

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

EXTENSION OF ASHBURTON BRANCH RAILWAY,

(REPORT OF COMMISSION APPOINTED 2ND JANUARY, 1884, TO INQUIRE INTO BEST ROUTE FOR.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

To His Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir W. F. DRUMMOND JERVOIS, G.C.M.G.,
C.B., Governor of New Zealand, &c., &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Acting under the instructions which I had the honour to receive by the Commission dated 2nd January, 1884, I went to Ashburton on the 19th January and put myself in communication with the Chairman of the Ashburton County Council and with the Mayor of Ashburton. I agreed with them that I should proceed to Mount Somers to examine the district and take evidence from the settlers. I went there on the same day, and on Monday, the 21st, I rode over the country towards the Upper Hinds and Rangitata, returning by the back of the Gawlor Downs to the South Ashburton Gorge. On Tuesday, the 22nd, I took evidence from the settlers of the Mount Somers District, and then drove over part of the country. On the 23rd I rode over all the district between the South and North Ashburton and up to the Alford Forest, and I returned to Ashburton on Thursday, the 24th, by way of the Forks of the Ashburton. On Friday and Saturday I took evidence from residents of Ashburton, and returned to Christchurch by the evening train.

From the evidence taken, and my observation of the district to be affected by the proposed extension of the South Ashburton Railway, I have the honour to submit the following report to your Excellency :—

The line of railway the extension of which forms the subject of this inquiry proceeds from the Township of Tinwald, on the south bank of the Ashburton River: leaving the main line it follows the bank of the river to the station called Anama, nineteen and a half miles from Tinwald, and it has recently been extended to the station of Cavendish, twenty-two and a half miles from Tinwald. The terminus is on the south bank of the river, one and a half miles from the Township of Mount Somers: between the terminus and the township there is a good road passing over the river by a substantial bridge. This township is placed at the southern border of the Mount Somers agricultural district, and for some years past there has been a difference of opinion among the settlers in the neighbourhood as to whether the line should be extended across the river and into the settled part of the Mount Somers District, or carried on up the south bank towards the Gorge of the Ashburton River.

The settlers in the Mount Somers District have the impression that they have a prior claim to the extension being carried into the centre of their district because, as they assert, the original agitation, which promoted the undertaking of the existing line so far as it goes, was by and for them and their district, and that the first proposed route, selected in compliance with their requisition, was through what is called the "Forks of the Ashburton," and more or less into the centre of their district; that, against their inclination, when the line came to be constructed it was diverted to its present site on the south bank of the river; and they ask, if any money remains of that voted for this line, that it be expended in bringing the line back into their district. They urge that the quality of the land, and the extent to which it is settled and cultivated, are such as to offer better prospects of remunerative traffic than any other proposed extension.

The Ashburton Railway Extension Committee, in the interest of Ashburton Town, support the Mount Somers District in urging the extension of the line in the direction of Bowyer's Creek, on the ground that a considerable traffic in produce, passengers, timber, and mineral which at present exists between Ashburton and the district in question will be benefited and increased by the extension which they advocate.

Both of these parties wish to strengthen their arguments by representing that the extension which they wish for would form part of the central Canterbury railway which they say is projected by the public works policy.

From the evidence of the Hon. Mr. Peter it appears that the Rakaia-Ashburton Forks Railway Company originally projected their line as far as Gough's Crossing, but on construction it was terminated at Methven. I do not agree with the opinion of Mr. Peter that the Methven line should be extended in preference to the extension of the Tinwald branch to Bowyer's Creek: on goods destined for Christchurch there would be a saving of five miles or more from the centre of Mount Somers District by way of Methven and Rakaia, but at the same time the large and increasing traffic between Mount Somers District and the Town of Ashburton would be placed at a great disadvantage if it was to be carried round by Methven to Ashburton.

I did not succeed in ascertaining clearly the objects sought by those who advocated the extension of the line up the south side of the river towards the Ashburton Gorge, especially as only three persons out of twenty-five who signed a petition in 1882 praying for this extension could derive any benefit from it, and one of these three, the Hon. Mr. Peter, expressly stated to the Commission that he did not advocate any further extension of the line in any direction. This extension is out of the way, and practically inaccessible to the lands owned by the other parties to this petition, the outlet for which is towards the Station of Westerfield.

The districts which are affected by this railway are, first, the Mount Somers District, and second, the Upper Hinds and Rangitata. The first comprises about 43,000 acres of good land, also a tract of forest, and several deposits of coal and limestone. It has a population of 500 people, there are two schools, with 110 children attending them, and there appears to be a prospect of the number of settlers continually increasing. The Upper Hinds and Rangitata District has also a very considerable area of good land, said to be about 65,000 acres; but a few owners hold large blocks of it, and there are very few settlers, and not much cultivation. I do not think that an extension of the line carried from the present terminus towards the Upper Hinds is the proper direction to serve this district effectually. Therefore the consideration of the subject is limited to the two alternatives of either extending it up the south branch towards the gorge of the Ashburton, or taking it over the river into the Mount Somers District.

I agree with the evidence and statements of Messrs. Peter, Walker, Ivess, and others, that no good purpose would be served by extending the line towards the Gorge, the chief use of which would be to facilitate the carriage of coal from the deposits near Stone Creek, and limestone from quarries near the Gorge: any extension in this direction leads into rough country which cannot be cultivated and is almost inaccessible to roads from either side. There would

be more traffic and general benefit if the terminus could be brought nearer to the settled agricultural country, and by the extension of the line to the crossing of Bowyer's Creek the agricultural centre of Mount Somers is best served, and at the same time the line would be conveniently placed for the carriage of coal, limestone, and timber either to the proposed terminus or to the station at Cavendish, which is the terminus at present.

It appears from evidence given to the Commission that the present line was originally laid out through the forks of the Ashburton, which is pretty thickly settled, and is mostly land of good quality. It was diverted to the south bank of the south branch of the Ashburton River by the advice of the County Council as a matter of economy to save expensive crossings of the rivers, but chiefly on account of the high prices charged by settlers in the Forks for the land which was required for the line. If, at the upper end of it, the line had crossed over into the Mount Somers District the route would have been quite satisfactory, because in its present position it can be made accessible to the country of the Upper Hinds, which would not be possible if it were placed in the Forks, and settlers in the Forks are too near to the Town of Ashburton to make use of the line.

