

Reference Guide 5:

Land Records

Department of Lands & Survey, & Land Titles Office Records

Summary

This reference guide is an introduction to the records that we hold from the Department of Lands and Survey and its successors, which document **the administration of Crown Lands** in the Canterbury and Westland areas, and also the records that we hold from the Land Titles Office (Lands and Deeds) and its successors, which relate to **the registration of land ownership** in Canterbury and Westland (and also Marlborough and Nelson in the case of the Deeds System records). Maori Land Court records, which contain information about the whole of the South Island and the Chatham Islands are also discussed, as are other sources of land information.

- September 2018

Contents

Introduction	2
Land Ownership Records - Department of Lands and Survey	3
Maori Land (pre-1830-Present Day)	3
Pre-Adamites (1830-1840)	4
Canterbury Association (1849-1853)	5
Provincial Government (1853-1876).....	8
Post-Provincial (1877 onwards)	10
Land Ownership Records - Land Titles Office (Canterbury, Westland, Nelson, & Marlborough Land Districts).....	11
Deeds System Records	11
Searching Deeds	11
Land District Searching Charts	12
Other Land Records	14
Crown Land Correspondence and Files.....	14
Maps & Plans.....	14
Valuations.....	14
Other Sources for Land Information	15

Introduction

Land Records held in the Christchurch Regional Office

In 1830 the great bulk of the land in what is now Canterbury and the West Coast was held communally on a tribal basis by the native inhabitants of the region. By well before 1900 nearly all of that land was held by individual European settlers according to English laws. Records held by Archives New Zealand's Christchurch Office document the process by which this revolution occurred.

We hold archives from the Canterbury Association, the Canterbury Provincial Government, the Maori Land Court, the Department of Lands and Survey, and the Land Titles Office (Lands and Deeds) - and the latter two agencies' various successor agencies in Canterbury and Westland (e.g. Land Information New Zealand - LINZ).

Archives from the Department of Lands and Survey and its successors document the **administration of Crown lands** in the Canterbury and Westland areas. Archives from the Land Titles Office (Lands and Deeds) and its successors, relate to the **registration of land ownership** in Canterbury and Westland (and also Marlborough and Nelson in the case of the Deeds System records). However, they often document the same original parcel of land, and so provide multiple pathways to the same, or similar, information.

Land Information New Zealand has inherited the main functions of both of these agencies.

Maori Land Court (Native Land Court) records contain information about the whole of the South Island and the Chatham Islands.

Land records held by the office include applications for the lease or purchase of land, various registers and indexes documenting those applications, minute books of the Waste Land Boards/Land Boards, interim licences issued to applicants, copies of Crown Grants and licences, Deeds System records, survey records, Maori Land Court minute books and land alienation files, financial records dealing with the lease or purchase of land, correspondence documenting land administration, and a variety of maps and plans.

Land Ownership Records - Department of Lands and Survey

Maori Land (pre-1830-Present Day)

In 1830 the great bulk of the land in what is now Canterbury and the West Coast was held communally on a tribal basis by Maori. By 1900, only a small proportion of the region was held under customary title.

Searching on Maori land ownership should be done initially through the Maori Land Court - most historical Maori Land records are still held by the Court, and they also have an invaluable database *Maori Land Online* (<http://www.maorilandonline.govt.nz>). We have received copies of the Minute Books (documenting decisions of the Court), and some files documenting the alienation of land from Maori Land status. (See below). Our Head Office in Wellington may also hold material of interest.

The Maori Land Court (previously the Native Land Court) was established in 1864 in order to facilitate the transfer of tribally owned land into individual ownership. Maori Land includes Maori customary land, Maori freehold land, as well as general land owned by Maori. The Maori Land Court Office in Christchurch covers all of the Te Waipounamu Maori Land Court District, which comprises the South Island plus Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands.

Contact:

Maori Land Court

20 Lichfield Street

Christchurch 8011

✉ DX Box WX11124, Christchurch

☎ (03) 962 4900

💻 mlctewaipounamu@justice.govt.nz

Maori Land Records

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Minute Books of the Maori Land Court [Photocopies] (The books cover the whole of the South Island and the Chathams).	1868-1965	CH299	/1-62
Maori Land Alienation Files (These document land which has gone out of the Maori land ownership system).		CH270	See Archway for individual items.

Pre-Adamites (1830-1840)

Overview

The period before the arrival of the first four ships is often seen as an almost pre-historic era but records do exist for land acquisition during this time. After 1840 the Colonial Government regarded all Europeans residing on land leased, or purchased directly from the Maori, as squatters with no legal title. Although the government's pre-emptive right was temporarily relaxed in 1843, the period before the arrival of the first four ships in Canterbury was one of restricted private sales, investigations into existing purchases, and large purchases by the New Zealand Company and the Nanto-Bordelaise Company. The period immediately before 1850 also saw the purchase of the bulk of Canterbury from Ngai-Tahu and Ngati-Toa. We do not hold these deeds.

