

112. *The Chairman.*] You were in charge during Macguire's contract?—Yes; up to June, 1893.

113. The work was practically finished then?—The formation had been done down to Norris's Gully crossing—that is, the road-crossing beyond the tunnel—and the lining of the tunnel was in progress.

114. Can you give us any idea of the additions to that contract?—No.

115. Are you aware whether there would be any additions?—There would be some, but I do not know whether a large amount. I think there would be some additions—the concrete abutments at the bridge, and I think some iron-pipe culverts were lengthened, but I am not sure on that point.

116. Without having the plan you could not tell?—No.

117. Can you give us any idea of the value of the office and platelayer's house you mentioned?—About £150, I think.

118. Without a plan you cannot tell the Commission where the company stopped and where the line has been carried on since by the Crown?—I can show it on our tracing.

119. *Mr. Fraser.*] I understand that when you made the deviation you deviated really from the line laid down by the company?—Yes.

120. Do you know whether the company was notified of the intention to make the deviation?—I do not know. It was done before I went back to the line.

121. *Mr. Graham.*] I think you said that, in your opinion, the deviation was desirable and more economical in construction?—Yes, I should say it would be, but I had not made an estimate of the line and abandonment; but, in my opinion, it was certainly better for the working.

HORATIO JOHN HOOPER BLOW examined on oath.

122. *The Chairman.*] You are Under-Secretary for Public Works?—Yes.

123. Are you acquainted with the section of the Midland Railway between Belgrove and Norris's Gully?—Yes.

124. Do you know the portion of it that was constructed by Mr. Maguire?—Yes.

125. You admit that the £46,676 8s. 8d. that was paid by the company to Maguire was a reasonable and economical amount to pay for the work that he carried on?—I am afraid I have not sufficient detail knowledge to make that admission.

126. Here is the contract?—But how am I to tell that Mr. Maguire was not the highest instead of the lowest tenderer.

127. That has been proved?—I do not know that.

128. So you cannot say whether this amount is a reasonable and economical amount to pay for the work or not?—No, I am not in a position to say.

129. Do you know if there were any extras on that contract?—No, only from the statement that the company submitted to the Committee last year.

130. There has been an amount spent by the Government on the completion of that line?—Yes.

131. Can you give us any details as to how that amount was spent?—I have submitted a return in considerable detail already.

132. Now, in regard to this return [Exhibit 4], take the first item, "Resetting out constructed line to enable platelaying, &c., to proceed, £268 19s.": can you tell us what that money was spent on? Can you give us any detail?—That was the amount that was spent in resurveying the line because we could not get possession of the plans.

133. Does that include the making of the plans?—Yes.

134. Then, the second item, "Preliminary works to put section in order, £479 10s. 6d."?—Those, I take it, are the works which Mr. Roberts referred to this morning, such as repairing the formation, clearing slips from cuttings, repairing fences, &c.

135. Then, as to ballasting and platelaying, had the Government to find rails and fastenings on this line?—Yes, and they are included lower down in the account.

136. And it also includes the sleepers?—Yes.

137. What length of line does that include?—That piece that was commenced by the company. I think, about six miles and some odd chains.

138. Does it include the station-yard at Belgrove?—I suppose it does include that.

139. You think it includes the station-yard?—If anything was done to the station-yard it will probably be included under the head "Preliminary works to put the section in order."

140. Was the formation of the station-yard complete when you took possession of the line?—That is a detailed question which I submit you should have put to Mr. Roberts.

141. He did not take the line over?—But he was here only two months after the construction-works began.

142. As a matter of fact, you cannot tell us whether the Belgrove station-yard is included in that item or not?—No, I cannot.

143. If you cannot tell us about the station-yard, can you tell us any one who can?—I think Mr. Roberts is certainly the best man to give that information. If the work was done by the Government, the expense must be included under one or other of these heads.

144. Then, take the next item, "Service-rails for ballast-pit, £50 3s. 4d.": did you charge to this section the full value of the rails, or is this the amount for the use of them?—That will probably be the cost of them.

145. The full value?—Yes; I suppose they were worth what they cost.

146. What became of them after you finished the ballasting?—They are there now, I think.

147. Are you still using this ballast-pit?—Yes; I believe it was left there for future use.