The evidence showed that the present terminus was very much out of the way for the Mount Somers District, and owners of produce often preferred to cart direct to Ashburton rather than take the backward direction and uphill road leading to the station of Anama; while other parts of the line were almost inaccessible, from the nature of the rivers to be crossed to get at it. It seems strange that the railway, after coming so many miles towards the district, should still have the traffic on the roads to compete against it, and I am inclined to believe that the awkward position of the terminus, the want of accommodation at the station, together with the proximity of the Town of Ashburton, and the chance that carters may get a return load, often determine the choice of carriage in favour of carting; and, that being the case, I am of opinion that, if the line were continued to Bowyer's Crossing, and a shed provided to house goods, there would be much less carriage by carts, and the traffic of the line would increase correspondingly.

The area of country which this position would serve conveniently is shown on the accompanying map, and some statistics of land, population, and products, submitted to the Commission by Mr. Hugo Friedlander, is attached to this report. From a table submitted in evidence at Mount Somers it will be seen that there are about five hundred settlers, holding 43,326 acres, of which 7,004 acres are in grass, 3,605 acres in turnips, 2,825 acres in wheat, and 13,613 acres not yet cultivated, total, 27,047 acres of arable land, and 16,279 acres of pastoral land, which includes 5,465 acres of bush; it is also estimated that there are 146 acres of mineral land containing coal or stone.

Mr. Friedlander estimates that there are about nineteen thousand acres capable of yielding over twenty-three bushels of wheat per acre, and the Tinwald line last season carried 34,892 bushels of wheat, 23,540 bushels of oats, and 1,356 bushels of barley, chiefly the product of this district.

In addition to the above resources there are 5,465 acres of forest in private hands, and 8,750 acres of Government bush reserve. The former is a fairly good bush of black birch, and contains a supply of timber suitable for building, fencing, and firewood, that may last for several years, and the land when cleared will produce grass, turnips, and oats. The Government bush has good timber on it, but it is much damaged by fire; nevertheless it still contains a considerable quantity of inferior timber fit for fencing and firewood, for which purposes there is a large demand.

Limestone of good quality, both for building purposes and for burning as quicklime, is found all along the foot of the Alford Hills, and coal crops out in many places between the Rakaia and South Ashburton Rivers, and even beyond it towards the Rangitata.

I was not able to form an estimate of the probable traffic that would be carried by the railway if it were extended to Bowyer's Creek, but I am of opinion that it will considerably exceed the present traffic on this branch. The progress of

settlement and cultivation is advancing in this district to such a degree as to give grounds for predicting that before very long all the land will be under cultivation or permanent pasture, and when that is the case it is fair to presume that this line will be remunerative, especially as it will combine a traffic in timber, coal, and stone with the ordinary agricultural and passenger traffic.

The proposed extension to Bowyer's Creek would be a distance of 3 miles 60 chains, the cost of which I roughly estimate at £12,500. It has been proposed to take the line over the existing road-bridge, which would need to be strengthened for the purpose: this would lengthen the line by about 34 chains, and the cost would be, approximately, £10,950. If the line were made to cross Bowyer's Creek, which it should do, the cost of the bridge must be added to the above estimates. This bridge would cost about £1,500.

I will summarize the conclusions which I have formed on the subject of the extension of the Mount Somers Railway as follows: First, that an extension of the line is not suitable to give access to the district of the Upper Hinds and Rangitata, for which purpose the best route would be a branch line starting from somewhere near the Station of Westerfield. Second, that no good purpose could be served by extending the line up the south bank of the Ashburton River towards the Gorge. Third, the only extension which is likely to benefit the Mount Somers District and increase the traffic of the line is that to Bowyer's Creek.

I have, &c.,

31st January, 1884.

C. NAPIER BELL.

APPOINTING COMMISSIONER TO INQUIRE INTO THE BEST ROUTE FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE ASHBURTON BRANCH RAILWAY.

COMMISSION.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith: To our trusty and loving subject Charles Napier Bell, of Christchurch, in the said colony, Esquire, M.I.C.E.

WHEREAS the Governor of our said colony hath, by and with the advice and consent of the Executive Council thereof, deemed it expedient that a Commission should forthwith be issued for the purposes and in the manner hereinafter set forth: Now, therefore, know ye that we, reposing great trust and confidence in your zeal, knowledge, and ability, do by these presents constitute and appoint you, the said

CHARLES NAPIER BELL,

to be our Commissioner for the purpose of making inquiry into the probable cost and economical or commercial value and other merits of the various proposed routes for the extension of the Ashburton Branch Railway, with the view of determining the route for the said railway best calculated to develop the surrounding country, and attain for the existing and proposed extension of railways the largest amount of traffic, it being the intention of these presents that you shall make inquiry in the most ample manner into all the facts and circumstances necessary and proper to be considered in determining the above question.

And, for the better enabling you to carry these presents into effect, we do authorize and empower you to make and conduct any inquiry under these presents at such place or places in the said colony as you may deem expedient, and to call before you such person or persons as you may judge necessary by whom you may be better informed of the matters herein submitted for your consideration, and also to call for and examine all such books, documents, papers, maps, plans, accounts, or records as you shall judge likely to afford you the fullest information on the subject of this our Commission, and to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever. And our further will and pleasure is that you do report to us, under your hand and seal, within thirty days from the date hereof, your opinion on the matters herein submitted for your consideration.

In testimony whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent, and the Seal of the said Colony to be hereunto affixed.

Witness our trusty and well-beloved Sir William Francis Drummond Jervois, Governor in and over Her Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies; and issued under the Seal of the said Colony, at Wellington, this second day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-four.

(L.S.)

WM. F. DRUMMOND JERVOIS,
Governor.

Issued in Executive Council.

FORSTER GORING,
Clerk of the Executive Council.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

The Commissioner arrived at Mount Somers on Saturday night, 19th January, 1884, and on Monday, the 21st, rode over the country between the Rangitata and South Ashburton Rivers.

On Tuesday, the 22nd January, he held a meeting at 10.30 a.m., at the Mount Somers Road Board Office, for the purpose of hearing evidence, notifications of the times and places appointed for receiving evidence having been duly given by advertisement. The evidence closed at 1.30, and the Commissioner then drove with the Chairman of the Road Board over the northern part of the district.

On Wednesday, the 23rd, the Commissioner rode over the district towards Alford Forest and the north branch of the Ashburton, and by way of the forks of Taylor's and Bowyer's Creeks.

On Thursday, the 24th, he drove down the forks of the Ashburton to Ashburton Town.

On Friday, the 25th, interviewed the member of the House of Representatives for this district and the Mayor at 6.50 p.m., taking evidence at the County Council Chambers.

On Saturday, the 26th, took further evidence at the Council Chambers, returning to Christchurch in the evening.

On Monday, the 28th, took the evidence of Mr. C. Percy Cox at Christchurch.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 1884.

MR. ALFRED EDWARD PEACHE examined.

1. *The Commissioner.*] You are Chairman of the Mount Somers Road Board?—Yes.