Old Land Claims

The government's series of investigations into early purchases by various Lands Claims Commissioners are documented in the Old Land Claims series at Archives New Zealand's Head Office, in Wellington. Presumably the Deans' purchase or lease of land is included in those records but we also hold some information.

Akaroa

The Nanto-Bordelaise Company established to settle Akaroa purchased land from the Maori and, via Jean Langlois, sold it to settlers. Their claim to establish legal title under the Colonial Government was heard first in 1843. Eventually the company sold its land interests to the New Zealand Company in 1849, and we have a copy of the deed.

The New Zealand Company was granted the right to sell land as an agent of the Crown. The Canterbury Association purchased from it a block of land of about 1 million acres for its proposed settlement. Crown ownership of the Akaroa area was not settled until 1856.

Pre-Adamite Land Records

<i>Record description</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Accession</i>	<i>Series/item</i>
Deans Papers: Copy of Original Lease	1846	CH290	6/1
Nanto-Bordelaise to New Zealand Company Deed	c.1853-c.1857	CH290	40/3c
Colonel Campbell's Review of Claims of Nanto-Bordelaise Company (Reports for each claim, description, comments, deeds swapped for Crown Grants, some plans).	c.1853-c.1857	CH290	40/1
Crown Grants issued (indexed) belonging to the Province of Canterbury (in Lieu of NZ Company Titles).	c.1853-c.1857	CH290	40/3b
Original French Claims (Papers supporting each claim, list of claimants, French papers and deeds).	c.1853-c.1857	CH290	40/2
Retrospective Index of all Rural Section Purchasers (includes Akaroa purchasers) to c.1883 is available (photocopy) in the Reading Room.	1851-c.1883	CH290	/48a

Canterbury Association (1849-1853)

Overview

The Canterbury Association acquired a million acres of New Zealand Company land stretching from the Ashley river down to the Ashburton river, excluding the lands sold by the Nanto-Bordelaise Company around Akaroa.

Within this *Canterbury Block* the land was to be sold at a fixed and artificially high price as part of the overall colonisation scheme. The theory was that farm labourers would have to work for others for a number of years before they could afford to buy land and become yeoman farmers in their own right, and so build a nation of small-holders. The practical realities of the new settlement soon put paid to such ideas.

Captain Thomas arrived as surveyor and agent of the Canterbury Association in 1848 to prepare the ground for the arrival of the first settlers. Between 1850 and 1853, officers of the Association ruled the settlement within the Canterbury Block as a fiefdom under the colonial government in Auckland.

While an officer of the Association operated as Commissioner for Crown Land within the Association's block, there was a separate Land Office dealing with land outside the block, including most of Banks Peninsula. For a brief period there were therefore two Commissioners for Crown Land and two Land Offices in the region.

Town & Rural Sections

The Canterbury Association started selling land on 14 January 1850. The original applications for the purchase of land in the settlement are now held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. All applications remained unopened by the Association until 1 July 1850, when they were opened at random and allocated orders of choice, the first application to be opened being allocated order of choice 'number one', etc. A second and final opening of these applications in Britain was held on 30 August 1850. A copy of the land order was sent to the purchaser.

We hold copies that were held by the Association and copies later exchanged by purchasers for deeds. The orders of choice (Land Orders) were endorsed on the back with the acreage purchased (minimum purchase of rural land was 50 acres). As well, the applicant received a town block. Land orders changed hands before land was actually chosen.

The selection of land by purchasers or their agents began at the Land Office in Christchurch on 17 February 1851, the order of selection being on the basis of the Land Order number. Purchasers chose pre-numbered town sections and rural sections anywhere in the block, with the rural section being given the number of the land order. This system continued throughout the period, the number of the successful application being the number of the rural section.

Leasehold Land

In spite of the hopes for a small holders' paradise, the Association also made provisions for pastoral licenses to allow the leased use of unpurchased land within the Canterbury Block for grazing purposes. Licenses were of several classes.

The Lands Department [*Archway Agency Code: ADBE*] was charged with the administration of lands within the control of the Canterbury Association – known as the Canterbury Block. It acted as an office of the Crown and of the Association.

After the Canterbury Association obtained a royal charter in December 1849, it reached an agreement with the New Zealand Company under which the Company reserved 2.5 million acres for the use of the Association. Originally Captain Thomas acted in an unofficial capacity as Land Agent for the Canterbury Association.

With the arrival of John Robert Godley in 1849, those responsibilities were given to him and he became the Land Agent for the Canterbury Association, charged with the disposal of land within the Canterbury Block. In 1850 Godley was appointed Commissioner for Crown Lands by the Governor and was responsible to the Colonial Secretary's Office. Godley then appointed William G. Brittan to take charge of the Land Office in December 1850.

The Lands Department originally established itself with an office in Lyttelton. The office in Christchurch, which was built in January 1851, was the first government building erected there. The dissolution of the Canterbury Association in 1853 and subsequent establishment of the Provincial Government resulted in a substantial change in the role of the Lands Department.

