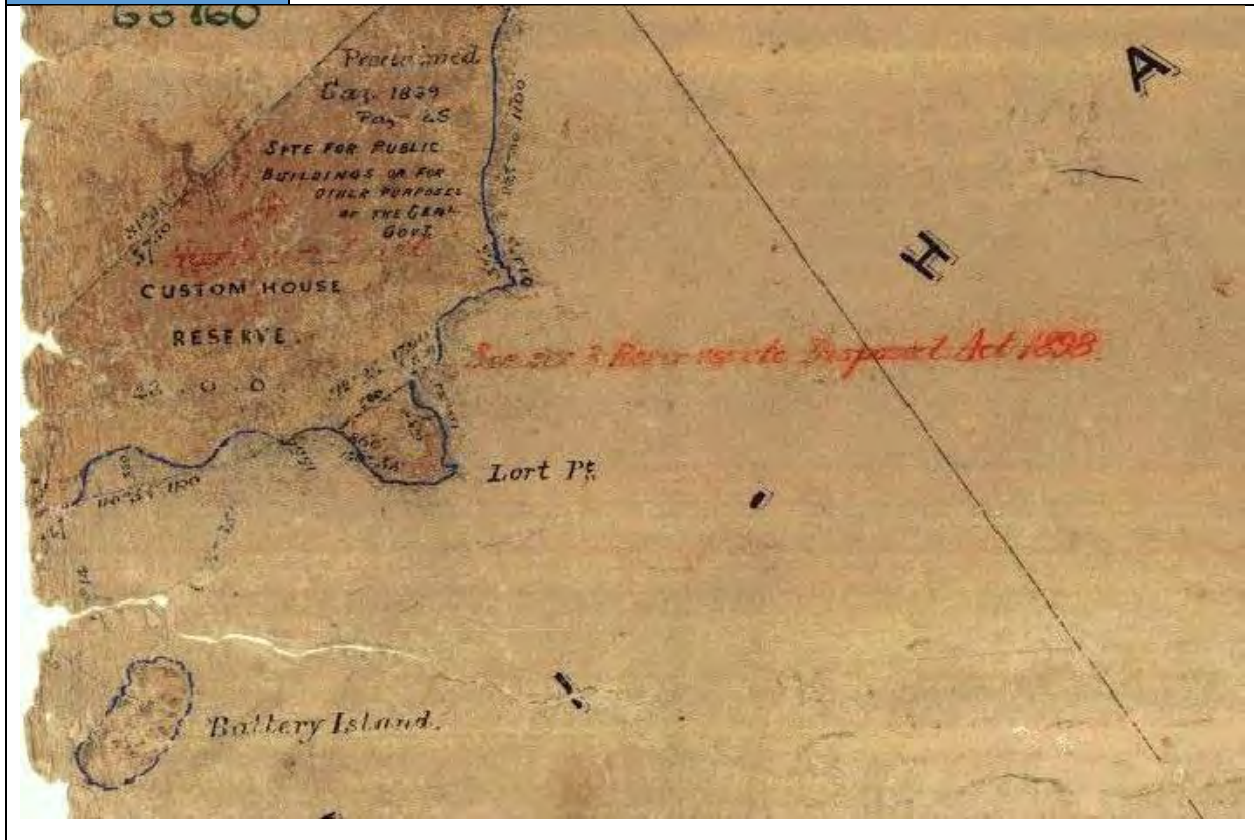


Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Excerpt from SO854A showing Lort Point stamped ca.1860s No building footprints or wharf are shown. (Source LINZ)



Source Material:

Reotahi Freezing Works ca.1912 Frederic George Radcliffe note the wharf, and reclamation wall/breakwater in the mid-foreground

(Source Te Ara: Story: Northland Region URL: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/7609/reotahi-freezing-works>)



Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Taken from the supplement to the Auckland Weekly News 27 JUNE 1912 p012 showing "Freezing industry in North Auckland: Group of visitors at the opening of the new freezing works at Whangarei Heads last week."

(Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19120627-12-3)



FREEZING INDUSTRY IN NORTH AUCKLAND: GROUP OF VISITORS AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW FREEZING WORKS AT WHANGAREI HEADS LAST WEEK.

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Taken from the supplement to the Auckland Weekly News 27 JUNE 1912 p012 showing "Historic event at Whangarei: Opening of the new freezing works and entrance to the harbour of the first ocean liner to visit the port."
(Source Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19120627-12-4)



HISTORIC EVENT AT WHANGAREI. OPENING OF THE NEW FREEZING WORKS AND ENTRANCE TO THE HARBOUR OF THE FIRST OCEAN LINER TO VISIT THE PORT.