2. I wish you would kindly explain to me the objects aimed at in this part of the country, for I am not acquainted with the subject of this inquiry beyond the fact that there is an extension of the line in dispute. The Commission only directs that I should inquire into the objects and the wants of those resident in the neighbourhood, and I shall endeavour to do this by taking evidence. Will you explain what you know about it?—From the very first it was always intended that the line should come to Mount Somers. There was a railway reserve to the township. The railway was not commenced by the Provincial Council of Canterbury, but a vote of £10,000 was passed by the Provincial Council for the Mount Somers Railway-line. The terminus was then intended to be at the Mount Somers Township.

3. What was next done in the matter: the line was subsequently made by the General Government, was it not?—The line as surveyed by Mr. Triphook came to within three miles of the township. It crossed the South Ashburton River lower down than the present Anama Station. Mr. Wright roughly laid off the direction of the line for Mr. Triphook.

4. Who was Mr. Triphook engaged by?—To the best of my belief he was engaged by the General Government, and he surveyed the line that was recommended by the Ashburton County Council. I was not aware that we were going into the past history of the question or I should have come prepared.

5. I only want to go into the past so far as it is necessary to clear my own mind on the subject. You need not be very circumstantial in the matter, but state generally the object sought when the line was proposed to be made?—When the Royal Commission was appointed two or three years ago, to report generally on the railways in the South Island, they recommended that this line should be carried out.

6. Did the Royal Commission recommend any particular route, or was the line already built?—I think the question of route arose after the Royal Commission had reported. Mr. Triphook's survey was at that time the only survey, and we concluded that that would be the route the line would take.

7. Where did Mr. Triphook's line go?—It crossed the south branch of the Ashburton River about six miles below the present traffic bridge, in the neighbourhood of Rural Section No. 26964. He indicated the terminus in Rural Section No. 29573.

8. Do you say this from report, or have you seen his plans?—I have seen his pegs and also his plans.

9. Were these plans acted on at all: in fact, was the present line part of the line shown on these plans?—I think a very small portion was on his plans. The change was made without the knowledge of any one in the district, and it was not until the work was commenced that we knew of any change in the route.

10. Then the change you speak of consisted in leaving the line on one side of the river, and not extending it across: that is, it was left short of the original proposal?—It was carried beyond the point originally proposed by Mr. Triphook, but kept on the south side of the river.

11. Will you explain your reasons for objecting to the line staying on the south bank?—Before we go into that question I should like to know how we stand at present. I believe that during the last session £11,000 was voted for the extension of the Tinwald-Mount Somers line. I understand that £6,000 has been expended up to the Cavendish Station at the present terminus of the line, and that about £9,000 is still to the credit for the extension of this line.

12. That is a vote of the Parliament for this purpose?—Out of the £15,000 allotted from the three-million loan, £6,000 has been expended. I think it would be convenient if we understood

clearly what the Commission is appointed for: whether it is appointed to determine in which direction the line should be extended.

13. All I can do is to show you the Commission, and you can judge for yourself?—(Witness, having perused the Commission, said) I see it is for the extension of the railway. I asked this question because I have good reason to suppose that, at this inquiry, either here or in Ashburton, a third party will come forward to try and make the line into a fork from somewhere lower down and carry it across the Rangitata Plains.

13A. He can only give evidence to show the advisability of such a fork?—But does your Commission include such a thing?

14. It is "the extension" of this line, and I am now trying to understand what it means. There are two lines you spoke of?—It seems to me it must start from the end of the present line.

14A. Just so; it usually means that?—I understand that a third party will advocate a forked line.

15. That is not part of your evidence. You are to give evidence of your view and of the interests which you are supposed to advocate in this district. It is not a question of opposing any other project. That, I take it, is the object of the evidence we want from you?—My impression is that if the line is taken across the south branch of the river it will open up a very large traffic in timber and also in stone. There is some of the best stone in the colony on the north side of the river. I may mention that the stone here is to be used for Mr. R. M. Morten's new buildings in Colombo Street and Cathedral Square. Mr. Lambert has reported that it is the best building-stone in the colony.

16. Is it up the Ashburton River?—Yes.

17. Limestone?—Yes. The line would have to be carried across the south branch to reach Alford Forest.

18. Is there any traffic in the timber of the forest at present?—Yes, a large quantity is being taken out.

19. How is the timber exported?—A large quantity is taken by Methven, and some by this line. If the line were taken across the river a dray could go two trips a day, and the timber could be worked to a much greater extent. There is also very good stone for burning lime on the north side of the river, and there is coal within a short distance of where the line would go.

20. Where is the coal situated?—It is about seven miles above the Mount Somers Township, on the north side of the river.

21. That is a very thick seam?—There is over 14ft. opened up at present. I may say that all the lime used in Christchurch comes from about thirty miles south of Dunedin.

22. And have you any reason for supposing that this lime would take the place of that?—Yes; I believe that, if the line were taken across the river to such a distance as would enable two trips a day to be made with a dray, we could undersell the Dunedin people.

23. Do you mean lime or limestone?—Lime.

24. What is the agricultural produce of this neighbourhood? is any quantity of corn raised here?—We have collected statistics for the information of the Commissioner. I have here a summary of the returns for the district benefited by an extension of the line to Bowyer's Stream. [Statement put in; see Appendix A.] The district benefited by the extension is indicated on the map by a red line. It is bounded by the rivers. The produce would be carted to the proposed Bowyer's Stream terminus rather than across the river. The statistics have been carefully collected from various people in the district. There is coal in the Alford Forest, but there are no roads to get it out at present. There are several limestone deposits on the north side of the river; and there is also coal in several places. This statement shows what part of the country would be benefited by the extension of the line up the south side of the south branch of the Ashburton. [Statement put in; see Appendix B.] A line was proposed starting from Anama and going to Edson's corner (Rural Section No. 29573.); the second route was to Bowyer's Stream; and the third, up the south side of the South Ashburton. These statistics which I now hand in represent the country which would be benefited by the southern line, and which is shown on the map by a blue line. The boundaries of this district are natural boundaries, and this extension would be of no benefit to land south of the North Hinds River, because of the general formation of the country: there is a high ridge between the North Hinds and this line, so that it is clear that people would not go down the valley and then come up two or three hundred feet in height with produce.

25. How do you arrive at the position of the blue line?—The blue line shows the country we consider would be benefited by the extension.

26. Why did you not bring the blue line farther south?—Because this line would be perfectly inaccessible to land south-west of "The Brothers." I consider that we have included by the blue line a larger extent of country than would be really benefited. We might fairly have kept it to the north of the ridge. We should be very glad if you would satisfy yourself that the boundaries we have assigned to the two districts are fairly drawn. There is a large quantity of good land to the south-west, but we maintain that it would not be benefited by the line, as the Anama Station answers every purpose.