The Lands Office in Akaroa [*Archway Agency Code: ABDF*] under the then Commissioner for Crown Lands, Colonel John Campbell, was established to administer the disposal of waste lands outside of the original Canterbury Block. Campbell was dismissed from his position because of numerous altercations with the Provincial Council, and the office was amalgamated with the Land Office in Christchurch under William G. Brittan.¹

¹ **Author's Notes:** No material was transferred by either of these agencies. The Department of Lands and Survey [*Archway Agency Code: CAAR*] transferred material relating to the Provincial Council under accession number CH287. Refer to agency documentation on Archway for further information.

Canterbury Association Land Records

NB: Rural land at this stage is anything outside of Lyttelton, Sumner and the four avenues of Christchurch. Nearly all of the land records for this period are indexed, including those for land outside of the Canterbury Block - see (f) below.

(a) Orders

Town Orders contain number of order of choice, price, name, address, occupation, area purchased, date order issued, names of those with power of attorney, conveyance of order to anyone else, street address. Transfers contain name of original purchaser, home & NZ address, date & who the order was transferred to.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Land Orders – Rural Land	1850	CH290	33/1, 2*
Land Orders – Town Land	1850	CH290	33/3, 4*
Register of Orders of Choice for Land	c.1851-1852	CH290	16/3*
Land Orders - Register of Transfers	1851-1854	CH290	36/1

(b) Registers of Applications for Land

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Applications for Town Sections (Lyttelton & Christchurch)	1851-1852	CH290	29/8 series
Register of Applications for Town Sections	1851	CH290	37/8

(c) Deeds, Crown Grants & Conveyance Books

See also: Deeds System Records. Conveyances below contain copies of the deeds & conveyances issued for the land orders once the land had been purchased & surveyed. They usually contain a description of the land & a small map. Equivalent of later Crown Grants & Deeds.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Crown Grants – Town Sections	1850-1853	CH290	37/1-2
Conveyances – Rural Sections	1851-1853	CH290	37/3-4
Index to Rural Sections	1851-c.1883	CH290	/48a
Crown Grants issued in Lieu of Canterbury Association Land Orders	1856	CH290	37/6, 41/1

(d) Leasehold Land 1849-1853

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Pastoral Licenses issued by the Canterbury Association	1851-1857	CH290	29/9* series
Rough Register of Applications and Pasturage Licenses	1851-1853	CH290	27/1
Transfer Book Pastoral Licenses	1851-1856	CH290	29/1
Pastoral Runs - Descriptions (Indexed)	1851-1853	CH290	27/5, 27/7

(e) Correspondence 1849-1853

Most of the extant correspondence of the Association deals with the sale and purchase of land. Examples below.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Land Office Outwards Letter Book	1850-1853	CH290	5/1
Indexed Correspondence of Land Agent, Lyttelton Land Office		CH290	6/1, items 1-155
Applications for Acceptance of Land		CH290	6/10
Commissioner of Crown Land outside of the Canterbury Block Outwards Letter Book	1851-1854	CH290	7/1

(f) Indexes

Multiple indexes provide access to the purchasers of town and rural land, and leased land (that is, land leased from the Crown). The indexes lead the reader to the land orders (the original applications are held at Turnbull) and then to the Deeds/Crown Grants. Leasehold land is indexed to the pastoral licence registers. Correspondence, both inward and outward letters and letter books, is also indexed.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Index to Names: Canterbury Association Records (a hard copy is available in the Reading Room, and an electronic copy on the in-house index terminals).	1848-1853	-	-
Retrospective Index of All Rural Section Purchasers to c.1883 (a photocopy is available in the Reading Room). This covers the Canterbury Association and Akaroa purchases in addition to the subsequent Provincial Government Period purchases. (This leads into the Rural Section Registers below).	1851-c.1883	CH290	/48a
Rural Section Registers (these provide information about the date of purchase, area and location of Crown Grant within the Crown Grant book series, or what schedule it went on). To search these, you need to know the rural section number - we may hold a map which could assist you to determine this.		CH290	/42a-c, & 48/1-4
Index to Town Sections (sections are indexed by town, then numerically by original section number).		CH290	/42d
Town Allotment Book		CH290	37/9

*Denotes that an in-house computer index is available for this record.

Provincial Government (1853-1876)

The Provincial Government was primarily instituted to dispose of the land. During the 1850s the Provincial Government fought successfully to gain control of the disposal of *waste lands*.

At the start of the period there were still two Land Offices, two commissioners of Crown Land and two sets of prices: 10/- an acre for land outside of the Block and £3 an acre inside the Block. All of this changed.

New land regulations came into force and the Waste Land Board was established to oversee the disposal of land. By the end of the period a million acres had been sold or leased in large runs. This period also saw the opening of land sales in West Canterbury and the establishment of a Land Office in Timaru for South Canterbury. There were some experiments with various leasehold and deferred payment schemes and attempts to establish village settlements.

In 1870 the first Land Transfer Act was passed, which provided for the issue of Certificates of Title (still in use today), rather than the Crown Grants and Deeds which had been the key title documents for the bulk of the Provincial Period.

