactory rate, and appear to answer the purpose well. The drains will most probably be finished this autumn. They would have been completed sooner, but owing to the broken weather experienced lately, and other unforeseen difficulties, the contractors have been somewhat delayed.

These ‘unforeseen difficulties’ were later revealed to be ‘the late native disturbance’, which those opposed to the settlement had tried to exploit.

The occurrence was, however, of the most paltry nature, and but for the supineness of those in charge of the drainage works, would never have assumed the slightest importance. The Maoris were, in pursuance of a practice not uncommon to them, merely trying the effect of a little bounce, and so far attained their object that instead of finding themselves at the bottom of the ditch, they succeeded in frightening the labourers away. As for any claim upon the land, that, of course, is simply nonsense, and the natives are not likely to assert their alleged rights again.¹⁶⁴

In mid-June, Samuel Grant’s letter to Rolleston was ‘approved as satisfactory’ by the land board. More than the number of settlers specified in the agreement had been obtained, with the last instalment sailing in mid-year. ‘The land on the east side of the river has nearly all been disposed of to respectable settlers, and will soon be laid down with English grasses’. Some portions on the western bank had also been sold, but this land was ‘not so available for immediate settlement’ because of the swamps. Although these were being drained, it would take a couple of years before some parts were sufficiently solid to bear stock and before grass could be sown ‘to advantage’. He regretted that the depression had prevented him selling his English property, ‘or I should have certainly been in New Zealand ere this. I

¹⁶⁴ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1882, p. 2.

have, however, one son at Te Aroha, who is attending to the general supervision of the settlement, and whose reports are very encouraging'.¹⁶⁵

'Some 16 families' who were 'in a position to take up and work large farms' were due to arrive by July, along with 'a considerable number of farm labourers'.¹⁶⁶ To accommodate them, 18 houses were being erected.¹⁶⁷

The first cottages on the block were imported from England, ready to be put [up] on arrival, but the experiment did not answer financially, to say nothing of the ungenerousness and impolicy of acting thus towards a colony which had given these gentlemen a large slice of the public estate on remarkably easy terms. The cottages for which tenders are now invited are of three rooms, and are upon a plan which will form the nucleus of large residences, which may by adding additional rooms without the difficulties usually encountered – convert them into comfortable residences of four, five, six, or seven rooms, either of which may be added and still form part of the general plan.¹⁶⁸

In July, settlers applied to have their settlement proclaimed an educational district, for it was estimated that soon up to 40 children would require schooling. Although the board of education complained that the site offered for a school, of three acres, should have been five acres, it granted the application.¹⁶⁹ All labourers received three acres irrespective of family size, which varied from two to nine: some members of the lands board commented 'on the smallness of the areas and the expansiveness of the families, but no action was taken'.¹⁷⁰

By early September, nearby 30 cottages had been erected, some by Te Aroha contractors. Roche, who had 'expended a large sum on money in improving his estate', was building 'another large stable'; 'but for his and some few other settlers' expenditure, many of the immigrants who arrived without means would have been unable to remain'.¹⁷¹ Thomas William

¹⁶⁵ Samuel Grant to William Rolleston (Minister of Lands), 14 June 1882, printed in *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 August 1882, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 May 1882, p. 17.

¹⁶⁹ Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 July 1882, Supplement, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 September 1882, p. 19.

¹⁷¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 September 1882, p. 20.