27. You have a road-bridge over the river; who built it?—It was built by the Ashburton County Council and the Mount Somers Road Board.

28. It was built to give access to the Railway Station?—No, it was built before that. We all expected the railway would cross lower down. All three streams—Taylor's Branch, Bowyer's Stream, and the south branch of the Ashburton—were bridged at the same time, without any reference whatever to the railway.

29. Is any of the district included within the red lines served by the Methven line?—To a small extent. Timber is sent down from Alford Forest by way of Methven.

30. And produce?—which way does the wool raised here go?—A small proportion by Methven, some is carted direct to Ashburton, and some is sent by the present Mount Somers line.

31. Why do they cart it—I am speaking of the area within the red lines?—I believe it is carted from the Alford estate. The Mount Somers line is of very little use to that estate, as there is a bad crossing at the river. They could take a load to Ashburton easier than to Anama.

32. Then, as I take it, the produce is carted indifferently to either Methven or this station, or direct to Ashburton?—Yes.

33. Does this line do much business?—Not very much at present. It is a very long day's trip from the greater portion of the district to the station. If the line were taken across the river I have every reason to believe that there would be a very large bush traffic at once.

34. What do you consider to be the reason why the line does not do much business at present? Because it is not extended far enough.

35. And you consider that, by crossing the river it would get more traffic?—I have not the slightest doubt about it.

36. How do you account for produce being carted to Ashburton: they seem to leave a station near by, and take it a long distance?—There is a bad river-crossing to get at the line, and it would be too far to come up to the present traffic bridge and then go down the south side of the river to the station. The whole thing is also in a very unsettled state at present, and there is no one in charge to take delivery at Anama.

37. Where is such produce as is taken to Ashburton stored?—In the sheds.

38. Where do they cross the river?—There are only two small streams; there is no river-bed to cross.

39. Do you know the route of the Canterbury Central line, as proposed?—Yes, approximately. It has only been laid off roughly. The extension we propose would form part of it.

40. Does it propose to run through Methven?—I have never seen it plotted on the map as far as that. There was a rough sketch sent up some years ago, but it only showed the line somewhere to the centre of this district.

41. What is the district indicated in red called?—You might call it the Alford Forest district.

42. Have you any more information to give?—The only thing I should like to say would be that I think the money has been allotted for the extension of the Tinwald-Mount Somers line, and that, should you think the boundaries of these districts as shown in blue and red on the map are fair, they are the only ones that should be considered.

43. Do you know the amount of money available?—There was £11,000 voted last session, £5,000 or £6,000 of which has been spent, and I suppose the balance will lapse. You will remember that before raising the three-million loan it was decided how it should be spent, and £15,000 of that was allotted to this line, so that there is a balance of £9,000 still unexpended.

44. Where did you get those figures?—From the Minister for Public Works, on his late visit to Ashburton.

45. What did the road-bridge over the South Ashburton cost?—I believe that, with the approaches, it cost £5,000, but a railway-bridge could be made for far less than that.

46. Do you think a railway-bridge could be made for less than £5,000?—Yes; Mr. Blair's and Mr. Austin's estimates are both less than that; Mr. Austin's is about £3,000.

Mr. ANDREW MACFARLANE, examined.

47. *The Commissioner.*] Where do you live?—At Alford Forest.

48. What are you engaged in?—Sheep-farming, and a little in the timber line, as well.

49. Is there much timber still in the Alford Forest?—Yes.

50. What character is it?—It is principally birch.

51. Marketable timber?—Yes.

52. Is there much used just now?—Yes, a great deal: in fact, the supply is not equal to the demand.

53. Where is it used?—Principally in the Ashburton and Rakaiia districts, or even as far as the Rangitata.

54. Which way is it taken out?—Principally by dray. A great part goes by rail. Some of it is carted to Somerton and other places.

55. The use of the Alford Forest timber is local?—It does not go to Christchurch, for instance?—It does not, for this reason: that they have so far to cart it to the railway-station that they are not in a position to compete with Oxford.

56. You say the supply is not equal to the demand?—The supply is insufficient, as people will not go in for a large trade when there is no way of getting the timber away so as to pay.

57. The districts requiring timber can get it elsewhere cheaper?—Yes, because it cannot compete with other places which have a railway alongside of them.

58. Is there much bush?—Between four and five thousand acres of good marketable timber, and two thousand acres more suitable for firewood.

59. Has it been affected by fires?—was it not burnt lately?—Partly, on the north side.

60. Is the land under bush good land?—Some of it.

61. When the bush is cleared, is the land of any use?—Yes, but of course it has never been used for agricultural purposes.

62. Of what character is the agricultural land in that district?—It is good land; rather hard to work, but the greater part of it is magnificent land.

63. Shingly?—Part of it is stony, and in parts there is any depth of soil. Some of it has realized £13 per acre at public sale. There would be more grain grown if it were accessible by a railway. It is more stony as you go towards the North Ashburton, but it is only a strip of about a mile. There are about three thousand acres broken up and in turnips ready for cropping on the Alford Estate—Rural Sections Nos. 30524, 30589, and part of 30520. I may state that part of that land has been let for cropping at 18s. 6d. per acre for one crop.

64. What do they grow?—Wheat.

65. Are there any minerals up in that district?—Yes, coal, which I am told by Mr. Cox and Professor Hutton is of very good quality.

66. Did you see the coal?—Yes; it has never been opened up, but it is in the creek, washed down in blocks three feet long. Professor Hutton and Mr. Cox think it is as good lignite as is to be found in New Zealand. The locality is just above Rural Section No. 21246. The coal crops out on both sides of the river.

67. What is the length of the proposed extension from the bridge to the Bowyer's Stream terminus?—Three and three-quarter miles.

68. By what road would the produce from near Pudding Hill come down?—It would go straight across.

69. What length of cartage would they have?—About seven miles from the North Ashburton Bridge.

70. That is not very far to cart?—No; the people would be quite satisfied with that, as they could do two trips a day.

71. How far is the nearest point of the bush from Methven?—The nearest point is eight miles, and the bulk of the forest is from ten to eleven miles from Methven. Where we have asked that the extension should go would be about four miles.

72. Then the distance from what we may call the "centre of gravity" of the forest to the present terminus is about seven and a half miles?—Yes.

73. Which way would they take agricultural produce from the middle of that area?—They would go direct.

74. Is there any other station below Anama?—Yes, Valetta.

75. Do you think that, as the district slopes to the sea, produce would be carted down hill towards Valetta, or up hill to the terminus you propose?—Most decidedly towards the terminus we propose, as the South Ashburton is such a bad river to cross—one of the worst rivers in the colony. To show you the injustice that is done to us I may state that the boundary of the Rakaia and Alford Forest rateable area is the terminus we propose at Bowyer's Stream.

