

413. In the end of December, 1884, we have it in evidence that Mr. Kingsford stated that Mr. Stark offered him his house and ten acres of land for £4,000, or with five acres for £3,500 : had you heard of that offer?—I had not.

414. You did not know that it had been refused?—No.

415. You see that if the house and five acres was offered at £3,500, and with the addition of the other five acres it was £4,000, that would be at the rate of £100 an acre. Do you think Mr. Kingsford would be likely to state what was not true in regard to a matter of this sort?—I should not like to think it of any gentleman.

416. You think that if he states so that it is likely to be the case?—I should think so. I have heard nothing with regard to the offer.

417. You know nothing of these transactions any more than of Mr. Ross's offer?—No ; it is since my valuation that these reports have come to my ears.

418. If you had known of these offers at the time of your valuation, would you have considered yourself warranted in valuing at £15,600?—I should, most decidedly, knowing the values that properties all round had fetched.

419. Are you aware what the property of Mr. Stark's—the house and twenty-eight acres—was valued at in the rate-book of the district in 1885?—I think I have already mentioned that I discovered, after seeing Mr. Mason's communication to the Government, that it was standing in the rate-books at £3,500.

420. Would the Road Board of the district have any reason for putting a less value upon the property, seeing that they had rates to get out of it?—No. They wanted to increase the valuation in 1882, and objected to my valuation as being too low. They have accepted it this last year.

421. You admit that it is to the interests of the Road Board to get as high a valuation as possible?—Yes.

422. And that there was only a valuation in their rate-books of £3,500?—I question very much whether it had not escaped notice.

423. What time did you say it would take from Devonport Wharf to Mr. Stark's property?—About five to eight minutes.

424. You have said that it is a mile and a quarter, that would be at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. I understood you were speaking of the time it took to walk?—I did not mean that you could walk it in five minutes. There are 'buses running. It would take about fifteen minutes to walk.

425. Then, it would take about half an hour to get from Queen Street to Mr. Stark's, if you catch a steamer without delay?—Yes, presuming that you walk from the wharf to Mr. Stark's.

426. Do you think that, seeing the manner in which the property was proposed to be cut up by Mr. Stark, it would have realized the price put upon these allotments?—I think so. My calculation was that it would average £2 10s. per foot, which would amount to £20,750, or, with improvements added, £23,400.

427. *Dr. Newman.*] Do you say that you valued the part the Government bought, *plus* the house, at £23,400?—No ; I have stated that I considered that the property cut up would realize an average of £2 10s. per foot.

428. Then the house, *plus* the grounds, would be worth, according to your valuation, £23,400 if cut up?—Yes.

429. Regarding the valuation of the Borough of Devonport, do they make a yearly valuation?—No : triennial.

430. And the house and twenty-eight acres was in the rate-books of the road district at £3,500?—Yes.

431. What was the date of your interview with Mr. Stark?—I cannot fix the precise date : it was the end of October or beginning of November.

432. You had no suspicion at that time that the Government wanted the place as a battery-site?—I had not.

433. Was it not current in the daily papers?—I had not the slightest knowledge of its being mentioned in the daily papers.

434. Is it your custom to interview owners when valuing?—Yes ; I consider that part of my duty, in order to arrive at an agreement if possible.

435. You have no suspicion that Stark wanted a high valuation?—No ; I was rather prepared to find him object to my valuation as being too high.

436. When was it that Mr. Stark proposed to cut up the property according to the plan he showed you?—It was during my interview with him. He said that he had refused the offer, and that his intention was to have it surveyed and cut up. Then, about a fortnight after, he brought me a small plan, and told me I could see the large one at Mr. Aitken's office.

437. How did you arrive at the value of the houses as £3,200?—Before entering on my valuation of the Devonport district I took a general survey, and, as I would not trust to my own valuation of buildings, I employed and paid for the services of an experienced builder—Mr. James Mays, of Devonport, who came with me and gave me his opinion.

438. How do you make up the other £1,200?—There is a lodge at the entrance—£200 for it ; £900 for the outhouses, fencing, and drainage I consider a very low estimate ; then, for other improvements—planting and general laying-out of the grounds, &c.—I put down £300.

439. The land you spoke of as selling at £6, £8, or £10 a foot is all nearer to Auckland—none of it further away?—It is all a little nearer.

440. What is the distance by coach and sea from Auckland to Stark's property?—It is about two and a half or three miles.

441. When you had this interview with Mr. Cochrane, did he hint that he had any doubts of the good faith of this offer?—He did not.