Carr, a local storekeeper,¹⁷² was erecting ‘a large new store in the lower part of the settlement, which will be a great convenience’.¹⁷³

The roads, still in ‘a bad state’, were being repaired in September, but bridges were required over the Wairakau and Waiorongomai streams and also a ‘blind gully’ which could only be avoided ‘by a detour of about a mile’. Besides being ‘often dangerous at half flood’, these streams often could not be crossed for days when the water was high.¹⁷⁴ Because of snags, river traffic was hazardous even when the water level was high, and one steamer was holed opposite the Manawaru Bush.¹⁷⁵

In late September, the following paragraph was printed in the *New Zealand Herald*:

From the Te Aroha Special Settlement comes the information that many of the settlers lately brought out are dissatisfied, and some of them are leaving. They are mostly strong able-bodied men of the labouring class, and few with any money, and say that they were led to believe the wages they would get were considerably higher than they find they can obtain. Those engaged in swamping and road-making are getting 5s a day.¹⁷⁶

George Lindsay Grant responded by denying that he paid more than a few swampers 5s a day, temporarily; most received 7s or 8s. ‘I also do not know of any single settler who has left, or intends to leave’.¹⁷⁷ A Waitoa correspondent then stated that many worked for the lower rate and challenged Grant to deny that on one Monday he had been at one settler’s house ‘three times offering that family inducements to remain, their goods then being packed up to leave on the steamer which took them away on the Tuesday’. Another settler had written to Grant ‘stating his intention of leaving’, another had said he would leave, and two settlers were working on the coach road being constructed between Te Aroha and Tauranga. He also referred to ‘those who came out but never would come upon the block’.¹⁷⁸ Grant did not respond.

¹⁷² See paper on his life.

¹⁷³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 September 1882, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 September 1882, p. 20.

¹⁷⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 September 1882, p. 21.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Waikato District News’, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 September 1882, p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 7 October 1882, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Waitoa Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 October 1882, p. 21.

In December, an Aucklander again criticized the settlement:

From information received I have concluded that the object and nature of the settlement as understood by the country have been entirely subverted, and that it has to all appearance been made simply a channel through which certain equivocal land claims have been floated to a prompt if not remunerative settlement, and another source through which individuals have secured large profits between the original native owner and the settlers who will have to subdue the wilderness.

He considered ‘the whole transaction to be one of the most iniquitous “jobs” ever perpetuated in the country’. Having accepted the assumption that ‘men of moderate capital and large agricultural experience’ would farm the land ‘upon the same principle as the Lincolnshire fens had been worked’, he had visited the settlement recently with ‘pleasing expectations’, to be disillusioned, for, with the exception of Grant, there was not ‘a single Lincolnshire farmer on the whole block. The settlement consists of rows of cottages, each cottage having three acres of land attached, the price of which, I was told, together with the respective passage money, the cottagers had to work out in draining swamps and other work for Mr Grant’. Because Grant and Foster had placed sufficient settlers on the land, in accordance with their agreement they could sell thousands of acres to anyone with the means to purchase them.

Judging from the neat, tasty little gardens, and from the general appearance of the settlers, as well as from repute, a more desirable class of settlers of the kind than those at Te Aroha could not be procured, and I have not the slightest doubt but they are an acquisition to the country of great value, but they are not what they were represented to be. They are not what the country expected, and still believe them to be, and the whole thing is a delusion and a sham.

For Grant and Foster the settlement was ‘a mere matter of speculation’.¹⁷⁹

By February 1883, the number of settlers exceeded the total required.¹⁸⁰ In September, in printing the favourable report by the Crown Lands Ranger, the *Waikato Times* commented that it would be ‘read with

¹⁷⁹ Letter from F. Lawry, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 1882, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 February 1883, p. 9.

some interest, the more especially as reports of a much less favourable nature have been circulated'.¹⁸¹ The ranger discovered that 47 families were residing on their land, the estimated value of their houses being £6,339. They had erected 'several other dwellinghouses, a general store, a hotel (temperance), out offices, and general buildings', valued at £2,040. Just over 6,716 acres had been taken up, of which 2,581 were being cultivated in various ways.¹⁸² Accordingly, the settlers would receive Crown grants for their sections.¹⁸³

The following May, a Te Aroha correspondent gave a very different perspective, forecasting that Shaftesbury seemed

doomed to share the same fate as nearly all other settlements of the special kind. The place was long since deserted by many of the poorer classes, for whom the prospects of making for themselves the comfortable homes pictured to them on leaving the Old Country were very slender indeed, and others had been departing from time to time as they found openings elsewhere. Some of the wealthier class seem also to be dissatisfied, and inclined to betake themselves to fresh fields.