Source Material:

"A Birds-Eye View of the Whangarei Freezing Works and Settlement" 1918 Northern Advocate showing freezing works on the left with the worker's settlement on the upper right.

(Source: Northern Advocate, 25 June 1918, p2 (Supplement))



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WHANGAREI FREEZING WORKS AND SETTLEMENT.

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Northern Advocate 12.12.81 (image ca.1920) showing "Reotahi in the Whangarei Harbour was once the site of a large freezing works which exported frozen beef and mutton. The works was the first in Northland and Reotahi was chosen because big ships could call there at any time. (Source Whangarei Libraries Northland Digital Collections)



Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Taken from the supplement to the Auckland Weekly News 20 January 1921 p042 showing "Destroyed by fire: The freezing works at Reotahi, Whangarei Heads. Where Damage was caused to the extent of £100,000. (Source Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19210120-42-4)



DESTROYED BY FIRE: THE FREEZING WORKS AT REOTAH, WHANGAREI HEADS, WHERE DAMAGE WAS CAUSED TO THE EXTENT OF £100,000.

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Source Material:

Taken from the supplement to the Auckland Weekly News 3 February 1921 p035 showing



THE REMAINS OF THE FREEZING WORKS AT WHANGAREI, WHICH WERE RECENTLY DESTROYED BY FIRE. THE DAMAGE BEING ESTIMATED AT OVER £100,000. F. P. P. photo.

Source Material:

Detail snip taken from Coastal view featuring Reotahi and Darch Point, Whangarei District, Northland Region. Ref: WA-77966-F. (Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22914649)



Elizabeth Clark 28 February 2017. Historical Background Research: Reotahi Freezing Works. Report for Northland Regional Council

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Background Alfred Bevins (ca.1858 – 1952)

The establishment of the freezing works at the Reotahi site had been the brainchild of London born merchant Alfred Bevins who arrived in New Zealand ca.1888. In an interview given in 1928, Bevins gave an account of his earlier life as a seaman. He began his career as an apprentice with the Aberdeen White Star Line first serving on the clipper ship *Thermopylae* on the London to Melbourne run, later transferring to the *Lucadia* on the Far East trade to Shanghai in China. During the 1870s to about the early 1880s, Bevins served as first mate on the *Loch Etive* commanded by Captain Stuart in the Australian trade. At some point in time in the mid-1880s, he then took up a position with the Union Steamship Company serving on the *Iona* in the New Zealand inter-island trade before leaving the company to settle in New Zealand as a permanent resident.¹ By 1888, Bevins had established the Zealandia Skating rinks of which a number were located around various townships in the South Island; including Milton, Balclutha, Kaitangata,² Temuka and Geraldine.³ By 1890 he had relocated to Maerewhenua in the north Otago region working as a water race manager on the Otago gold fields,⁴ during the same year he had also married Minnie Cottrell.⁵ By 1893, Alfred and Minnie Bevins had moved to Auckland. Alfred then aged 35, applied to the Auckland Harbour Board for a position as a wharfinger on the Auckland waterfront, however his candidacy was unsuccessful.⁶ By November of the same year Bevins had established himself as a grain and produce broker, manufacturers' agent, and general commission agent. He was the Auckland agent for Dunedin companies Ahlfeld Brothers and J Fotheringham, as well as for the Wellington Meat Export Company based in Wellington.⁷

In 1899, he became manager of the Auckland Freezing Company Ltd⁸, which was owned at the time by Christchurch firm A Turnbull & Co Ltd trading in partnership with London based meat exporting company Weddell & Co Ltd.⁹ At some point in time Bevins had entered into partnership with Arthur Southey Baker firstly under the trading name A Bevins & Co Ltd which was later dissolved due to financial issues¹⁰, then reformed again in 1908 under The Bevins and Baker Ltd.¹¹ Their partnership however proved to be difficult, by 1909 Bevins and Baker had gone their separate ways.¹² Having previously been in the freezing works trade Alfred Bevins set about financing his next venture namely that of the future Reotahi Freezing works site. The venture at the Reotahi site however would later prove to be a costly one. By 1922, Alfred Bevins had been adjudicated bankrupt owing his creditors the sum of £14,000 the causes attributed to the liquidations of Bevins and Baker Ltd and the

¹ *Auckland Star*, 16 February 1928, p10

² *Bruce Herald*, 25 May 1888, p3

³ *Temuka Leader*, 5 July 1888, p2

⁴ *New Zealand Electoral Roll 1890*, Otago Waitaki; Source Ancestry.com

⁵ "New Zealand, Civil Records Indexes, 1800-1896," database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q24K-X99H> : accessed 7 March 2017), Alfred Bevins and Minnie Cottrell, 1890; citing Marriage, New Zealand, New Zealand, Wellington; registration number 1890/580.

⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 1893, p6

⁷ *Wises's Post Office Directory*, 1894-1895, H Wise & Co (NZ) Ltd, p43

⁸ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District] Vol 2*, 1902, p388

⁹ *Auckland Star*, 11 May 1899, p8

¹⁰ Statement of Affairs, Alfred Bevins, 18 September 1922, Insolvency File: Alfred Bevins 1922 – 1923, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A709 21460 Box 141 c 1922/7

¹¹ Closed Company File: The Bevins and Baker Ltd 1908 – 1909, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BADZ 5181 A13 Box 228 Record No. 1341: Archway Search Engine:

URL : <https://archway.archives.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=9093650> Retrieved 28/02/2017

¹² Statement of Affairs, Alfred Bevins, 18 September 1922, Insolvency File: Alfred Bevins 1922 – 1923, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A709 21460 Box 141 c 1922/7

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

Whangarei Freezing Company Ltd.¹³ Prior to this, Bevins had negotiated the sale of the Reotahi Freezing works to London based international export company Vestey Brothers Ltd in August 1913, he became their New Zealand general manager operating under Vestey's subsidiary W & R Fletcher¹⁴ (NZ) Ltd.¹⁵ In 1915, Bevins formed the Westfield Freezing Company on behalf of Vestey Brothers¹⁶, acquiring land at Westfield for the construction of a new freezing works complex.¹⁷ He remained under the employ of Vestey Brothers Ltd (trading as W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd) supervising the construction of the Westfield freezing works until 1916, when he left the company.¹⁸ Alfred Bevins later retired living at his residence in Remuera until his death on June 1, 1952.¹⁹

The Reotahi Freezing Works

In September 1910, the Whangarei Harbour Board received a letter from Mr Alexander, a solicitor acting on Bevins behalf, seeking a grant of a transfer of the short term lease held by William Carter to his client, with a right to erect freezing works and wharf facilities at the reserve site. Bevins had attended the board meeting held on 5 September 1910, advising there was also an intention by his company to develop bacon curing and fertiliser manufacturing facilities on the same site. The transfer of the lease from William Carter to Alfred Bevins was granted by the WHB board members at the meeting.²⁰

The land in question had been gazetted as a scenic reserve which had then been vested to the Whangarei Harbour board in 1898. SO854A ca.1889 shows the area at Lort Point, where the freezing works were later sited in 1910, was a part of a custom house reserve. In 1898, under section 3 of the Reserves, Endowments, and Crown and Maori Lands Exchange, Disposal and Sale Act 1898 exchanged Section 79A of the Parish of Manaia containing 114 acres (46.13 ha) for Section 1A, Block IV Ruakaka Survey District containing 48 acres (19.42ha) more or less.²¹ Instructions for a certificate of title to be issued for the former under the Land Transfer Act 1885, Warrant No 1136 in favour of the Whangarei Harbour Board were received by the Department of Lands and Survey on 5 April 1899. Certificate of Title No 92/170 was issued on the same date. In order for the transfer of lease from Carter to Bevins, the Whangarei Harbour Board had to become a leasing authority under the Public Bodies Leases Act 1908.²² The Harbour Board was gazetted as a leasing authority under the Act in October 1910. This was necessary so Alfred Bevins could have a security of tenure which in turn warranted the erection the buildings and plant required in connection with the works.²³ CT 92/170 records Lease No 4720 Whangarei Harbour Board to William Carter being produced on 17 July 1911 for a term of 21 years

¹³ *Auckland Star*, 19 September 1922, p7

¹⁴ *Observer*, 10 December 1917, p3 col 1

¹⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 16 October 1913, p4

¹⁶ Statement of Affairs, Alfred Bevins, 18 September 1922, p2: Insolvency File: Alfred Bevins 1922 – 1923, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A709 21460 Box 141 c 1922/7

¹⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 April 1915, p6

¹⁸ Statement of Affairs, Alfred Bevins, 18 September 1922, p2: Insolvency File: Alfred Bevins 1922 – 1923, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A709 21460 Box 141 c 1922/7

¹⁹ Probate File Alfred Bevins – Retired Merchant, 1952, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A645 1570 Box 141 Record No: P1280/1952

²⁰ *Auckland Star*, 5 September 1910, p5

²¹ Section 3, *Power to Exchange Reserve with Whangarei Harbour Board*, Reserves, Endowments, and Crown and Maori Lands Exchange, Disposal and Sale Act 1898, NZ Legislation
URL: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1898/0039/latest/DLM134274.html> retrieved 28 February 2017

²² *Northern Advocate*, 3 September 1910, p5

²³ *Northern Advocate*, 15 October 1910, p4

Appendix: Background Information for Reotahi Freezing Works

backdated to 12 August 1906. On the same day the transfer of the lease from William Carter to Alfred Bevins was recorded. Bevins later transferred the lease to the Whangarei Freezing Company Ltd on 6 December 1911.