For a time, land transactions could be registered in either the Land Transfer System or in the Deeds System. Archives New Zealand only holds the Deeds System Records. If you are looking for land ownership records post-1870, it is important that you look at these, as well as the Land Transfer System Records (still held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)).

Canterbury and Westland Provincial Period Land Records

NB: At Archives New Zealand there are two main sets of records of relevance for researchers of land ownership in the Provincial Period. The first are the Department of Lands and Survey Records (in the table below) which deal only with land purchased or leased directly from the Government; once land was alienated from the Crown, its subsequent ownership history was recorded in the Deeds System Records (see that section for more information).

(a) Rural Sections

These archives include the original applications for land, the licences to occupy lands issued while the land purchased was being surveyed (sometimes many years), copies of the Crown Grants (and later, the schedules). NB: Crown Grants also appear in the Deeds System Records (see that section) so researchers may want to begin with a search of those.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Retrospective Index of All Rural Section Purchasers to c.1883 (a photocopy is available in the Reading Room). The index leads you into the Rural Section Registers (see below).	1851-c.1883	CH290	/48a
Rural Section Registers (these provide information about the date of purchase, area and location of Crown Grant within the Crown Grant book series, or what schedule it went on). To search these, you need to know the rural section number - we may hold a map which could assist you to determine this. The Rural Section number also allows you to get to the original application in the Application Guardbooks (see below).		CH290	/42a-c, & 48/1-4
The Guardbooks of Original Applications are a primary record and contain both successful and unsuccessful applications. They contain the acreage, locality and description, how paid for, residence, name, occupation, date of Crown Grant (on back), and the signature or mark of the purchaser. The applications run from 400 through to 35500 and cover the period through to the 1890s. (Numbers prior to 400 refer to the aforementioned Canterbury Association land orders). Purchasers were issued a Licence to occupy land until such time as the Crown Grant or CT was issued. These are sometimes found within the applications if they were returned post-grant.	1856-1892	CH290	/1-86
The Crown Grant Books follow on from the Association period Deeds and Conveyance Books, and contain copies of the Crown Grants issued to the purchaser. These usually contain a small map of the area. The reverse page gives information about when the grant was issued. (This series also includes some Nelson Land District [Amuri] Books).	1855-1885	CH290	42/ series
Guardbooks of Rejected Applications are also extant, but there seems no easy nominal access to these.	1873-1891	CH290	18/55-61

For Rural Sections in Westland search through accession CH501 on Archway.		CH501*	See Archway.
(b) Town Sections			
<i>The researcher of Town Sections under the Provincial Period may wish to start with the Deeds System Records which are comprehensively indexed - see that section for more information.</i>			
<i>Record description</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Accession</i>	<i>Series/item</i>
Index to Town Sections: Canterbury and West Canterbury (if after researching the Deeds System Records, you decide to search through the Lands and Survey records for an Original Application, or a copy of a Crown Grant, then you could look through this index). Entries in this index are in town/village section number order arranged by town. (Unfortunately there is no index arranged by name). Information includes the name of the grantee, the page/application volume number and where it is recorded. It includes Canterbury Association allotments.		CH290	/42d
Original Applications are stored in separate sequences from the ones for rural sections (e.g. CH 290, 18/53 Town and Suburban Land Timaru, 1857-75). There are guardbooks of such applications for most towns.			See Archway.
Crown Grant Books for the earlier sections, (or a Schedule for the later sections), can also be found via the index above.		CH290	See Archway.
Allotment Books for town sections (in Canterbury only), arranged by section number).		CH290	37/9
West Coast Applications		CH501*	
West Coast Township Section Registers		CH75*	
(c) Leases			
<i>Researchers of leasehold land during this period are less well off, as there is no single comprehensive register of leases, let alone an index. Instead we hold various record books and registers of pasturage licences inside and outside of the Canterbury Block, we also hold some applications. The different classes of pastoral land and licenses remain from the Association Period. As leases are sometimes recorded in the Deeds System Records, these should also be researched - see that section for more information.</i>			
<i>Record description</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Accession</i>	<i>Series/item</i>
Pasturage Licences (a miscellaneous collection of record books and registers).	1853-c.1895	CH290	25/ series
Applications for Pastoral Licences	1856-1882	CH290	27/2-4
Applications for Pasturage Licences under Canterbury Waste Land Regulations	1856-1883	CH290	28/5, 28/5a-7
Pastoral Licences - Description of Runs (Indexed)	1853-c.1857	CH290	27/2, 27/6
Register of Licences Issued	1857-1877	CH290	27/8
Register of Exchange of Original Licences issued under Canterbury Association Regulations for Licences under 1856 Regulations	c.1860-1887	CH290	28/1-3
Transfer Registers for different classes of pasturage licence. This includes descriptions of the land.	1851-1889	CH290	29/1b-4
Westland Leasehold Land (search through accession CH501 on Archway).		CH501*	See Archway.
(d) Other Sources			
<i>As in the earlier period information about land acquisition can be found in the correspondence of the Commissioner of Crown Land and the Chief Surveyor. Unfortunately no inwards letters survive but the extant records can fill the gaps</i>			
<i>Record description</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Accession</i>	<i>Series/item</i>
Commissioner of Crown Land - Index to Inwards Correspondence	1853-1875	CH290	8/1c
Commissioner of Crown Land - Index/Register of Outward Letters	1856-1875	CH290	8/1b
Commissioner of Crown Land - Outwards Letter Books	1853-1875	CH290	8/1-4
Chief Surveyor - Outward Letter Books	1850-1874	CH290	47/1-6
Minute Books of the Waste Land Board (established in 1853) also provide a detailed (if unindexed) record of transactions in Crown Land during this period.	1856-1876	CH290	1/ series
Westland Correspondence (for additional land correspondence relating to Westland in the period, search through accession CH501 on Archway).		CH501*	See Archway.

