

1086. Residing at?—Cobden.
1087. *Mr. Bell.*] You were in the Railway Department in May, 1895?—Yes.
1088. What were you then?—I was leading carpenter on the Brunner Railway.
1089. When were you appointed foreman of works over the whole line?—Some time in 1896.
1090. You were appointed foreman of works over the whole line, including the Midland Railway?—Yes.
1091. Were you instructed by Mr. McIntosh to go over the buildings and the bridges?—Yes.
1092. Mr. McIntosh was District Engineer?—Yes.
1093. And did you write certain reports to him as to the timber that would be required?—Yes.
1094. Will you see if this is your report?—Yes. [Exhibit No. 13.]
1095. Are these reports of yours a correct statement of the repairs required then to the bridges and cattle-stops?—Yes.
1096. And the quantity of timber also required?—Yes.
1097. Did the overhead bridge at Stillwater require entire rebuilding?—Yes.
1098. You say this is a correct report?—Yes.
1099. Now, the timber that was required for renewal was ironbark?—Yes.
1100. Will you give us the price of ironbark during the years 1896, 1897, and 1898?—In 1895 it was 15s. 6d.
1101. *The Chairman.*] Where was that?—I understand, delivered in Greymouth.
1102. How do you know that was the price?—I got it from the officer.
1103. You do not know it of your own knowledge?—No.
1104. *Mr. Bell.*] It is information derived from the department?—Yes. In 1897 it was 17s. ; in 1898, 19s. 6d. ; and in 1900, £1 4s. 6d.
1105. During the time that you were foreman of works were any repairs done that were not necessary?—No, all that was done was absolutely necessary.
1106. *Dr. Findlay.*] And this represents a statement of all the timber required for repairs to bridges and cattle-stops?—Yes ; in May, 1896.
1107. It was really timber which could not stand any longer on the road, and that was the year after the seizure?—Yes.
1108. *The Chairman.*] You told us the price of ironbark in 1895, 1897, 1898, and 1900 : can you tell us what the price of birch was in the same years?—It all depends on the length and size you require.
1109. Well, say, similar lengths, supposing you had replaced this timber with birch?—Up to 20 ft. lengths, from 14s. to 15s. per hundred ; longer than 20 ft. lengths, you have to pay 19s. or £1 per hundred.
1110. Would that be the price of birch when you told us ironbark was costing £1?—No.
1111. What was the cost of birch at per 100 ft., say, in July, 1900?—You could get it for 14s. up to 20 ft. lengths.
1112. What would it cost above 20 ft.?—I have not got any since.
1113. Are we to understand from you that to make these repairs with birch timber would cost practically as much as to make them with ironbark?—Certainly.
1114. How did you gain your knowledge as to the price of ironbark timber in the years you gave us : did you pay that amount yourself?—No ; I always got a certain amount of information from the office as to the price of it.
1115. Are you giving the Commission the price in the Government contracts for ironbark for these years?—Yes, so far as I know.
1116. Are you Inspector of Permanent-way?—No.
1117. *Mr. Graham.*] Has the timber mentioned in this return been supplied to you and used since?—Yes, and a lot more besides.
1118. *The Chairman.*] Have you got to do the repairs to buildings along the line?—Yes.
1119. Can you tell us the condition of the buildings generally between Stillwater and Reefton and Stillwater and Jackson's in 1895, and also on the 23rd July, 1900? If they wanted any repairs you might give us your opinion as to what the repairs cost?—Most of the buildings wanted a certain amount of repairs, and wanted painting very badly. Inside some of the buildings you could put your hands through the lining. These had to be scrimmed and papered.
1120. If you are in charge of the buildings you will have a fair idea as to the original cost of putting up these buildings : what percentage of the original cost do you consider it would be necessary to spend for the painting and repairs you mentioned?—It would take about 25 per cent.
1121. *Dr. Findlay.*] Of the whole cost of the buildings?—Some of them ; I do not say all of them.
1122. *The Chairman.*] I want you to give us what you consider a fair reasonable average as to what the cost of repairs and painting would be?—It would cost about 25 per cent. Some of them were worse than others.
1123. Do you know how long these buildings have been up?—I do not.
1124. Consequently you cannot tell us how long they are likely to last?—No.
1125. *Mr. Graham.*] You said you used this timber and a lot more besides?—Yes.
1126. Have you got a record of all the timber put in in addition?—I dare say I could get it.
1127. This return only includes part of the timber you have used for renewals?—That is so.
1128. It was used in the same way as this for ordinary maintenance?—Yes.
1129. *The Chairman.*] If you pulled down, say, a pile bridge, and replaced the abutments or foundations with concrete, would you consider that ordinary maintenance, or do you consider it an addition to the value of the line?—If you pull down a bridge, it all depends whether there is an order issued for it. All repairs to bridges are put down as ordinary maintenance.