76. But your district uses both railways indiscriminately?—We cannot help it; we do the best we can: we cannot use either of the lines at present so as to compete with other parts of the country in the way of timber.

Mr. JOHN HOOD, examined.

77. *The Commissioner.*] Have you been long in this district?—Yes, I have resided here about seventeen years.

78. You live here, at the Mount Somers Township?—Yes.

79. What is your opinion of the proposed extension?—do you think it would benefit the township in particular?—Yes, I think it would without doubt be a benefit to the township, although not in particular, because the extension as shown on the plan would go about three-quarters of a mile from the township. I think, further, that the extension would be a step in the right direction to make the Tinwald-Mount Somers line a paying one. If it remains as at present I do not think it could ever pay working expenses.

80. It does not appear to have much traffic at present?—No, not in comparison with the outlay.

81. Then what becomes of the produce of the country as shown by these statistics?—There would be a great deal more produced in the district if the line were extended. A large amount of what is at present produced finds its way to the market by other means. Besides, there are minerals which do not find their way to any outside market, and which would no doubt be developed to a great extent by the extension. I have been informed, that in a portion of the Alford Forest district hydraulic lime has been discovered, which would be of great importance in creating a traffic.

82. At present there is no mineral exported?—No; but I believe the coal would be sent to Ashburton.

83. How far is the coal from the end of the proposed extension at Bowyer's Stream?—The coal would be taken to another point on the line about six and a half miles from the coal.

84. Where is the coal being worked at present?—Up the south branch of the Ashburton.

85. You mean the Stour deposit?—Yes. No doubt others would be opened up eventually.

86. It does not appear that the railway is any further now from that deposit than it would be if that extension were made?—No, but it would be much more accessible if the railway crossed the river. I believe that in that case, even with the six and a half miles cartage, it could be exported so as to compete with the Malvern coal.

87. Is more Malvern coal used at Ashburton than Newcastle coal?—I do not know. The Malvern coal is sold at 25s. a ton at Ashburton. I believe some Malvern coal is used in the locomotive engines.

88. Is this coal fit for locomotives?—I believe they are constructed with fire-boxes specially made for the purpose of burning this lignite.

89. Is this township growing since the railway came near it?—No; there is no inducement, until the direction of the line is decided, for any one to settle here, who might have to remove; and, as it has been agitated for two years, every one has been expecting it to be settled in a reasonable time, and so no action has been taken.

90. And has the determination of this question influenced the settlers in this township?—Yes. I believe they would be very glad to see it, as being interested in the district.

91. What is the distance of this township from the Cavendish Station, the present terminus of the line?—About one and a half miles.

92. And the extension, when carried out as you propose, would pass within three-quarters of a mile?—I think it would be a trifle less than that.

93. It does not appear, on the face of it, that the township would benefit by the extension?—It would amount to this: that wherever the station was located the township would eventually be removed to it. If the line was, as recommended by a committee of the Ashburton County Council, brought across the river on the present traffic bridge, it would come close up to the township.

94. Did the Ashburton County Council recommend that?—Yes.

95. To whom was the recommendation made?—To the Government.

96. Would the present traffic bridge carry the railway?—It was estimated by a competent authority that an expenditure of £700 to £800 would be necessary to strengthen the bridge. The engineer who drew the plans for the bridge stated that he had in view that probably at some period or other it would be used for that purpose. I may state that the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks Railway Company have surveyed a line from Methven which ends near the present township.

97. Do you know what the original intention was?—It was to follow the line I have indicated.

98. Is it not intended to extend the Methven line further?—No; I suppose from want of means.

99. Would that extension of the Methven line be as beneficial to the district as the one you propose?—Yes; except for the business ties and connection with Ashburton which we have at present. I think if the Tinwald line were extended to the Forest it would be more beneficial than the Methven line.

100. What is the principal direction of the passenger traffic?—Back and forwards to Ashburton; principally on business with Ashburton. I may state that, as one of many, I consider a great injustice would be done to the district if the line were not extended to this township either from Methven or Ashburton. Many years ago there was a reserve: it was proposed to run up three or four miles northward of the present line.

101. Would it have been a better line than the present one?—It would have opened up the district much better; but when the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks Railway was started it was thought that the line I speak of would interfere with the traffic on the Methven line.

102. Then, the line was moved three or four miles to the south in order not to compete with the Methven line?—Yes, and also because there were no rivers to cross; and when the Canterbury Interior line was proposed, that was given as a reason why it should come up and intersect with that, and have one bridge to serve both, instead of having a bridge where Mr. Triphook surveyed it. There would be a bridge somewhere as shown by the green line on the map.

103. Therefore they did not cross where Mr. Triphook proposed, but carried it farther up in order to suit the proposed Canterbury Interior line?—Yes.

104. Is it still proposed to make the Canterbury Interior line?—I believe sections are being made which would come in eventually as part of it, such as the line from Oxford to Malvern, and it is proposed to bring it on towards the Rakaia.

105. Have you any more information to give?—I should like to read an extract from the report of the Royal Commission on the Railways, which is as follows: "Tinwald to Mount Somers: line already in progress. Cost of extension small. Will serve a large agricultural district, besides coal and stone."

106. What extension is that?—The line surveyed by Mr. Triphook.

107. That is the line as now built?—It is the same direction, all except the crossing of the river.

Mr. DUGALD MACFARLANE, examined.

108. *The Commissioner.*] Where do you live?—At Buccleugh. I am managing for the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company.

109. Where is Buccleugh?—It is at Taylor's and Bowyer's Streams.

110. It is being principally used for sheep?—Yes.

111. Your main products are wool?—Yes; and I believe it is the intention of the company to let it for cropping.

112. What is the total acreage?—A little over ten thousand acres.

113. What is the character of the land?—From good to inferior. Most of the land which would be served by this line would be good—like some of that in the district round here.

114. Are you of opinion that the extension as proposed on the plan would make much difference to your operations?—Yes; I should think that we would let our land much more readily, and more would be cropped. Already there have been some three thousand acres cropped near Rural Section No. 39571.

115. Which way do you take your produce to market?—At present we send it to Methven. I would not risk the produce at Anama, as there is no one to take charge of it. If there had been sheds, &c., at Anama, I should have sent it there in preference to Methven.

116. The present terminus at the Cavendish Station will be still nearer to you?—Yes, it is only four or four and a half miles from my place to Anama, but I drive round by the bridge, some nine miles, on account of the bad river-crossing.