*Denotes that an in-house computer index is available for parts of these accessions.

Post-Provincial (1877 onwards)

New Zealand's provincial governments were abolished in 1876, and upon their demise the Central Government introduced the Land Act of 1877, which replaced provincial land legislation, and vested the administration of Crown Lands throughout the country in a new national Minister of Lands.

The provinces were replaced by land districts, each of which had an appointed Land Board, with a Commissioner of Crown Lands as chairman, responsible to the Minister. Land policy from the latter years of the 19th century throughout the early 20th century was directed towards limiting the size of landholdings so that more people had the chance to own land.

An especially significant development were Crown attempts to assist with the resettlement of soldiers who had returned from the First and Second World Wars via the purchase of large tracts of land for farming, which could be bought or leased by ex-servicemen at favourable rates with the assistance of government loans where necessary.

Post-Provincial Period Land Records

NB: Those searching at our office for records of land ownership in Canterbury, Westland, Nelson & Marlborough from the beginning of this period up until c.1925 would be best to begin with a search of the Deeds System Records (see that section for more information). Other records which may be of interest are listed below.

Record description	Dates	Accession	Series/item
Land Board Minute Books	1877-1957	CH290 CH325	1/9-1/36 1-12
Westland Land Board Minute Books (indexed)		CH501*	
Original Applications for Land (under various pieces of legislation)		CH290	18/1-18/34
Registers of Applications	1888-1953	CH290	18a/1 & 18a/2
Westland Registers of Applications (indexed)		CH501*	10/4-10/6*
Return of Freeholders	1882	CH290	26/1
Rural Sections Allotment Book		CH290	62/1
Certificates of Provisional Title and Purchase of Freehold	1914-1950s	CH325	
Lease Register/Index	1887-1919	CH325 CH290	/253 79/1
Settlers' Roll	1910	CH290	65/1
Auction Sale Sheets		CH290	64/ series
Licenses & Leases	1886-1990	CH281, CH462 CH601, CH723	
Settlements (applications, evidence, ballots, sales plans)		CH134, CH158 CH180, CH290 CH730, CH1032	
Financial Records		CH30, CH288	
Land Tenure Files		CH188, CH480, CH626, CH918, CH1013, CH1014	
Crown Land Correspondence Letterbooks & Files		CH98, CH290	
Canterbury Land District Registered Files	c.1915-2002	CH134	
West Coast (in addition to many of the accessions listed above, researchers of West Coast land ownership in the post-Provincial period should conduct a thorough search of the following accessions (especially those in bold print)).		CH75,* CH78, CH501,* CH541, CH546, CH626, CH1013, CH1015	
Nelson (in addition to the Nelson Land District Deeds Records (See: Deeds System Records section) held here, we and our Head Office in Wellington hold land-related material from this period for the Nelson Land District.		CH626, CH1013, CH1015, CH1016, CH1085	

*Denotes that an in-house computer index is available for parts of these accessions.

Land Ownership Records - Land Titles Office (Canterbury, Westland, Nelson, & Marlborough Land Districts)

Deeds System Records

Overview

In New Zealand, the Deeds Registration System documented changes of ownership and boundaries for pieces of land from the 1840s onwards. Land was alienated from the Crown by a Crown Grant. In Canterbury, the Canterbury Association had a special charter which provided that conveyances from the Association should have the effect of a Crown Grant. The key index in this system is the Deeds Index (DI), which can give an overview of what has happened to a parcel of land up until 1924. Under Deeds Registration, the first establishment of a land title was usually a Crown Grant or Warrant, which passed the land from the Crown into private hands. Later transactions and changes to the land could be registered into the Deeds System.

It was not compulsory to register a sale of land, but registration enabled ownership to be tracked and validated through a Government system. When a transaction occurred the documentation was taken to the Deeds Office. There it was numbered and copied into the relevant type of register, usually a Deeds Register (DR), Crown Grant Record Book (CG) or Will Book. The original document was returned to the owner. These transactions were then copied into a Deeds Index.

In 1870 the first Land Transfer Act was passed, which provided for the issue of Certificates of Title (still in use today), rather than Crown Grants and Deeds. For a time, land transactions could be registered in either the Land Transfer System or in the Deeds System. From 1924 it became compulsory to register land ownership, but it could only be registered in the Land Transfer System as the Deeds System was phased out. Some land remains in the Deeds System today, but the Deeds System records are mainly used for historical purposes. We hold the Deeds System Records of the Canterbury [CH1032], Westland [CH1033], Nelson [CH1034] and Marlborough [CH1035] Land Districts.