Building work began on the site during October 1911, with the initial construction of the tallow works, foundations for the main building and the stone work on the foreshore for the wharf under the supervision of Mr Laird.²⁴ In November the Whangarei Harbour Board received a letter from Bevins confirming members of the general public were still allowed access to the island and land area.²⁵

By January 1911, construction work at the site had all but ceased. It was reported later that it was due to a lack of temporary capital.²⁶ Enquiries were made as to whether or not work would be recommencing. It was indicated work recommence at the beginning of February.²⁷ In the same month it was also reported that a new company was possibly to be formed if the investigation into the suitability of the harbour for the loading of home liners was found to be favourable.²⁸ Construction of the freezing works however, despite the promises of work would be recommencing²⁹ failed to materialise. By April it was being announced that any further construction on the Reotahi site was to be postponed indefinitely.³⁰

In June, it was reported construction was recommencing 'within a month or so', when Captain Shudley of international shipping line Shaw, Savill & Co came to Whangarei Harbour to take depth measurements in the near the shoreline.³¹ By early August 1911, work of the site had recommenced with several workmen employed to continue with the erection of the buildings on the site.³² During the same month, the announcement was made by the *Northern Advocate* of the formation of the Whangarei Freezing Company on July 29, 1911 with capital of £25,000 divided into 25,000 £1 shares of which Alfred Bevins was a shareholder.³³

During September 15 workers had been employed for the onsite construction.³⁴ The Whangarei Freezing Company also advertised an intention to apply for a meat export slaughtering license in the *Northern Advocate*.³⁵ The freezing companies' application for the license was granted by the Whangarei County Council at their meeting on 15 December 1911.³⁶ Construction by November had advanced with the framework of the larger buildings being erected.³⁷

By mid-January 1912, progress reports advised construction of the freezing works were nearing completion. It was also reported the Whangarei Freezing Company hoped to start slaughtering operations the following month.³⁸ However it wasn't until April 1912, construction on the site was finally completed.³⁹ Napier based engineering firm J J Niven & Company Ltd had been contracted to

²⁴ *Northern Advocate*, 24 October 1910, p4

²⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 5 November 1910, p5

²⁶ *Evening Post*, 24 April 1911, p5

²⁷ *Northern Advocate*, 18 January 1911, p4

²⁸ *Thames Star*, 27 March 1911, p2

²⁹ *Northern Advocate*, 8 February 1902, p3

³⁰ *Northern Advocate*, 6 April 1911, p4

³¹ *Northern Advocate*, 2 June 1911, p2

³² *Northern Advocate*, 11 August 1911, p3

³³ *Northern Advocate*, 12 August 1911, p4

³⁴ *Northern Advocate*, 6 September 1911, p4

³⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 16 September 1911, p1 col. 5

³⁶ *Northern Advocate*, 16 December 1911, p3

³⁷ *Northern Advocate*, 13 November 1911, p4

³⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 January 1912, p5

³⁹ *Northern Advocate*, 20 April 1912, p4

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supply the complete manufacturing plant and equipment for the freezing work operations including; an 18 ton Linde refrigerating plant driven by a 55 bhp National suction gas engine, a 30 kilowatt electric dynamo driven by 48 bhp National gas engine, a fellmongery and boiling down plant, comprising a Niven's patent rotary manure dryer capable of handling the offal of 700 sheep per day, two tallow digesters, two refiners, a combination grinding, elevating, screening and bagging plant, and complete electric lighting plant.⁴⁰ A reporter from the *Northern Advocate* toured the facility⁴¹ around the time slaughtering operations had commenced on 23 April 1912⁴², gave a detailed account of their visit to the site;