Cox, for instance, was reportedly moving to Auckland;¹⁸⁴ he would later settle in Christchurch, but died at Shaftesbury in 1936, when his occupation was given as gentleman; he left an estate of £14,358 14s 10d.¹⁸⁵ The local newspaper noted that only three or four of the 18 houses belonging to Grant and Foster were still occupied.¹⁸⁶ By late September, three-quarters of the houses were deserted, and in November the temperance hotel was for sale.¹⁸⁷ The following month, reports were circulating that the settlement had failed; because the holdings were too small, outside employment was necessary.¹⁸⁸ By the following September, out of about 30 cottages on the western side of the river only two were

¹⁸¹ *Waikato Times*, 18 September 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸² *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 September 1883, p. 12.

¹⁸³ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 October 1883, p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 22 May 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ London Correspondent, *Press*, 21 July 1904, p. 5; Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/3736, ANZ-A..

¹⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1884, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1884, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1884, p. 2.

occupied. Some cottages on both sides had been pulled down to take away, and ‘very nearly the whole’ of the three-acre settlers had left. As the land ‘everywhere on the block’ was of ‘the very best quality, and from all appearances large sums of money have been spent on improvements’, one newspaper blamed the bad system of settlement for the failure.¹⁸⁹ In December that year, of the 37 families who had taken up their three acres all but ten had been ‘starved out’ and gone elsewhere for work. Fearing they might lose their land, at a meeting they all signed a letter to Sir George Grey, who promised to help them to retain it.¹⁹⁰

Early in 1886, a visitor described Shaftesbury as having ‘a very woe-begone appearance, most of the original settlers having left their land, finding it of such poor quality as to be nonpayable’.¹⁹¹ By 1887 Grant was a station manager at Waitoa.¹⁹² Cox, who had not departed yet, responded that the settlement was being ‘very much misrepresented’:

Shaftesbury has most undeservedly obtained a bad name from the mistaken policy of Messrs Grant and Foster, who sent out a number of mechanics and labouring men, and settled them each on three acres of the poorest land. These have mostly left, not finding sufficient work; hence the woe-begone appearance of the unoccupied cottages. But none of those who have purchased farms are discontented with the quality of the land.

He challenged the visitor to ride around his property and three other named ones

and then to say whether the block of land as a whole is not equal to almost any block of similar area in the North Island. Many friends who have visited me during the past summer have been amazed at what has been done in the short space of four years. The greater part of the land taken up has been brought under cultivation, and the drafts of cattle sent frequently to the Thames market show what Shaftesbury can do in fattening beasts. The produce of my orchards and garden sent to Te Aroha this year has surprised many of the numerous visitors there. This district will soon eclipse those that have been established far longer.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ *Waikato Times*, 8 September 1885, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 December 1885, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ ‘Voz’, ‘A Holiday at Te Aroha’, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 April 1886, Supplement, p. 1.

¹⁹² *Waikato Electoral Roll*, 1887, p. 8.

¹⁹³ Letter from E.Y. Cox, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 May 1886, p. 15.

It had earlier been noted by a Thames newspaper that the large farms had been doing well.¹⁹⁴ In mid-1887, another journalist visited:

The settlers at and around the Shaftesbury settlement are, I was informed, effecting substantial improvements on the land which was purchased by them from Grant and Foster, and the country generally speaking looks well. A large number of cattle have been fatted for the market, for the Thames and Auckland, during the past winter, thereby showing that the land is capable of producing good feed, both summer and winter. The swamps especially have turned out exceedingly well, and the owners are perfectly satisfied with their purchases.

