

could get the light, wind, &c.; but for a company range, close to town, it is absolutely necessary for the men to get through their work for capitulation. In fact, none in Wellington would capitulate if they did not have that range. For my own part, we have our own private range at Petone; so of course the Polhill Gully range is of no use to us. We have also a range at Kaiwarra, in fact. The Polhill Gully range is of great use to the Wellington Volunteers.

307. *Mr. Baker.*] Is there another range at Kaiwarra?—Yes; we have one of our own there.

308. May I ask what you pay for it?—Five pounds a year. The property belongs to Mrs. Hawkins, and she allows us to use the small gully to shoot on.

W. J. WILLIAMS examined.

309. *The Chairman.*] You are in the habit of shooting in the Polhill Gully rifle-range?—I have been.

310. You are well acquainted with the range?—Yes.

311. Do you look upon it as a good range?—I might state that there are two ways in which I could answer that question, because I am a first-class shot, and I would not call it a good range for shooting purposes. My reason for so saying is this: As you know, the gully is confined by two high hills, and the great essential in rifle-shooting is to have a thorough knowledge of windage, which you cannot get in the Polhill Gully rifle-range, as the hills are so high. The north-west blows up the range, and the south-east wind comes over the hills at the top, and then comes down the range towards you; and you have only simply got these two winds. Volunteers who go to the New Zealand Rifle Association meeting to fire for the championship (which I had the pleasure of winning on one occasion) try to get a knowledge of windage, and you can get no knowledge of that by shooting up this gully; therefore, all the first-class shots go to the open range, where the light is also better. Even on a fine day in the Polhill Gully range we find a very hazy light for the sights; it is on account of the ground lying so very low between the hills. Therefore it is not what I would call a good range by any means. Men going in for shooting as New Zealand Rifle Association competitors use the Martini-Henry rifle, and of course it is essential we should have a knowledge of windage. Moreover, the Polhill Gully range is only 600 yards in length, and we shoot 700 yards at the New Zealand Rifle Association meetings. On this range, therefore, we could get no practise at 700 yards before the meeting. I think the range should be really 1,000 yards in length. Long-range shooting should be encouraged instead of discouraged.

312. I suppose, what is the best education for crack shots is the best education for all: they all want to learn the same thing?—Undoubtedly. My company is divided into four classes. In the D class—that is, the fourth class—they commence their shooting, and from that they get into the C class by winning a trophy. Almost immediately afterwards they get into the B class, and they go to the open range with the Martini-Henry rifle. They go to the open range and begin to learn a new thing altogether. Consequently, it takes them twelve months to learn what they really ought to have been at from the D class.

313. Do you only use the short-range weapons—viz., the Snider rifles—in the gully?—No; as a matter of fact, there are regulations under which we have to shoot for the class-firing, also for the marksman's badge, for which we have to shoot five rounds at the 700 yards and five rounds at the 800 yards; and part second we are supposed to fire as skirmishers, commencing at the 300 yards, and firing at 50 yards intervals to the 100 yards range; but this cannot be done owing to the gully and the firing-mounds only being made at 100 yards intervals. The men are supposed to do that at the Polhill Gully range to get the marksman's badge as laid down by the regulations. We have, therefore, to evade the regulations, and go in for a different thing altogether.

314. What is the length of your experience as a rifle-shot?—I think it is about eight or nine years.

315. What prizes have you gained?—I have a house full of trophies of my own. I won the championship at Dunedin in 1890, and the naval's company's belt for seven seasons. The year before last I was seventh in Napier, but last year at Trentham I was not so successful.

316. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Your evidence goes to show that the Volunteers would be better off by having a range at Evans Bay than at Polhill Gully?—Yes. Its only redeeming feature is that it is close to town.

317. You say this, practically: that, although the range, from its proximity to town, may be valuable for recruits and young Volunteers, in one sense it is not really valuable because they have got to unlearn all they learned at the Polhill Gully range when they get along a little further?—Just so.

318. So that they had better start at once with what they have got to learn later on?—It would be easier for them to gain experience at first, as now they have to undo what they have already learned, and start afresh.

319. What I would like to ascertain from you is this: Suppose the question of the purchase of a range were submitted to the Volunteers as a whole, would they have preferred purchasing a range where they could have had windage and other necessary things for practise, or would they purchase the Polhill Gully range?—Well, speaking for myself, I should say they would have preferred to have gone elsewhere.

320. *Mr. Baker.*] Speaking in that way, you speak as an expert shot; but would the majority of Volunteers who had not gone in for expert shooting—for prize-firing—rather have gone elsewhere? Do you not think the distance from town would make a great difference to them?—When a man has shooting at heart he would go any distance; but a man will not go unless he is fond of it. Besides, from what I can hear, we are likely to have the tramway to Evans Bay before long. It will take us there in half an hour then.

*Mr. Baker:* The point I was trying to get at was: It appeared to me that the great bulk of the men did not go in for prize-firing; therefore the distance to them would be a consideration.