Searching Deeds

To search the Deeds Registration System records, one of the following is needed:

- **A Certificate of Title record that refers to a Deeds Index entry. Certificates of Title records are held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ).²**
- **Legal Description: The Rural or Town Section Number (Appellation) of the piece of land. (As distinct from the Current Address).**
- **The name of an historical Registered Owner (See: Nominal Indexes).**

While deeds registration methods were principally the same across the country, there were variances in the use of the system between Deeds Offices, and the boundaries of some of the land districts changed over time. ***See the charts overleaf for instructions on how to search each district's deeds records. Please note that the indexes have been digitised and are available on Archway.***

² The first Certificate of Title issued against a piece of land should cite a preceding deeds reference. This is noted in the top-left corner of a Certificate of Title. All subsequent Certificates of Title quote the preceding Certificate of Title reference. The first Certificate of title issued for a piece of land is therefore key to locating historical information in the deeds system. You can request an historical title search from Land Information New Zealand.

Land District Searching Charts

Canterbury Land District [CH1032 - Black tape on spine]

If you know the Rural Section or Town Section number

For a Rural Section refer to the 'C' Deeds Indexes (C books, 220-234)

For a Town Section refer to the relevant Deeds Index, eg A for Christchurch (244), D for Akaroa (243), etc

Follow the reference given to the relevant Deeds Record Book, eg. 135 D 198 - see Deeds Record book 135, page 198

If a subdivided section number is given (eg. 'c/s' subdivided Rural Section, or 'a/s' subdivided Christchurch Town Section), follow the reference to the relevant Deeds Index book, eg. 3 c/s 697 - see c/s book 3, page 697

If you know the current address or legal description of the land

Request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *Linz - Land Record Order Form*

On the first title issued there will be a prior reference to either an Application, Warrant, or document number

Application number - see the Application books (348-350, see Archivist to order), you may be able to follow the Section number given

Warrant number - see the Warrant books (342-347, see Archivist to order)

Document number - refer to LINZ for a copy of a registered gazette notice

If the property can be identified but the address is not known

Refer to LINZ *Landonline (Spatial)*, if you have a subscription, to find the legal description and possibly also the Certificate of Title references

If the title is not found on *Spatial*, or if you do not have a subscription to *Spatial*, request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *Linz - Land Record Order Form*

If you know the name of the land owner
The records could be under the Deeds or Land Transfer system (the Deeds system was phased out 1870-1924)

Deeds system

Select the Nominal Index (288-297) for the approximate date when the person may have acquired land and work forward from that date

If you find the name, there will be a conveyance or re-conveyance number beside it, follow this number to the relevant Primary Entry Book (276-287)

The first two Primary Entry Books refer to a Deeds Index under 'land affected' (eg. A 1072), the following Primary Entry Books refer to a Deeds Index as well as the relevant Deeds Record Book (eg. 31 D 140 - see Deeds Record book 31, page 140).

The Deeds Indexes will show all the deeds registered against a particular parcel, and the related Deeds Record Book references.

• **Wills books** - the Wills index (271-273) lists those who held land at the date of their death, follow the reference from the index to the Wills books (261-270)

Land Transfer system

Refer to LINZ to search the nominal index of all persons taking interests in Land Transfer Land 1870-1972, so that a Certificate of Title can be obtained from them

On the Certificate of Title, there may be a reference to the Land Transfer Index volumes 1-44 (298-341, see Archivist to order)

If the Land Transfer Index gives a Rural Section number in the range 1-14277, you can follow this in the Rural Section Index books (C books, 220-234)

Westland Land District [CH1033 - Green tape on spine]

If you know the Rural Section or Town Section number

For a Rural Section or other section refer to the relevant book.

eg. Deeds Index books 64-64A for Rural Sections, Deeds Index book 65 (GY) for Greymouth, or Deeds Index books 60-60B (H) for Hokitika, etc

If the relevant Deeds Index page is blank:

- Go to the Allotment Books 70-71A, you may find the land is/was still held by the Crown, and a lease number (see accessions CH78 and CH626)

- See the notes below

Follow the reference given to the relevant Deeds Record Book

eg. 3 D 711 - see Deeds Record Book 3, page 711

eg. 4 G 81 - see Crown Grant Book 4, page 81

If you are looking for a part section, you may have to follow through all the references to track the right part

If you know the current address or legal description of the land

Request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *Linz - Land Record Order Form*

On the first title issued there will be a prior reference to either an Application, Warrant, or document number

• Application number - see the Application books (68, 76 - see Archivist to order), you may be able to follow the Section number given

• Warrant number - see the Warrant books (67, 114-116 - see Archivist to order)

• Document number - refer to LINZ for a copy of a registered gazette notice

If the property can be identified but the address is not known

Refer to LINZ *Landonline (Spatial)*, if you have a subscription, to find the legal description and possibly also the Certificate of Title references