That the ‘smaller settlers’ had been ‘unable to reside permanently’ he blamed on the government’s requirement ‘that a given number of immigrants should be put on the land by a given date. Too large a number of small settlers were put suddenly on the land, beyond the local requirements for labour’, which, combined with ‘the limited area of their holdings, and the difficulty of obtaining work in the immediate vicinity’, forced them to leave. ‘A large quantity of work’ had been done in a short time, with from 6,000 to 7,000 acres now cultivated. Six named farmers had farms that looked ‘especially well’, and several of them planned to sow larger areas in wheat and oats. ‘The buildings on the block are substantial, and the same may be said of all the other improvements’. A weekly steamer from Auckland, running weekly, took goods to market more cheaply than the railway.¹⁹⁵

The settlement continued to flourish, with a reduced population, and in 1894 the Shaftesbury Creamery Association was formed.¹⁹⁶ In 1900, the last year that its fortunes have been noted, the settlers provided some of the money for a bridge over the river.¹⁹⁷

GORDON

In April 1885, when mining was fading, at Waiorongomai an association, to be called the Gordon Special Settlement, was formed; its 65

¹⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1885, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Special Reporter, ‘A Trip to Te Aroha’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 20 October 1894, p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 August 1900, p. 31.

members wished to take up land under the new Special Settlement Act. They had offered their services to John Ballance, Minister of Lands and Defence, ‘as a semi-military settlement in view of the Armed Constabulary being withdrawn to the front from the country stations’, an offer that had been declined. Formed ‘under rules suggested in a Government pamphlet’, they had applied for a block of land. It was decided by a large majority that the settlement be ‘seriously a temperance one – no sale of drink being allowed’.¹⁹⁸ About half the members were Waiorongomai residents.¹⁹⁹

When William Larnach, Minister of Mines, visited Te Aroha at the end of May, he received a deputation from the association, now comprising 61 men. According to the Hamilton newspaper, they were ‘all qualified for the farming pursuit, and who, if treated liberally and placed on good land, and in a district tapped by a railway, promise to do very well’. Larnach was told that, ‘war being imminent between Russia and England, and as the militia was being enrolled’, they had offered to be a semi-military settlement. One of the deputation spoke at length about the ‘unaccountable practice of successive Governments bringing people out to the colony to settle on the land, giving them exceptionally easy terms’, whereas many colonists ‘were only too anxious to settle its waste lands’ but ‘were not afforded the same easy terms’. He also complained that ‘land grabbers who picked the very eyes out of the country were encouraged to come out and were treated with exceptional liberality’. Should colonists receive similar encouragement and good land, ‘he had no doubt they would pull through and succeed’. Larnach promised to further their cause.

The newspaper explained the regulations for such settlements. The block should be at least 1,000 acres and not more than 10,000, and the cost of the land, roads, and surveys was to be paid in regular instalments. One-tenth of the land must be cultivated within two years from the date of purchase. It anticipated that, ‘if settled on a good piece of land adjoining the goldfield’, the association ‘should succeed very well. We believe the members are all hard-working and industrious men, and we hope the Government will give them every encouragement’.²⁰⁰

Ballance had declined the first request for land in the King Country because title had not been acquired, and also told them that the government

¹⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 April 1885, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

did ‘not require the services of military settlers’.²⁰¹ The potential settlers then examined the possibility of land near Te Aroha on the western bank of the river before expressing interest in Waiharakeke, up-river from Shaftesbury.²⁰² In October, after the association was granted Waiharakeke No. 5, of 6,700 acres, its members made a call of 6d towards the cost of survey.²⁰³ A county councillor described them as ‘all good hardy pioneers of the proper class’, who would within a few years ‘give a satisfactory account of themselves’.²⁰⁴

At the end of the month, a meeting was held to ascertain how many men intended to take up land.

