

302. *Mr. Cooper* (to witness): The lands we have been referring to are immediately near to Reefton?—There is a good metalled road round the boundary right to Reefton.

303. Besides the railway running to Reefton Junction?—Yes; and there are good roads through the property.

304. Do you think those would have been of value to the company for the purposes of selection?—Yes; and I know they would have been taken up if they could have been purchased. All the land in this Grey Valley is the best fruit-growing land that ever I saw in my life. You can see the apple-trees breaking down with apples.

Now I propose to go through the Western Charleston group. [Exhibit 95 put in.]

305. I will take Blocks 5 and 6 (Plan No. 9). Starting at 6: there are 5,600 acres in Block 6. According to the hatched portion, 4,900 acres of 6 have been improperly reserved?—Yes.

306. Can you give us your reasons for that?—The gold lies in this block to the west of the hatched portion, and the eastern portion, or hatched portion, is only limestone country, in which there are no gold-workings.

307. Is there any gold there?—No; I do not think so.

308. The only portion you suggest should be reserved is that portion on the sea-coast?—Yes.

309. There were ten thousand men in Brighton at one time, and if there had been gold there it would have been discovered and worked?—In the limestone country, I believe, there is no gold. The other portion has been sea-beach.

310. I see you have marked "Old workings" on the portion north-west of Brighton?—Yes; gold-beach leads.

311. Is that, in your opinion, all that was necessary to reserve of that 5,600 acres?—Yes.

312. I understood you to say that at one time there were ten thousand men working at Brighton?—Yes.

313. Have you any idea how many are working there now?—There might be twenty.

314. And where are they working?—Along the beach. Beachcombers I call them in most cases.

315. So that you might fairly say Brighton is abandoned as a goldfield?—There were 10,000 men there at one time and only twenty now; it gives you an idea.

316. Is there timber on that block?—Some of it is timbered, some of it open.

317. Now, in reference to Block 5—9,600 acres?—Everything that I have said about Block 6 applies to Block 5. The limestone country continues up through the hatched portion and the western portion next the sea; there have been workings in it, and there are men working there at present.

318. *Hon. E. BLAKE.*] Was it old beach?—Yes; old beach and cement leads.

319. *Mr. Cooper.*] When you say there are twenty men working at the present time, does that apply to Blocks 5 and 6?—No; there are more on Block 5.

320. I should say, by the appearance of the plan, that was the original site of the old goldfield, from Charleston down to Brighton?—Yes. There were thousands of men working at Charleston at one time. There might be now perhaps a hundred in and about Charleston. I would not be quite certain, perhaps about seventy.

321. Then, you think that portion that is marked off on this plan would be sufficient for present and future requirements?—Yes.

322. Have you any doubt at all about it?—None at all.

323. Do you know of any attempts that have been made recently to prove whether there is a likelihood of future gold-mining about here?—Prospecting associations have been started to find if there was gold at deeper levels there.

324. With what result?—The results I heard were nil.

325. Now, there are Blocks 2, 3, and 4 [Exhibit No. 96 produced]. There is Block 4—8,500 acres—still going upwards. According to the plan, there are 7,200 acres of that at least improperly reserved?—Yes.

326. Will you tell us why?—Want of payable gold.

327. The portion there that is not hatched, up the River Nile and running up the coast, are there gold-workings there?—There are gold-workings along the beach. There are beachcombers at the Shetland Beach. At Brown's Terrace there is gold in the cement.

328. And a very considerable portion of that outside the hatched portion, I see, is freehold land?—Yes; very good land too—splendid land.

329. What have you to say about the Shamrock lead?—That is required for gold-mining. It is evidently an old beach formation at the foot of the hills, and the gold is in the black sand through that lead. I consider it was quite right to reserve it.

330. What is the general character of that land?—A good deal of it is open swampy land. There are some portions of it along the sea that is timbered land, outside the freehold sections. The line of bush country runs the whole way north through sections 2, 3, and 4, in which there are no gold-workings of any kind.

331. Would there have been any difficulty, *Mr. Fenton*, in reserving the portion that you have suggested should be reserved?—It would contain all the gold-workings and gold leads.

332. If the least care had been taken in making these reserves, would there have been any difficulty in ascertaining the information you have given the Court about it?—No; there would have been no difficulty.

333. I see the Shamrock lead extends beyond Block 4, and there has been no reservation made of the balance of the Shamrock lead. Do you notice that?—Yes.

334. Does that indicate to you whether any care was taken in making these reserves?—There is no doubt in my mind that the reservations were made in the office, not on the ground.