"...The engine room takes precedence in a tour round, as it should, being the essence of all that goes to make things freeze. In this large space are the suction-gas plants driving a dynamo of 30 kilo-watts, motors for meat hoists, and other auxiliary machines; the dynamo supplying the lights all over the works; at the far end is the refrigerating machine, capable of freezing 45 tons in 24 hours; the gas producers are also of interest, as one of them will drive both engines to their full extent. Off the passage running by the side of these is the store room, 60 x 60 x 10, of a capacity of 12,000 sheep carcasses, or 1100 head of beef. Above are the freezing rooms, of them each 60 x 12, and each taking one day's killing, viz., 600 sheep or 50 bullocks, thus giving plenty of time for the perfect freezing of each day's killing. Here can be seen and felt evidence of the actual freezing agent; this in the ports at each end for regulating the inlet and outlet of the cold-blast; this cold-blast is driven electrically from the battery-room by a fan, and one was much struck by the enormous length of pipes—some thousands of feet—through which the ammonia is expanded. So from freezing chambers to beef chiller and sheep-cooler; above in these are endless rails, along which beef is run in from the slaughter-house immediately behind... the beef-hoists, as before mentioned, being driven by electricity... The offal passes through the concrete killing floor to one (also of concrete) immediately beneath it, where it is separated and dispatched to the tallow and manure house by truck over a small viaduct. This enters on a platform where the digestors are placed to receive its contents. After the tallow has been extracted the remains pass to the manure drier, where it is automatically treated and fed through to grinding and tagging machines (these driven by motor), and ultimately reaching the farmer as ... fertiliser... One also sees, in this department, the boiler which supplies the steam for the digestors, and the purifiers, in which the tallow is, finally treated before casking. All drainage is carried to below low-water mark. The water-service gave food for thought at first blush, but a regular and sufficient supply is low assured both summer and winter, this being led to the works by pipes from a dam and tank about quarter mile away on the Company's property as much sea water as is required will be pumped up—for this purpose stands a little house near the beach with its own pump and motor. The yarding and holding pens run down to the water's edge, and it is most likely that more cattle will arrive that way than, by land... Lighters will do the loading, the meat being taken down to the water's edge (where is a concrete wharf) in railway trucks..."⁴³

A photograph ca.1912 by Frederic George Radcliffe contemporary with the time period illustrates the *Northern Advocate* description some of the exterior view of the overall site. The image shows a series of buildings on concrete foundations, including the boiler house with a large chimney, an extensive multi-level slaughtering, processing and freezing complex that leads down to a smaller warehousing

⁴⁰ *New Zealand Times*, 18 April 1912, p7

⁴¹ *Northern Advocate*, 26 April 1912, p6

⁴² *Auckland Star*, 23 April 1912, p7

⁴³ *Northern Advocate*, 26 April 1912, p6

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area located near a medium sized concrete and timber wharf structure. A small reclamation area surrounded by a concrete retaining wall/breakwater is featured in the mid-foreground.⁴⁴

On 20 June 1912, the first ocean going home liner to enter Whangarei Harbour *Kumara* owned by Shaw, Savill & Co, arrived to load the first shipment of frozen beef produced at the Reotahi freezing works. The official opening had taken place on the same day with 200 guests attending the banquet to celebrate the occasion.⁴⁵ In late July however, the Whangarei Freezing Company had called a meeting of its creditors with a view to reorganise the financial structure of the company.⁴⁶ On 7 November 1912, at an extraordinary general meeting of members a resolution was passed to place the company into voluntary liquidation, 'by reason of its liabilities it was unable to continue its business'. Public accountant E Gerard was appointed to liquidate and wind up the company.⁴⁷

The Reotahi freezing works, plant and machinery along with its assets were advertised by Auckland auctioneers Smith and Halcombe on 31 January 1913. The advertisement also mentions the site was already being leased at the time of publication.⁴⁸ CT 92/170 records the transfer of lease to Alfred Bevins and Herbert Francis as joint tenants in common on 20 December 1913. The statement of affairs Bevins wrote during his insolvency in 1922 gives an account of the issues with the Whangarei Freezing Company and the lease transfer back to himself and Herbert Francis.