117. You do not know anything about the minerals or timber in the district?—I know nothing about the minerals, but I know something of the timber.

118. There is very good timber?—Yes, very good.

119. How long do you think it will last?—I have not been through it sufficiently to form an opinion, but there is a good deal.

120. Is there much land in the district which has not yet been cropped?—Yes.

121. About half of the land in your district has been cultivated already?—I can hardly say from my own knowledge, but I should say that more than half has not been cultivated.

122. Is the district in your neighbourhood owned by small or large proprietors?—There are a good many small proprietors. The company sold, just before I took charge, a good many blocks to small holders who are interspersed around.

123. Have you any more information to give me?—No; except that, looking at the map, you would suppose that the present line would serve them, but the difficulty of crossing the river stands in the way, and the inferior part of the land in the district is in the southern portion. The best land is towards the middle and northern part of the district, although some of it is stony. The better land of the district is all in the immediate vicinity of the proposed extension; where you get near the bush the land is good.

124. Is it your opinion that the proposed extension would increase the traffic of the Tinwald line?—Yes.

125. The traffic is small?—Yes.

126. The traffic of the district does not appear to go down that line?—My brother is manager of a run in the back ranges, and his wool comes down, passes through the township, and goes to Methven, because there is no one at Anama to take charge of produce.

127. But that could be easily remedied?—Yes, but it is one of the reasons I give why the traffic is smaller than it would be. I would not run the risk of getting any goods or stores up by that line.

128. What is wanted, then?—A goods-shed, and some one to take charge of the produce.

129. If the line were taken over the present road-bridge would it be as serviceable as if it were taken along the line shown in green on the map?—As far as I see it would make no difference: it is merely a short cut; but it would serve the township and save the shifting of buildings, and money which has been expended in sections would not be sunk; it would be better in that way. Townships have been laid out in the neighbourhood of the hotel and sections purchased.

Mr. THOMAS ELRICH McRAE, examined.

130. *The Commissioner.*] Do you live in the district indicated on the map?—Yes.

131. And do you think that the extension shown on the map would be of service to you?—Yes; it would be of decided service to me, and to the district at large.

132. Do you not think that as much produce could be taken at present—to the present terminus?—No; because only one load can be taken at present in a day from the bush.

133. Does it not often happen that, when a load has been put on a dray, it does not matter whether it is taken an extra mile or two?—There is a carter named Jollie, who says it is as cheap to cart it to Ashburton as to take it to Anama.

134. Where is he living?—In the centre of the bush.

135. What is the distance which will enable him to make two trips a day?—I could not put it in mileage, as to what would be the distance.

136. It depends very much on the roads, does it not?—Yes. I know that they cannot do more than one load a day, and a long day at that. Jollie can take a load to Ashburton in a day, and sometimes get back-loading.

137. Do they always get back-loading?—Not always, but often.

138. Then, at present, it is the same thing to go by cart to Ashburton as by railway?—It does not make much difference, except to passengers.

139. And as to produce?—I do not think it makes much difference.

140. Then, if that were the case, it seems to be a great waste of money to make the railway as far as it has gone?—Well, if they brought it on to Bowyer's Stream it would be more useful, as the people there could compete profitably by sending coal and stone. No one would go to Ashburton by cart if the train came to Bowyer's Stream.

141. But the train has come twenty miles, and you say it makes no difference?—The reason is that the line goes towards the Rangitata. We cannot go straight to Anama from Alford Forest, but have to go over the bridge.

142. Then, do you think the new terminus at Cavendish Station, which is nearly completed, will make the difference?—It will make a great deal of difference: a difference of about two and three-quarters of a mile.

143. What direction do carts take produce from that district to Ashburton?—They go direct down the Forks, and there is no river to cross except Taylor's Stream, but if they go round by the bush there is a bridge over Taylor's Stream.

144. What is the quality of the land?—All the land between Taylor's Stream and Bowyer's Stream is very good for growing crops; but it will not pay, especially in oats, on account of the distance.

145. But there are many districts growing grain which are much farther from a railway terminus than this one you are speaking of—three times as far: how do you account for their producing their crops and sending them away?—I do not know. The land must be easier worked, or of better quality.

Mr. WILLIAM EDSON, examined.

146. *The Commissioner.*] Can you give me any information on this question?—where do you live?—About two miles lower down, on the Tramway Reserve, where the railway was originally intended to have been brought. I consider that the district has suffered a great injustice from the railway being taken on the south side of the river. It was originally intended to have been taken on the Tramway Reserve, and I and many others bought land on the strength of that, and the consequence has been that we have suffered very materially through it.

147. But the Tramway Reserve is not on the line as surveyed by Mr. Triphook?—It was originally intended to have come up the Forks, but it was diverted to the south side.

148. You bought on the supposition that the original proposal would be carried out?—Yes, and so did most here. One gentleman bought ten thousand acres of land, and he told me he was ruined, through the line not having been carried out.

149. Where is that land?—Buccleugh. Mr. Macfarlane and others can corroborate me in that.

150. Why was it diverted—was it to give others the benefit?—I should not like to be personal, but I believe it was to benefit Mr. Wright.

151. But surely that line does not serve any one person only?—The river is very bad to cross, and therefore the present line is not of much general service.

152. What is the distance you have to go to reach the new terminus on the south side of the river?—It would be about three and a half miles.

153. Good roads?—Not very good roads.

154. Up hill?—Yes.

155. Have you any further information to give?—There has been a counter-petition to take the railway on the south side of the river. Several gentlemen, representing sixty-five thousand acres, signed the petition to take it to its present terminus. There is only one gentleman who would be benefited by that, namely, Mr. Peter, with the exception of Mr. Wright, who did not sign the petition.

156. What was the object of the petition?—To carry the railway further up on the south side of the river beyond Anama, and there is hardly one of those gentlemen who use it even at Anama, with the exception of Mr. Peter. Had it not been for that petition it would have crossed the river and come by my place.

157. Was the petition to the Government?—Yes; and we were kept in the dark about it.

158. When was the petition sent in?—About two years ago.

159. Before the railway was built?—Before it was built beyond Anama.

160. Mr. Triphook's original crossing is nearer Ashburton than Anama?—Yes; it was somewhere between Valetta and Westerfield.

161. Have you anything further to tell me?—No, except that I believe the district would be very materially benefited if the line were extended to Bowyer's Stream. It would be only scant justice if we could get it so far.

162. When was the original proposal to make the line in the direction you have just been speaking of: it appears that you have all expected the line to come to the centre of the district—when was that proposal made?—About six years ago.

163. And was any publicity given to that proposed route?—Yes, it was understood that it would go there. Our member promised to support it, and then told us that anything we did would only retard its progress, and that it would cross the river higher up.