To prove their *bona fides* a call had been made, payable on that day, nonpayment entailing the erasure of the names of defaulters from the roll of members. More than 60 intimated their intention of going on the land, and the calls paid exceeded £100, representing at 6d per acre, an area of more than 4,400 acres. A number of other persons would readily have joined, but it was considered by the meeting that this area, (which embraced the whole of the land fit for agricultural purposes in the block), was more than sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the original applicants, and therefore no new members could be admitted.

Those who had not paid this second call were expelled, and those politicians, including Sir George Grey, who had assisted obtaining land were thanked. Once the survey was completed, allotment of the sections would take place ‘immediately’. There was a road already formed for most of the distance to the district, which could soon be put in ‘good repair’.²⁰⁵ When Ballance visited early the following month, he was asked for assistance to provide a bridge on this road; he advised them to form a road board and also seek the aid of the county.

Some discussion then took place respecting the quantity of land available for settlement in the block. It was at first supposed to be over 4000 acres in extent, but it had been found to be only little more than 3000 acres, and as members had been admitted in proportion to the size of the larger area, difficulties would arise

²⁰¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1885, p. 2.

²⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 5 June 1885, p. 2, 30 June 1885, p. 3.

²⁰³ *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1885, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 October 1885, p. 3.

²⁰⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 2.

in reducing the number to make it proportionate to the smaller one.

Ballance suggested that 1,400 acres be taken up on the other side of the river, ‘but this was not approved of by the deputation and the matter was left to be settled by the members themselves’. Ballance was also asked for ‘one or two small reserves in the neighbourhood’, which he promised to grant, ‘if possible’.²⁰⁶

In September 1886, the land was apportioned amongst 20 members. As the total available was not sufficient for each to obtain the full amount requested, a proportion would be allotted: ‘the arrangement met with general approval as being the best that could be made under the circumstances’. The smallest section was just over 46 acres and the largest was just over 158.²⁰⁷ The council was then informed that two-thirds of the settlers could not get to their land because of the lack of roads. After one councillor, Charles Gould,²⁰⁸ commented that ‘the third who could get on the land had not yet shown any disposition to go upon it’, the council decided not to provide roads.²⁰⁹ Nine months later, when another request was made for a road, two councillors who were also farmers were unsympathetic:

Cr. Gould remarked that a new secretary had been appointed, the former one having made a rise out of his section and cleared. These people were very rough on “land sharks,” but when they got half a chance they became land sharks themselves. His impression was that all the settlers took up land only for what they could make out of it.... The road was not wanted by the settlers except to improve the value of their land, in order that they might sell it. They were making no effort to improve the land. One man [Michael Dineen O’Keeffe]²¹⁰ had put in five acres of oats and an acre of potatoes, and as he had got nothing off them he cleared out. – Cr. [William Philip] Chepmell said the settlement was not occupied.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1885, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Waikato Times*, 7 September 1886, p. 2.

²⁰⁸ See paper on his life.

²⁰⁹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 September 1886, p. 2.

²¹⁰ See paper on his life.

²¹¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 5 July 1887, p. 3.

When a leading settler denied these statements, Gould ‘said he had heard the late secretary was trying to sell his land, and probably, like many others, he had been unable to do so’.²¹² Nearly six months later, the chairman of the association wrote to the *Te Aroha News* in response to a ‘good deal of carping and picking’ at the settlers. He provided details of the amount of fencing and the few acres, mostly two, that seven farmers had planted in crops.

The maize crop looks very well so far; the potatoes owing to the lateness of the season before they could be got into the ground, are not looking so well as could be wished, but this is partly owing to the hurried manner in which the ground was worked. The result however shows that the soil is of fair quality and I am confident that, in spite of the detraction of croakers, the settlement will be ultimately a success.

The Settlers have in the aggregate about 250 head of cattle.²¹³

For details of one Waiorongomai miner who attempted to farm a section at Gordon, unsuccessfully, see the paper on Michael Dineen O’Keeffe. Others left Waiorongomai to settle at Gordon at the end of the 1880s,²¹⁴ when mining was extremely flat.