If the title is not found on *Spatial*, or if you do not have a subscription to *Spatial*, request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *Linz - Land Record Order Form*

If you know the name of the land owner
The records could be under the Deeds or Land Transfer system (the Deeds system was phased out 1870-1924)

Deeds system

The Westland Land Registry Office did not produce alphabetical nominal indexes for the Deeds system. However, for the period 1865-1868 the Canterbury Nominal Index N2 (book 289) and the Nelson Nominal Index book 328 can be used - see notes below and refer to the appropriate chart

Land Transfer system

Refer to the Hokitika Museum for the Nominal Index cards. The cards may give a Certificate of Title reference or a Land Transfer Index book reference

• If a Certificate of Title reference is given ("Ref") - refer to LINZ

• If a Land Transfer Index book reference is given ("Book Ref") - refer to the relevant book (56-56D). There may be a Section number to follow, or a Certificate of Title reference to refer to LINZ

Notes: • Deeds for Southern Westland land parcels were registered at the Canterbury Land Registry 1865-1868, see the Canterbury Deeds Indexes C1-C15 for Rural Sections rather than Westland 64-64A • The first 279 transactions recorded in the Westland Registry in 1868 were not entered on the appropriate Deeds Index page, see Primary Entry Book 57 to check these • The Northern boundary of Westland has changed, check Primary Entry Book 57B, and the Nelson Allotment Books 184-197 - refer to the Nelson chart

Nelson Land District [CH1034 - Blue tape on spine]

If you know the Rural Section or Town Section number

There are no early indexes to parcels, as such, searching when only the legal description is known can be very difficult

Note: if you know a parcel's Survey District, Block and Section numbers, you may be able to locate the Crown Grant (the first purchase of the land from the Crown). Use the Allotment Book Index (197) to locate a reference to the relevant Allotment Book volume and folio number (184-196). In the Allotment Book, under the 'Certificate of Title or Crown Grant' column, there may be a reference to the Crown Grant (eg. 4 G 12193, books 314-318) or a Deeds Record Book (eg. 1 D pt 1 407, see Archivist to order). If a Crown Grant or Deeds reference was found, also follow the instrument number (12193 or 407 in eg.s above) to the Primary Indexes (330-335) as there may be a Deeds Index (284-296) reference given there

Refer to LINZ as to whether a current title with the same legal description can be found

If so there may be an Application number or a Deeds Index reference

- Application number - see the Application books (241, 262 - see Archivist to order)
- Deeds Index reference (eg. 3 DI 265 or 3/265, book 3 page 265) - see the relevant Deeds Index book (284-296) and follow reference therein to relevant Deeds Record Book

If you know the current address or legal description of the land

Request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *LINZ - Land Record Order Form*

On the first title issued there will be a prior reference to either an Application, Warrant, or document number

- Application number - see the Application books (241, 262, 270(?) - see Archivist to order). [There may also be a Deeds Index reference (eg. 3 DI 265, book 3 page 265) - see the relevant Deeds Index book (284-296) and follow reference therein to relevant Deeds Record book]

- Warrant number - see the Warrant books (339-344 and 497-497D, see Archivist to order)

- Document number - refer to LINZ for a copy of a registered gazette notice

If the property can be identified but the address is not known

Refer to LINZ *Landonline (Spatial)*, if you have a subscription, to find the legal description and possibly also the Certificate of Title references

If the title is not found on *Spatial*, or if you do not have a subscription to *Spatial*, request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *LINZ - Land Record Order Form*

If you know the name of the land owner
The records could be under the Deeds or Land Transfer system (the Deeds system was phased out 1870-1924)

Deeds system

Select the Deeds Nominal Index book (327 or 328) for the approximate date when the person may have acquired land and work forward from that date (note that there is no Nominal Index under the Deeds system after 1868)

If you find the name, follow the reference to the relevant Deeds Record book

eg. 5D4865 - see Deeds book 5, registered number 4865; 4M4259 - see Deeds book 4M, registered number 4259; 2G4320 - see Crown Grant book 2, registered number 4320

Land Transfer system

Refer to the Nominal Index cards (440, 440A - see Archivist to order). Note that different persons of the same name are not distinguished from one another, and so can be on the same card. Also, the volume "1 Nominal Index Book Vol. 2, c.1915-c.1920" (329), refers to the Land Transfer Indexes 5-7.