*"After a lapse of three months, the liquidator Mr Gerard arranged a transfer of the works to me on progress payments. I carried on with difficulty until the end of 1913, and then as a large payment was falling due I went to London with intention of floating a company, but found the freezing industrial market in a low state, consequent on bad prices and low outlook. Messrs Vestey Bros. offered me just enough to clear the liabilities, on a purchasing lease maturing in 1916.... I was forced to accept losing all I had put into the works and five years hard and worrying work."*⁴⁹

The works during 1913 continued under Bevins temporary tenure. In mid-February it was reported 500 sheep and fifty bullocks had been processed with a further 1000 sheep arrived from the week before.⁵⁰ During May the Pakeha owned by Shaw, Saville & Co loaded 8000 frozen carcasses to be shipped directly to the London market.⁵¹ By August, Alfred Bevins had managed to secure a sale for the freezing works.⁵² In October it was announced the freezing works had been taken over by Vestey Brothers Ltd, through their subsidiary company W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd of London. The company was reported to have over 600 retail shops across Britain as well being a major trader at Smithfield Markets. The freezing works had enlarged to increase capacity. Plans had also been made to extend the existing wharf to improve the loading of the barges. Bevins had been appointed the companies' New Zealand manager to oversee operations.⁵³ In November, the Hikurangi and Maungatapere Co-

⁴⁴ Photograph "Reotahi Freezing Works" (undated) by Frederick George Radcliffe, Te Ara: Story: Northland Region URL: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/7609/reotahi-freezing-works> Retrieved 23 February 2017

⁴⁵ *Auckland Star*, 20 June 1912, p7

⁴⁶ *Northern Advocate*, 26 July 1912, p4

⁴⁷ Letter to the Register of Companies, Subject Whangarei Freezing Co Ltd, Formal Notification of liquidation, 18 November 1912, E Gerard, Guardian Trust & Executors Company Ltd: Closed Company File: Whangarei Freezing Company Ltd 1911 – 1925; Archives New Zealand Ref No: BADZ A13 5181 Box 276

⁴⁸ *Auckland Star*, 31 January 1913, p6 col 2

⁴⁹ *Statement of Affairs*, Alfred Bevins, 18 September 1922, p2: Insolvency File: Alfred Bevins 1922 – 1923, Archives New Zealand File Ref: BAEA A709 21460 Box 141 c 1922/7

⁵⁰ *Northern Advocate*, 19 February 1913, p3

⁵¹ *Northern Advocate*, 8 May 1913, p3

⁵² *Northern Advocate*, 5 August 1913, p4

⁵³ *Northern Advocate*, 16 October 1913, p4

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operative dairy companies made arrangements to store their outputs in the cool stores at the freezing works when strike action was to take place.⁵⁴

During late January 1914 the Shaw, Savill & Co steamer Delphic loaded a cargo of 4000 quarters beef, 2000 carcasses mutton, and 500 bags sundries (cheeks, skirt steaks, tails and tongues), 2000 boxes kidneys and frys, and 110 casks of tallow produced at the works.⁵⁵ By May Northland farmers were expressing dissatisfaction with the lack of capacity for stock at the freezing works site. Meetings were held across the region resulting in a combined resolution to enquire further into the possibility of establishing a farmers' co-operative freezing works of their own.⁵⁶ On 4 June, 1914 the North Auckland Farmers Union was formed. A resolution at the meeting was made to approach the Auckland Farmers Freezing Co-operative with a view to establishing a branch of their freezing works in the Northland region.⁵⁷ In September the works at Reotahi had increased its plant to cope with the increasing numbers of stock coming into their yards for processing.⁵⁸ In October, Sir William Vestey one of the owners of the Reotahi freezing works advised the Whangarei Harbour Board there was a need for improved wharfage for the ocean going steamers. The method of using lighters for transporting frozen meat out to the ships had been proved to be inefficient. The Board agreed to take soundings of the area around the works to ascertain the probable cost of the wharf.⁵⁹ During the same month consulting engineer L G James was engaged to prepare plans, and supervise new works for the expansion of Whangarei site, so meat could be exported to Britain due to the start of the First World War.⁶⁰ The cost was set at £25,000.⁶¹

In February 1915, it was revealed freezing works owner W & R Fletcher (NZ) Limited's parent company Vestey Brothers Ltd had secured a contract to supply the allied troops with 600 tons of beef per month exported directly from New Zealand.⁶² On 4 March 1915, the New Zealand Government announced all meat could only be exported to Britain and had set a price schedule. Affected by the export restrictions, the Reotahi works output was reduced by 25 percent.⁶³ In the same month construction of a new concrete building was underway. Plans for the expansion of the works included replacing the producer gas plant with updated steam machinery, and a new meat canning plant.⁶⁴ On 17 April the freezing block was partially destroyed by a fire outbreak causing the loss £6,000 worth of frozen beef. The fire also resulted in operations at the facility being temporarily shut down.⁶⁵ Despite the setback of the April fire by September the site capacity had been increased to 150 cattle and 500 sheep per day slaughtering capability. Cold storage capacity had been increased to hold 50,000 carcasses on the site. 20,000 carcasses were loaded onto the *Ionic*, the largest shipment of meat produced by the freezing work's output.⁶⁶ By the end of the 1915 the year's output had been 38,893 beef quarters, 201 mutton carcasses and an undisclosed quantity of tallow and hides had been shipped from the works.⁶⁷