164. Was the route not determined by the General Government?—Originally; but he was a member of the Royal Commission, and he reported favourably on the extension of the line: but we have reason to believe that he was the means of its being taken south. He proposed Triphook's survey first: at least he told us so when he was standing for election.

165. Do you think that any extension towards the south would benefit people towards the south?—It would benefit Mr. Wright and Mr. Peter, but I do not know of any one else.

166. It would benefit any lands towards which it was carried?—It would benefit the stone-quarries. Mr. Wright and Mr. Peter have both got stone quarries. Mr. Wright did the best for himself, but we do not think he did the best for the district.

The Hon. W. S. PETER, M.L.C., examined.

167. *The Commissioner.*] Have you any information to give us?—The only thing I have to say is, that I oppose any extension of the railway whatever. The Methven line is bound to be carried further, because before many years are over it will fall into the hands of the Government; and I believe it would have been carried further in this direction, to Gough's Crossing, but for the dispute between the company and the Government as to who was to build the bridge.

168. Where is Gough's Crossing?—It is at Rural Section No. 34143. The idea of the company was that this bridge would be utilized for the main central line. I believe that was one of the original obstacles, and latterly the company found considerable difficulty in collecting rates—in fact, they could not do so at all—and that prevented them extending the line into this district.

169. And do you think that extension would be advantageous to the district?—Most decidedly. It would save about twenty-three miles of railway carriage.

170. That is carriage on the main line?—Yes.

171. Would it be longer on the branch line?—The distance from Rakaiia to Methven is twenty-three miles, and from Methven to Gough's Crossing nine miles.

172. It is twenty-one miles from Ashburton to Anama?—Yes.

173. And two and a half miles from Anama to the terminus at Cavendish, making twenty-three and a half miles in all?—Yes; I believe the Methven line has been surveyed towards Mount Somers Township.

174. What are your ideas as to that extension?—I think there cannot be two opinions, and that the Methven line should be extended; and, as far as I am concerned, I should not object to the Government applying the balance in hand for the south branch extension towards that purpose.

175. Do you see any obstacle in the way of applying the money for that purpose?—I do not know whether the Government have power to do it or not without a fresh vote.

176. The amount appears to be about £6,000?—Some one said at a meeting that there was £10,000 still available, but I do not think there is so much.

177. It has been stated that there is about £9,000: that will not make many miles of line?—No; but, eventually, when the Methven line is extended, there will be very little traffic on the Tinwald line.

178. Why do you think so?—Because there is no traffic, and it is nearer to the port of shipment to go by way of Methven.

179. That is provided the produce is for shipment?—Yes.

180. It was given in evidence that the timber was not for shipment, but for local consumption in the neighbourhood?—Yes, chiefly.

181. And that the passenger traffic is principally to the Ashburton?—Yes, to some extent: we do all our business right through.

182. Is there much traffic to be got by extending the line on the south side of the river?—No; I would not go one yard beyond where it is at present.

183. Do you consider that there are two proposals as understood by the residents to be in dispute?—No.

184. Has there been a survey of the line crossing the river?—I believe that both have been surveyed. There was also a survey up to the Gorge of the South Ashburton, but I was against that in any shape or form.

185. Then you are of opinion that the line as shown on the south side of the river is not wanted?—Decidedly; because I think it would be a great mistake to have the two railways, that and the one by Methven.

186. But I refer to the extension up the south side. Do you think that is wanted?—No; it would not pay.

187. Is there any land in the neighbourhood that would be benefited?—No, not very much, except that the head of the Rangitata would be served to some extent, but the line as it is at present suits them.

188. Where would traffic coming from places further to the south reach this railway?—At the present terminus.

189. Then such traffic would not be helped by the south extension?—No.

190. There are various minerals which it is thought would be benefited by the extension—coal and limestone?—I think the present line is quite as near the coal and limestone as the extension would be. It would make a great difference if there were a bridge.

191. Do you send any of your produce away by cart?—No; all by train.

192. We had it in evidence that it was a matter of indifference whether it was carted to Ashburton or sent by rail. Can you understand that, after bringing the railway twenty-three miles?—No, I cannot understand it.

193. Then, do you think that extending the railway a few miles further would make any difference in creating a railway traffic?—No, I do not.

194. Would bridging the river make any difference?—The high terraces on the lower part of the river prevent access to the river further down. The high terrace extends the whole way down to opposite Valetta.

195. Is there any good land to the south of Mount Somers Township?—Yes.

196. To the south-west—I mean towards the Rangitata River?—Yes, very good land. It is expensive land to work: it is stony, but very rich soil. It is not in any way affected by the railway extension.

197. What distance were the crops I saw yesterday from the railway-station?—About eight or nine miles.

198. Do they cart that distance?—Hitherto they have carted down to Valetta, on account of the road not being metalled; but the road is, I see, now being metalled, and when that is completed the distance will be about eight miles, mostly down hill.

199. Is the land at the back of the Gawlor Downs good land and fit for agriculture?—Yes, all of it.

200. Is there much of it?—Between the two branches of the Hinds about 6,000 acres; but this extension does not affect any of the land in that direction.

201. How would produce from that part of the country get to market?—It would go to the Cavendish Station.

202. Would it be a good road, or rough?—Tolerably good.

203. No rivers to cross?—No, only the Hinds.

204. Suppose that the line were extended along the south side of the south branch of the Ashburton, do you think that the area indicated on the map in blue would be a fair estimate of the extent of country that would be benefited?—I think so; but the district would be rather smaller, as the southern boundary would be really "The Brothers" Ridge.

205. Then the extension on the southern side of the river runs into a mountainous district?—Yes, mountainous country; and none of the land there will ever be cultivated. I consider that if the line were extended on the south side it would only be for the benefit of minerals; but, as I said before, I am strongly opposed to any extension.

Mr. DUGALD MACFARLANE, re-examined.

206. *The Commissioner.*] You wish to supplement your former evidence?—I should like to make a further statement. I think there is no doubt that, if the Methven line were continued through and made an entire loop-line, the bulk of the produce would go to Christchurch, and that very little would go by the Tinwald line. Every ton of our wool and grain would go by Methven, I am certain of that, because we should save something like eighteen miles; but general traffic, I mean passengers and small parcels, would go by Tinwald.

207. Then, you think the business would be split up into parcels' traffic and traffic of goods for export, the one to go by Tinwald and the other by Methven?—Yes, and I suppose there would be ten people who would go to Ashburton for one who would go to Christchurch.

Mr. ALFRED EDWARD PEACHE, re-examined.