Being occupied, or in most cases at first, not occupied, by families with little or no means, meant breaking in the land was slow. Members of the association struggled to combine their initially usually minimal development of their sections with the need to earn money elsewhere, particularly at Waiorongomai when mining revived, or as road and drainage contractors. The first decade was marked by often very personal conflicts between those who had settled and those who had not, and over the amount of development that was carried out, those who spent more time and effort on this complaining that the lax held the district back.²¹⁵

²¹² Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 2 August 1887, p. 2.

²¹³ Letter from James Munro, *Te Aroha News*, 14 January 1888, p. 2.

²¹⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1889, p. 2.

²¹⁵ For considerable detail of these conflicts and the development of the settlement until 1895, including the ranger’s reports, see Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

Threats that sections would be forfeited for failure to occupy led to many hard luck explanations to the lands board.²¹⁶ One settler had, after a time, been unable to pay his instalments because he had ‘exhausted’ his money and ‘had then to go get work to enable me to pay them, and erect a good house as the one I have got now is only composed of sacks’.²¹⁷ Another had ‘a family of 8 to provide for, and if I had gone to reside on the Settlement, my family would not have been provided for as there is no work nearer than 10 miles’. He asked to be permitted to place a substitute on the land, ‘as by removing my family there at once they would be debarred from attending school, until this last 12 months times have been very bad, but since then I have been putting a little money on one side for purchasing wire etc’. He quoted Ballance as having told a deputation of settlers that he did not view continuous occupation as compulsory and considered they could improve their land ‘by degrees’.²¹⁸ (A year later, faced with a demand to pay the next instalment, he approached an ‘old acquaintance’ who was a member of parliament. ‘You know pretty well how I am situated I was obliged to leave home to look for employment, and am now at work at Waihi at 9/- a day 10/- a week rent to pay and a family of 9 to keep’).²¹⁹ Another man had ‘a very large family to support, with limited means, namely what I can earn myself’, and as there was no work at Waiporongomai it had taken ‘all my earnings to support my family’.²²⁰ A painter, after listing the work done, explained that ‘I could not have taken my family to live there before this summer as we could not get out during winter to get stores. The long swamp between my land and Waiporongomai completely stopping all traffic on it in winter’.²²¹ During the previous two years one man had ‘not been

²¹⁶ For example, letters from A.F. Etheridge (Chief Clerk, Crown Lands Board) to 22 settlers, 4 March 1889, and replies, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁷ Cornelius Murphy to A.F. Etheridge, 11 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁸ G.R. Beeson to A.F. Etheridge, 6 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁹ G.R. Beeson to A.J. Cadman, 12 January 1890, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁰ A.L. Forsman to A.F. Etheridge, 14 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²¹ George Gapes to A.F. Etheridge, 18 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

employed half my time I had to go away to the King Country to get work therefore it took all I earned to keep two homes'.²²² Another father of 'a large family of small Children' had no capital and begged for more time to develop his land: 'I would as soon half Starve as loose my home I have been strugling for'.²²³ Another father argued that because there was no school he could not settle his children there, and claimed that Ballance, when told that the members of the association were 'all working men', had told the delegation that they did not have to reside continuously.²²⁴

A man who had resided for eight months could not do so continuously 'on account of the state of my wiffe health which requires me to be almost continualy with her and as the doctor informs me she may take another fit at anytime and carry her off'.²²⁵ Another wife, living in the settlement, upon receiving a notice requiring payment of arrears explained that her husband was away:

He had been constantly improving the land this last 6 months. And on account of having Such a large family he could not Stay home any longer, and has gone away in search of work. As soon as I hear where he has gone to I shall forward this notice to him. He has told me if he got employment he would not be home untill the end of October. As he hoped by that time if he kept in work to earn enough money to pay his rent, Dear Sir I pray for extension of time and hope you will grant my prayer. As it is a matter of great importance to me.²²⁶