There will be either a Land Transfer Index reference or a Certificate of Title reference

- A Certificate of Title reference will show the document type and number, the legal description and title reference - refer to LINZ
- Follow a Land Transfer Index reference (eg. 1.195, book 1 page 195) to books 319-326, see Archivist to order. In these books you may find a Certificate of Title reference (1C/163 or 5/58) in which case refer to LINZ. Grant (G) or mortgage (M) document references cannot be followed up

Marlborough Land District [CH1035 - Red tape on spine]

If you know the Rural Section or Town Section number

There are no early indexes to parcels, refer to the Section Index book (154). The opening pages list Towns and Districts, and page numbers to refer to for further information

Turn to the relevant page, there is an entry for each section. If more than one section is shown, see the 'Block' or 'Remarks' column to identify the correct section

There may be references to a Certificate of Title and a Deeds Index book

- If there is a deeds reference (indicated if it does not have LT noted after it, and the volume number is 1-5 or A, and does not have a C or G)

- See the relevant Deeds Index book (104-110)
- Follow the 'Where Recorded' column to the relevant Deeds Record Book (111-153)

If you know the current address or legal description of the land

Request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *LINZ - Land Record Order Form*

On the first title issued there will be a prior reference to either an Application, Warrant, or document number

- Application number - see the Application book (103, see Archivist to order)

- Warrant number - see the Warrant books (192-196, see Archivist to order)

- Document number - refer to LINZ for a copy of a registered gazette notice

If the property can be identified but the address is not known

Refer to LINZ *Landonline (Spatial)*, if you have a subscription, to find the legal description and possibly also the Certificate of Title references

If the title is not found on *Spatial*, or if you do not have a subscription to *Spatial*, request a Historical Title Search from LINZ through *Landonline* or *LINZ - Land Record Order Form*

If you know the name of the land owner
The records could be under the Deeds or Land Transfer system (the Deeds system was phased out 1870-1924)

Deeds system

There are three alphabetical Nominal Indexes to try: Nominal Index to Deeds (206), Nominal Index Deeds - Wills (205), and Index to Memorials and Powers of Attorney (156, see Archivist to order)

- Follow a deeds registration number (eg. 4357) to a Primary Entry Book (198-201), and follow reference therein to a Deeds Record Book (111-153)

- Follow a Deeds Index reference (eg. 1 937, book 1 page 937) to books 104-110, and follow reference therein to a Deeds Record book (111-153)

- Follow a Deeds Record Book reference (eg. 2 D 182, book 2 page 182) to books 111-153

Land Transfer system

Refer to the Nominal Index cards (207-208, see Archivist to order). Note that different persons of the same name are not distinguished from one another, and so can be on the same card

There will be either a Land Transfer Index book reference or a Certificate of Title reference

- Follow a Land Transfer Index book reference (eg. 1/195, book 1 page 195) to books 202-204 (see Archivist to order).

- A Certificate of Title reference will show the document type and number, the legal description, and title reference - refer to LINZ

Other Land Records

Researchers with a general interest in land history throughout the Canterbury and Westland areas may be interested in looking at the following records, in addition to those already outlined (see Archway for further information about these).

Crown Land Correspondence and Files

Archives that came to us from the Department of Lands and Survey document the administration of Crown Lands in the Canterbury and Westland areas. We hold an extensive amount of correspondence and numerous registered files from the early days of settlement to the present day, covering everything from surveying, mining and goldfields administration, reserve and domain land, public works, forestry, agricultural and conservation activities.

Material received from the Department of Conservation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the New Zealand Forest Service, Warden's Courts, New Zealand Railways, the Maori Land Court, and the Ministry of Works (and their predecessor and successor agencies) serve to round out the picture.

Maps & Plans

We hold an extensive collection of original historical Roll Plans and Maps transferred to us by Land Information New Zealand, which cover the Canterbury, Marlborough, Nelson, and Westland Land Districts.

This collection includes the Black, Green and Red Maps of Canterbury, some Crown Grant Maps and Plans, and Survey Office Plans (SO) of the Districts. Dating from the 1840s onwards, they show the reconnaissance surveys undertaken by district surveyors, detail the pastoral runs, and note early Crown Grants, subdivisions, and applications for Crown Land. Some of the maps and plans are very fragile and are unable to be issued for viewing in the Reading Room. In such cases, there are often aperture card copies available. [Archives Reference: CH1031].

The Department of Lands and Survey have also transferred a number of miscellaneous maps and plans to us over the years. [Archives References: CH47, CH95, CH96, CH505, CH506, CH528, CH555, CH675, & CH765].

Valuations

We hold Valuation Department rolls and slips for Canterbury, Westland and the Chatham Islands (c.1904-c.1985). These can be a useful source of information, giving the name of a land owner or occupier, the situation, description and area of the land, the nature and value of improvements on the land, and the land and capital values. There is no comprehensive index to these records, but having deposited plan numbers and purchaser details from historical certificates of title (held by LINZ) will be of assistance to those tracing particular parcels of land. [Archives References: CH41, CH76, CH321, CH507].

Other Sources for Land Information

Official publications, such as the Provincial Government Gazettes & Ordinances, the New Zealand Gazettes & Statutes, and the AJHRs, are likely to be of assistance to those researching land.

Other institutions such as Land Information New Zealand, city, regional and district councils, and national and local archives, libraries and museums will likely also have information of interest.

Christchurch Regional Office
Archives New Zealand
15 Harvard Avenue, Wigram,
Christchurch 8042.
✉ P.O. Box 642, Christchurch 8140,
New Zealand.
☎ (03) 377-0760
💻 christchurch.archives@dia.govt.nz

💻 www.archway.archives.govt.nz

💻 www.archives.govt.nz