⁵⁴ *Northern Advocate*, 8 November 1913, p4

⁵⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 24 January 1914, p4

⁵⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1914, p8

⁵⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 5 June 1914

⁵⁸ *Northern Advocate*, 11 September 1914, p4

⁵⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 8 October 1914, p4

⁶⁰ *Sun*, 27 October 1914, p4

⁶¹ *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 19 December 1914, p3

⁶² *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 February 1915, p4

⁶³ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1915, p7

⁶⁴ *Northern Advocate*, 3 March 1915, p3

⁶⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 19 April 1915, p5

⁶⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 9 September 1915, p5

⁶⁷ *Northern Advocate*, 1 February 1916, p1

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During January 1916, the Reotahi freezing works owners applied to the Whangarei Harbour Board to carry out reclaiming works. Plans showing the retaining wall to be constructed were also submitted and were approved.⁶⁸ During early 1916, the effects of the First World War on overseas shipping was taking its toll on the freezing industry nation-wide. Storage capacity at the Whangarei works was near maximum levels by the end of February. Only one vessel had been consigned to take the output from the works. Cargo space was limited, works management had anticipated closure until the shipping issue could be resolved.⁶⁹ In late March plans forwarded by the Whangarei Harbour Board to the Marine Department for a wharf extension at the freezing works including an occupation of the seabed were approved. Freezing company management, had also agreed to give a guarantee regarding the number of sheep going over the wharf at Marsden Point with a view to having the wharf at the locality improved as early as possible.⁷⁰ During September the Whangarei County Council and the freezing company reached an agreement regarding the Whangarei Heads road. Issues had been raised over cattle damaging the road while being driven to the works.⁷¹ The Whangarei County Council agreed to take out a loan of £4,000 for the purpose of repairing and metalling the road, with the freezing company paying the loan interest for two years, thereafter paying the Council 5d per head of cattle passing over the road to the works.⁷²

During January 1917 members of the Parliamentary tour visited the works. The reporter that accompanied them noted the loading of 40,000 frozen carcasses onto lighters that took the shipments out to a waiting liner anchored in the harbour. 120 employees were on the pay roll, with a small housing settlement including recreational facilities and a half time school⁷³ provided near the works thus forming a self-contained industrial complex.⁷⁴ Frozen meat export statistics for the freezing works at Reotahi were reported in early March 1917. Between 1 July 1916 to 31 January 1917 2,781,315 lbs of beef and 226,683 lbs of mutton had been exported. During February 1917 531,183 lbs of beef and 90,898 lbs of mutton had been shipped from the works site.⁷⁵ In June the general manager of the freezing works A Rowlands wrote to the editor of the Northern Advocate advising plans had been made to increase the cold storage capacity at the Reotahi site with the addition of a large two storey building on the waterfront to improve loading and unloading outcomes.⁷⁶ At the end of August the works owners were granted a license to occupy the foreshore and part of the seabed with plans approved to proceed with a reclamation. Yearly rental had been set at £10 per annum for a lease term of 21 years.⁷⁷ By December 1917, the new cool storage building had neared completion with the equipment being installed for direct discharge from storage to vessels at the wharf.⁷⁸

In January 1918, it was reported due to a shortage of shipping availability exporting at the Reotahi works had been substantially reduced. Export statistics quoted for the year ending 31 December 1916 were down on the previous year.⁷⁹ The following year in late February 1919, the *Northern Advocate* visited the freezing works at Reotahi. “...The works were practically full up with frozen meat, therefore killing operations were suspended, but the presence of the s.s. Mahia in the harbour kept all available

⁶⁸ *Northern Advocate*, 28 January 1916, p2

⁶⁹ *Auckland Star*, 1 March 1916, p4

⁷⁰ *Northern Advocate*, 18 March 1916, p2

⁷¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 August 1916, p8

⁷² *New Zealand Herald*, 22 September 1916, p10

⁷³ “*The First Whangarei Freezing Works at Reotahi 1912-1921*”; Rae, DA (1994) *Auckland Waikato Historical Journal*, April 1991. No 64, p26: Auckland Waikato Historical Society

