

191. Do you not think it would pay the estate to remove the College now and let that frontage? —No, I do not.

192. *The Chairman.*] Can you now produce any of the documents referred to in your evidence in the earlier part of the day?—Yes; I will read the following covering letter with reference to the power of attorney: “Wellington, 8th July, 1905.—E. N. Liffiton, Esq.—DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 5th instant came duly to hand, and I have to thank you for the information contained therein. Enclosed I am returning you two letters of agency of the 10th August, 1885, and your power of attorney of the 4th September, 1885. Kindly acknowledge receipt. I have retained copies in this office.—Yours, &c., AUBREY GUALTER, Secretary to the Wanganui College Board of Trustees.” I have no reply to that letter, and I cannot find the power of attorney. I have telegraphed for a copy of the power of attorney, and will furnish it to the Commission. I also submit the following copy of the certificate of incorporation of the Board of Trustees: “I hereby certify that the Wanganui College Board of Trustees was duly incorporated under the provisions of ‘The Religious, Charitable, and Educational Trust Act, 1884,’ on the 14th day of July, 1898.—Dated at Wellington, this 14th day of July, 1898.—W. A. HAWKINS, Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court at Wellington.” I should like to give some further evidence of my own volition. I came to Wanganui at the end of 1856, and I have been engaged in various occupations—farm labourer, and so forth. Part of the time I served in the west coast campaign, and was for part of the time attached to the commissariat corps. During that time I was in charge of some bullock-teams. The bullock-teams were camped in close proximity to the College Estate. The bullocks got out, and I spent three or four days going through the College land, which was then one vast dead swamp, excepting such portions of the land as are sandhills. Therefore, I speak with some knowledge of this land. I was a young active man then, and it took me three or four days to get the bullocks out. I date my knowledge of the College Estate from that time. I tendered for and obtained a paddock opposite my house, and I have had very many opportunities of observing the ground. The swamp portion is continually subsiding. The ground is consolidating by the traffic of stock over it. Every year it still further consolidates. In 1863 the only occupied portions were the sandy portion of the estate—the swamp was a dead swamp. A drain was put through by the trustees. The swamp land at that time was not lettable. A little later on the swamp began to dry, and it was let in such portions as were possibly suitable for grazing at the best price the trustees could obtain. Up to within the last three or four years you could not ride across most of those paddocks in winter time. Of late, the ground, as you will see, has subsided, but those stumps did not show twenty-five years ago. But much of that land is now utterly unfit for building-sites. The resources of the trustees were limited. They have been spending the whole of their revenue on the school. Necessarily they had to let the land at such rents as they could obtain, otherwise they would have got no return from it. It has been said that the trustees could have got a better return than they have got. But there was no demand for land up to 1871, and all the Crown lands in the neighbourhood were not bought. In Wanganui there has always been a dislike to taking leases of land whilst freehold land could be obtained.

193. *The Chairman.*] Does that dislike still continue?—Yes, to a considerable extent.

194. How do you account for Smiley’s paddock having been taken up?—Smiley’s paddock has been mostly taken up by artisans who are working at the Railway Workshops, or for merchants on Taupo Quay. The borough land to the north-west of London Street has only three or four houses on it. The area of that land is, roughly speaking, about 50 or 60 acres.

195. Has it been put on the market?—No, because there is no demand for it. A great deal of it is not fit for building upon. I simply wish to show that there was no excessive demand for such land during the time I have had anything to do with it. Smiley’s paddock—of about 10 acres—was put in the market within a period of about two years. Some of the sections in the Cemetery Road, between the Guyton Street Extension and the borough boundary, have not been taken up even to this day. I state this in further proof that the trustees have not in any way hindered the letting of the land. As to the sections in the Avenue, which are considered valuable sections, their area is a little over a quarter of an acre. Their upset price has been £41 a year. Some of that land was advertised for lease for terms of forty-two years, and only one application was received for two sections. All the borough leases contain compulsory building conditions. All this shows that there was no great demand for the land. The trustees have made efforts to put the land in the market and dispose of it on lease for building purposes. In 1903 the land-tax valuer came to me and said he was instructed to make a valuation of the property. That valuation was sent in in due course to the trustees. The total valuation was £32,649. I produce a return showing details of that valuation [Exhibit No. 55]. We have no better official record of valuation of the property than that. That shows that the valuation of the property at £500 an acre—and similar values—is not correct.

196. Has there been any valuation made since then?—Not that I am aware of. As to the drains, they have been opened up every year. A considerable portion of the Mosstown water comes down on the road drain, and some of it saturates through the whole of the estate.

197. Do you think that the present system of drainage is sufficient?—That is a difficult question to answer.

198. Do you not think that if a Drainage Board were created some scheme might be carried out which would be of great benefit to Mosstown and the whole of that district?—Yes; I proposed that, but it was not agreed to. As a matter of fact, you cannot drain the College Estate until Mosstown is drained, because all the water from Mosstown comes into the College ground. With reference to the westerly portion of the estate, and also the borough land adjoining and up to and above the Town Belt, some three or four years ago that portion of land was declared an infected area for cattle. There was an outbreak of typhoid, and the Health Officer traced the outbreak to some water in the drains at Mosstown in close proximity to this land. The local