

THURSDAY, 12TH MAY, 1892.

Colonel PEARCE examined.

363. *The Chairman.*] We have asked you to attend here to give us some information as to the suitability of the Polhill Gully for the purpose for which it has been used. Is it a suitable range?—It is by no means a perfect range; but in days gone by it has been exceedingly useful to the Volunteers, and I have no doubt it continues to be exceedingly useful. As a short-distance range it is good enough for all practical purposes.

364. Is it good enough for all the purposes you require for Volunteers?—It would not do alone. With the improved weapons now in use it is necessary to have a range of greater length than the Polhill Gully range.

365. *Mr. Baker.*] You were in command of the district?—Yes, for many years.

366. *The Chairman.*] Would you say, under the circumstances, it would be desirable to acquire this range at a high cost, or to seek elsewhere for a range that might do for all purposes?—I am not aware of any range so convenient to town that would be better than the Polhill Gully range. You would have to go as far as Evans Bay for a more suitable range.

367. You look upon its close proximity to the town as a matter of great importance?—It is of great convenience to Volunteers going through their class-firing, as they have to go there in the early morning and do it before their work begins.

368. Then, I understand, your opinion, practically, is that the great recommendation of the range is its proximity to town?—That is so; otherwise it is by no means an ideal range.

369. *Mr. Baker.*] Do you consider it a good range for young Volunteers to practise at?—I do. Of course it would be better in the open.

370. Are you speaking from your own knowledge, or are you expressing the opinion of the men who have served under you?—For many years I used to attend at the range myself in charge of squads, or shooting myself. Of late years my adjutant used to do that work. I have frequently been in charge of squads in Polhill Gully.

371. Then, you speak from personal knowledge of the range?—Of that and other ranges—yes.

Colonel NEWALL examined.

372. *The Chairman.*] You are commanding the Wellington District?—Yes.

373. Will you tell us what you think of the suitability of the Polhill Gully rifle-range?—Its proximity to the city, and therefore to the homes of the Volunteers, is, in my opinion, its chief recommendation. It is also good from another point of view—that the shooting is almost directly south, a characteristic which is always sought after, but not very frequently obtained.

374. Is the manner in which it is shut in from all winds advantageous or disadvantageous?—Very advantageous to a young beginner.

375. But it renders it desirable that some other range should be used afterwards?—I would not like to say that in so many words, but I would say that the Polhill Gully range, embracing as it does a distance of from 100 to 600 yards without any obstacle, is sufficiently good for all practical purposes; at any rate, for practice with the rifle at present issued to Volunteers—namely, the Snider rifle.

376. Is that arm likely to be continued to be used?—I should not say so.

377. Is it desirable that it should be used?—No. It is most desirable that it should not be. I would like to add to that, that if the Martini-Henry rifle was in use we should begin on the same range precisely.

378. And what if a still more modern and further-carrying weapon were brought in?—I would take leave to say that it would be difficult to find a rifle-range in any country in the world suitable for a much longer carrying-capacity. In the second place, say at 3,000 yards, an individual enemy could not be observed, and therefore it would be of no use shooting at him. It would be what we call unaimed rifle-firing—rambling shooting.

379. Do you think the Magazine rifle is likely to be used for practise?—I think that any service which is armed with the Magazine rifle will necessarily do all its practise with the arm issued to it—namely, the Magazine.

380. *Mr. Baker.*] And for the purpose you have mentioned, you think the Polhill Gully range is an efficient one?—I do—to that extent.

381. Can you express any opinion as to whether the rifle-range being situated at Polhill Gully is any disadvantage to the neighbourhood—I mean in the way of causing a nuisance?—From my knowledge of the locality I should not consider there was much danger to anybody, except to those who might see fit to trespass where they had no business to be—namely, on the ground itself.

382. I ask the question because we have it in a petition that there is danger?—I am aware of that from the public prints—that a petition has been laid before this Commission by the people who live in the neighbourhood. I do not know whether I am at liberty to express a hope that the residents of Polhill Gully may never be troubled with anything worse than the crack of a rifle by fellow-citizens who devote much time and expense to make themselves efficient as a safeguard to the colony at some future day perhaps. The Volunteers are a well-behaved lot of men. They do not commit a nuisance in any other way than the noise they make in firing. The same noise would be created if they were rabbiting or snipe-shooting, and that would often be nearer the dwellings than the rifle-range.

383. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Considering the question of danger, have you taken into account the fact of the new road in the vicinity?—No, there is no road.

384. Is there not a new road to be made there?—I believe so. If that road was made I should not think it would be safe for firing, especially that portion at the rear of the target from the short range.