⁷⁴ *Auckland Star*, 19 January 1917, p2

⁷⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1916, p9

⁷⁶ *Northern Advocate*, 16 June 1917, p2

⁷⁷ *Northern Advocate*, 29 August 1917, p2

⁷⁸ *Northern Advocate*, 22 December 1917, p10

⁷⁹ *Northern Advocate*, 17 January 1918, p1

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hands busy giving the big vessel her load. The wharf presented a busy scene throughout the day. At high tide the frozen beef quarters were sent rapidly down shoots from the cool stores right into the holds of the lighters, but as the water fell it became necessary to berth at the outer wharf and from then on the carcasses were run out on trolleys to the side of the waiting lighters... Quite a small town exists around the works.... Apart from the huts and camps of private individuals the company has built 24 houses for its employees, and Mr Coyte (the manager), stated that many others would be erected if the present cost of material was not so high. The settlement also possesses a fine big boarding-house and public hall for amusement purposes. There are somewhere about 150 men employed on the works and these, with their wives and families, make up quite a fair-sized community which is well worth attention.”⁸⁰

On 7 April 1919, the men employed at the works had a meeting with the manager to demand the removal of the foreman by reason of his ‘rush methods’ which caused the workers to have no further work due to finishing too early. They had demanded half a day’s pay as well as the removal of the foreman. However the site manager refused to dismiss the foreman. The workers then resolved to stop work. As a result the livestock was removed from the works and operations were shut down.⁸¹ In early May slaughtering operations at Reotahi had recommenced and were expected to last for about six weeks.⁸²

In March 1920, the freezing company launched the lighter *Taheke* from a concrete slip it had built on the foreshore. The vessel had been built at the freezing works site. The *Taheke* had been designed by J L Gitchard, and constructed on site at Reotahi by R C Coss assisted by shipwrights Messrs Grey and Heighton.⁸³ During May due to a shipping shortage the freezing works operations had been closed down.⁸⁴ The manager of the Reotahi works revealed that operations had been intermittent for more two months, and no regular work had been done for a fortnight. He attributed the cause to the British Meat Control allowing meat to accumulate and as a result vessels were taking longer to unload, thus causing a meat glut.⁸⁵ In late June shipping of meat from Reotahi resumed when the *Westmoreland* was loaded with a cargo of 26,000 carcasses.⁸⁶ During September a further shipment of 16,000 carcasses were loaded onto the steamer *Port Darwin*.⁸⁷ In early November fire had broken out in a storeroom. The flames were extinguished by workers at the site.⁸⁸

On January 15 1920, a major fire destroyed the slaughterhouse, freezing department, cold store, appertaining machinery, hide department, general store, offices and post office. The extent of damage amounted to £100,000. The newer store building, along with the condenser house and engine room were left intact. The cause of the fire had been unknown.⁸⁹ The owners W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd made the decision to dismantle then close down the site. In August 1920, the remainder of the Reotahi freezing works were dismantled and the machinery removed.⁹⁰ The decision to do so was more than likely due to the isolation of the site. A later report by the company’s engineer J L Gichard reflects this conclusion:

⁸⁰ *Northern Advocate*, 27 February 1919, p2

⁸¹ *Northern Advocate*, 8 April 1919, p2

⁸² *Northern Advocate*, 5 May 1919, p2

⁸³ *Northern Advocate*, 20 March 1920, p2

⁸⁴ *Auckland Star*, 5 May 1920, p4

⁸⁵ *Northern Advocate*, 13 May 1920, p4

⁸⁶ *Northern Advocate*, 21 June 1920, p2

⁸⁷ *Northern Advocate*, 29 September 1920, p2

⁸⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 9 November 1920, p4

⁸⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 17 January 1921, p4

⁹⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 August 1921, p4

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“The site selected at Reotahi is about the worst site that it was possible to select. There was no level land of any size and no room for any future development. No fresh water in sufficient quantity and none procurable by boring. No road access from Whangarei to Urquhart’s Bay, so one had to be cut around a rocky bluff. Sheep could not traverse the very rough and muddy main route. They were all brought by double deck barge from various points around the harbour. Coal had to be brought by barge from Ngunguru. The only advantage was deep water close to the works approximately a quarter of a mile away and this made lightering an easy job.”⁹¹

In 1993, the historical significance of the former freezing works site was recognised by Heritage New Zealand (formerly Historic Places Trust) with the placing of a plaque at the site to commemorate the site of Northland region’s first freezing works.⁹²

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27/02/2017

Updated 28/02/2017 by Author

Updated 12/04/2017 by Author

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⁹¹ “The First Whangarei Freezing Works at Reotahi 1912-1921”; Rae, DA (1994) Auckland Waikato Historical Journal, April 1991. No 64, p25: Auckland Waikato Historical Society

⁹² *Ibid*, p28