She explained her delayed response to being '13 miles from a post Office and the letters often lay a week or a fortnight before we get them. And the roads are almost impassible and having no one but little children to

²²² Edmund Cookson to 'Gentlemen' [Crown Lands Board], 18 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²³ James Orr to 'Gentlemen' [Crown Lands Board], 19 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁴ Nathaniel Baskett Pro Agnes Baskett to A.F. Etheridge, 19 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁵ James Munro to A.F. Etheridge, 15 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁶ Margaret Forsman to Thomas Humphries (Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland), 1 August 1890, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

send for them'.²²⁷ For such reasons, the ranger commonly reported sections being 'Deficient in Cultivation'.²²⁸

At the end of November 1891, a Te Aroha resident complained that the settlement had been 'going back' because some owners had neither settled on nor drained their land, forcing some residents to leave whilst others, who were resident, had sought government assistance to enforce the regulations. The writer was disappointed that, despite settlers on several occasions being promised by the ranger that action would be taken, the non-residents had been given six months to settle on their land, extra time which would allow them 'to move all the political influence possible to get out of the conditions under which they hold their land, and thereby making Acts of Parliament a mere farce, and a waste of public money. Some of these absentees are great land reformers, but do not practice what they preach'.²²⁹ Two months later, Bernard Montague,²³⁰ chairman of the association, complained of mismanagement by officials who did not enforce the conditions, thereby retarding development and forcing children to travel 12 miles to school; he charged the non-residents with wanting to obtain 'the unearned increment',²³¹ confirmation that Gould's charge of land speculation had some basis.

In mid-1893, having received another report from its ranger, the board agreed settlers would be permitted to convert their holdings into leases in perpetuity. 'Unless this is done the Board will be compelled to forfeit the sections for non-fulfilment of conditions'.²³² A year later, Montague told it about the poor state of the settlement, which was being held back by 'the evil of absenteeism'. Only ten of the 24 settlers were living there, and the absentees were not complying with regulations. As sections were too small for farmers to make a living by raising cattle, 'they would have to have recourse to dairying'. A creamery would be erected if 400 cows were being milked, but with sections being unoccupied only half that number could be

²²⁷ Margaret Forsman to Thomas Humphries, 3 August 1890, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁸ Memorandum of arrears to 30 June 1890, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²²⁹ Letter from 'Sympathiser', *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 December 1891, p. 14.

²³⁰ See paper on his life.

²³¹ Bernard Montague to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, 10 February 1892, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/102a, ANZ-A.

²³² Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 June 1893, p. 35.

guaranteed. ‘The settlers on the land had to barter their butter to the storekeepers for groceries, as money was not obtainable’. The board agreed that sections on which conditions had not been fulfilled might be forfeited, later.²³³

There were many disputes between members, with attempts to expel some creating ‘a good deal of ill-feeling’. One correspondent considered that some of those who did not live on the land were ‘improving their property as much, or even more, than many of those actually dwelling upon their sections’, and regretted that complaints were being made.²³⁴

As with Shaftesbury, after overcoming the initial difficulties those who remained on their land created a successful farming district by the early twentieth century.²³⁵

CONCLUSION

Special settlements were seen as a way of opening up virgin land to farmers and, in time, miners and others seeking either another occupation or a supplement to the other ways in which they tried to earn money. Being virgin land, the pioneers had a hard struggle, and some were not immune from the temptation to become a ‘land shark’ on a small scale, but over time those who stuck with their sections became prosperous farmers.

