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1914, Aug. 12, 1915, May 20 - Letters from W. Baguley, Smithton.

2 letters, signed W. Baguley, written from Smithton and Irishtown, addressed to 'Wilkie'. He describes attempts to establish a settlement in N.W. Tasmania: 'Blythe and I are at present squatted in the midst of a vast forest ...' They hoped to obtain a grant of 10,000 acres on condition 50 people were settled there within three years and has had a promise from 5 cabinet ministers to that effect. The organisation was to be known as 'The Tasmania Colonizing Association Ltd.' In the meantime they were clearing timber and living in an old surveyors' hut 24 miles from Smithton - 'Smithton has a population of about 500, six stores, seven churches, 1 pub. 1 school, a sawmill, post-office etc.' By the time Baguley wrote his second letter they had been joined by 3 men, wives and children from British Columbia, Canada, but the bill to authorise the land grant had been defeated (although they hoped to try again) and so they had taken various jobs, including road making.

Baguley also referred to the war - 'Bad job isn't it' - and sent 'kind regards to all in the office', probably his former colleagues since he also commented that now 'I ... shoulder an axe and walk into the forest, just as naturally as I used to walk up stairs to that refrigerator called an office in Birch St., Dunedin!'

The original letters are in the archives of the Otago Harbour Board, Chief Engineer's private file.

(11 pp. xerox)