Appendix

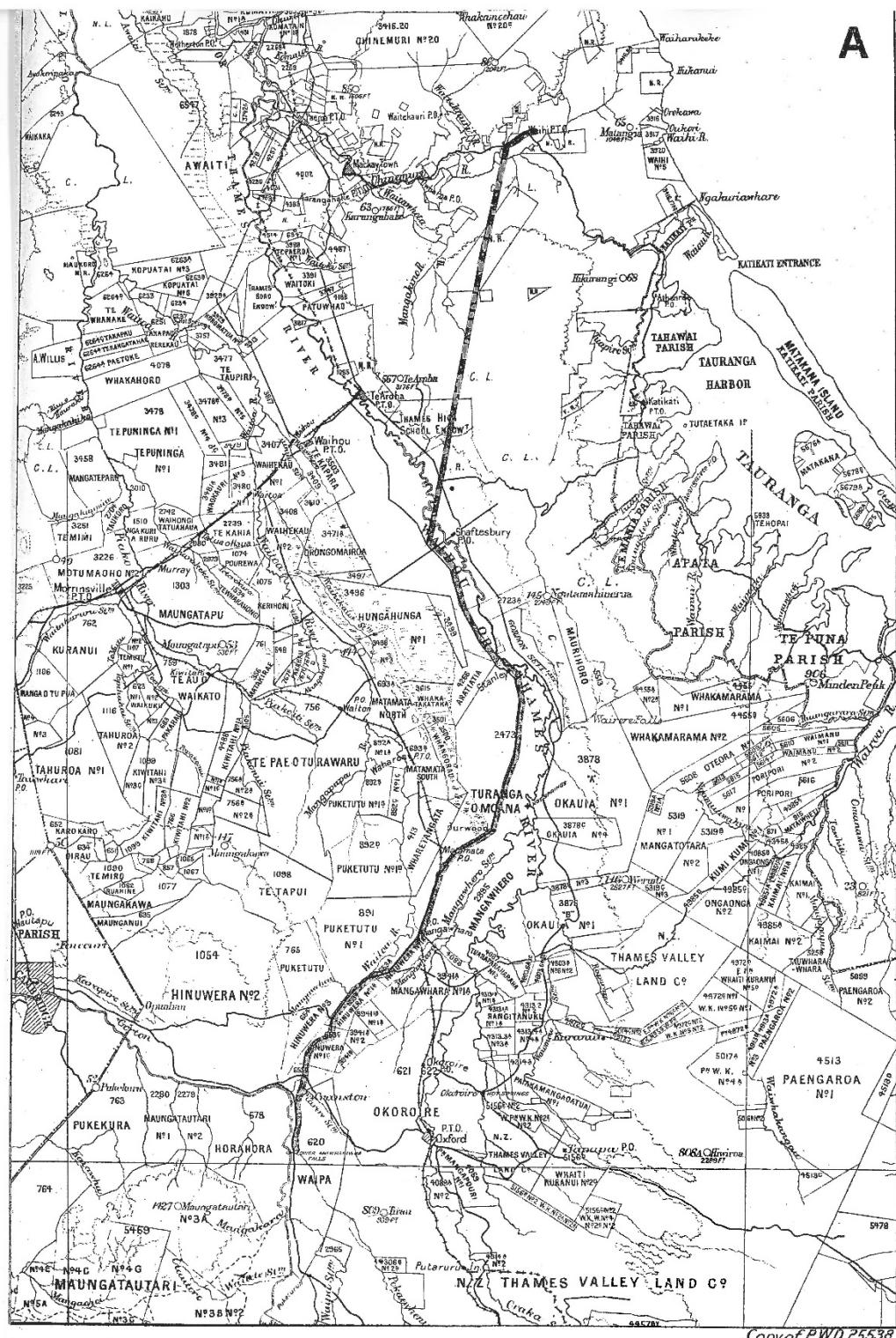
Figure 1: ‘The Route for the Transmission Line’ between Horahora, on the Waikato River, and the Waihi goldfield, 1910, showing locations of Shaftesbury and Gordon, AJHR, 1910, C-11, map A, facing p. 6.

²³³ *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1894, p. 6.

²³⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1894, p. 6.

²³⁵ See photographs in *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 July 1902, Supplement, pp. 6-7, 16 October 1902, Supplement, p. 10.

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