208. *Witness.* I wish to say that the inquiry appears to me to have drifted into a discussion on the merits of the extension of the Methven line rather than of the Tinwald—Anama—Mount Somers.

line, whereas I understood that the inquiry was into the question of the direction in which the Tinwald-Mount Somers line should be extended. A certain amount of money has been voted for that purpose, and it is impossible to use any of it for the Methven extension. In the first place, the Methven line belongs to a private company: it is not a Government undertaking in any way; and, even supposing that it was a Government undertaking, the sum of £15,000 has been allotted for the extension of the Tinwald-Mount Somers line, and I do not see how, without a great breach of faith, the balance could be used for the Methven line, or for any other line in the colony. Another point is that, if it were used for that purpose, the amount available would be utterly insufficient even to bring it to Gough's Crossing. I should venture to protest against the inquiry going beyond the question of the extension of the Tinwald-Mount Somers line.

FRIDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 1884.

MR. DONALD WILLIAMSON, Mayor of Ashburton, examined.

209. [*To the Commissioner.*] In opening these proceedings, I should like to state a few facts, and I shall endeavour to be concise, in order not to take up much of your time. The late Provincial Council decided that a branch railway should be made from Ashburton to Alford Forest and Mount Somers, through the Forks. The Council at the same time made reserves through all the unsold lands up the Forks of the Ashburton, with a view of providing a site for the railway. They also ordered ten thousand pounds' worth of rails from England for the work. These rails arrived in 1874. Before the rails arrived, however, the Provincial Government had ceased to exist. When the rails did arrive the Colonial Government used them for other works. The Ashburton County Council claimed a return of these rails, as county property. Then the route of the line was changed on the plea of economy. It was found that a bridge could be saved over the North Ashburton, and large landholders on the south side of the river offered to give the land required free of cost if the line were carried through their properties as they wished. The smaller settlers in the Forks did not see their way to do this, so the Ashburton-Alford Forest Railway became the Tinwald-Mount Somers Railway. About three years ago an effort was made to get the line continued as near as might be to what is known as the Triphook survey.

210. Was the line actually commenced at that time?—This was after the line was started and had been continued for some distance on the south side. A public meeting was held in Ashburton to support this view, and a deputation was appointed, consisting of the then Mayor of Ashburton, Mr. Hugo Friedlander, and Mr. Peache, of Mount Somers. The deputation went to Wellington to urge this matter upon the Government.

211. Before we go any further, can you indicate on this map what you call the Triphook survey?—I have a map here which shows it [map produced]. The blue line indicates Mr. Triphook's survey. The view urged by the deputation was not acceded to, but the line has been and is being gradually pushed on to a point where the district more immediately affected saw that, if the line was to be of much use to them, or pay any return on the outlay, it must cross the river in the direction of Alford Forest. The settlers of Alford Forest were quite willing to concede the point of bringing it to the township, in order that the whole district might be served. Remonstrances have been made accordingly, of which this Commission is the outcome. In my opinion, a very considerable traffic awaits the completion of the line to the districts of Alford Forest and Mount Somers, not only in goods and raw material, such as coal, timber, stone, and no doubt other minerals, but also in grain, wool, and other farm produce, besides a considerable passenger traffic. I believe the principal reason why the present length of railway is so poorly patronized is that people, instead of carting back or driving some six, eight, or ten miles to the railway, prefer to go straight to Ashburton by road; as the distance which they would have to cart or drive or ride, going back to the railway, would bring them a very considerable part of the way towards their destination. This would be very different if the railway were brought within a reasonable distance of the settlers, and I hope that the witnesses who are about to be examined will demonstrate this more fully. I may state that the reasons why Ashburton supports the diversion of the line—although, after all, it is only the original line—are these: First, we have a considerable trade with the districts affected, which will increase in proportion as the railway is made a paying affair, so that the interests of the town and of the colony are identical; second, we, in common with the colony at large, wish to see this line a financial success; and, third, we desire, above all things, to see that justice is done to the struggling settlers of Mount Somers and Alford Forest. Many of these people bought their land in the full faith that a railway would be made to their district, and I know for a certainty that they have been struggling on for years, the cost of cartage completely absorbing the profit they would otherwise have secured on any produce they were able to raise. I thought it was only fair to state the principal reasons which actuated the Borough Council and the burgesses of Ashburton—being so far distant from the districts directly affected—in taking an active part in the matter. The Borough Council and the inhabitants have always been at one upon this question. I have brought with me some of the principal resolutions which have been passed at the meetings of the Borough Council, which I wish to put in. I may state that these resolutions were always carried unanimously, as we have been at all times willing to assist a district which had been wronged, and which was being, as it were, deprived of its birthright. [Resolutions put in; see Appendix C.]

212. Have you any idea of the value of the traffic that would be developed by such an extension of the line—exclusive, I mean, of the present railway traffic?—I could not say with any certainty what the money value of the traffic would be. I am sure that the traffic must be increased a great many times over.

213. Have you any opinion as to the route, seeing that the line has been made as far as it is; this map [map exhibited] was supplied at the inquiry at Mount Somers?—A meeting was held of the Borough Councillors and a number of burgesses with the Mount Somers people, so that the districts and the Borough Council are satisfied with what was arranged. No doubt this was pointed

out to you at Mount Somers. The line agreed upon was as shown in green on the map, with the terminus at Bowyer's Stream.

214. This plan indicates the area which the Mount Somers people believe would be served by that extension. Do you think the district as marked a fair one?—That will be answered by one of the witnesses who will give evidence presently. I should think that quite the whole of the area shown by the red line would be served by the railway.

215. Have you any information to give on the subject of the other extension of the line, up the south side of the south branch of the Ashburton?—I have never been up farther than the limestone rock, but in passing through that country I must say that I was not favourably impressed with the quality of the land.

216. You know nothing of the land beyond?—Beyond that point there may be good land, but as far as the railway goes, and as far as we traversed, I saw no good land.

217. Do you think that the line would serve other people in the neighbourhood to the southward of the river?—There are no settlers there except one or two large landholders, and I believe that the principal products are sheep and wool, which the railway, up to the point to which it is now being made, would serve sufficiently for all the purposes of their traffic.

218. You have not been over this country to the south-west of the proposed extension up the south branch?—No; I have not been over it further than I have just stated.

219. Have you any further information to give?—I should like to say that I have been requested by Mr. Percy Cox, who is unable to be here, to state that he would be glad to give evidence before you in Christchurch. We set a good deal of value on his evidence, as he was a long time a resident at Mount Somers, and has a very good knowledge of the whole country. I think his evidence would be very valuable.

Mr. HUGO FRIEDLANDER, examined.

220. *The Commissioner.*] You are a member of the County Council?—Yes.

221. And you are familiar with this question?—I have been endeavouring to get up some statistics regarding the grain-producing qualities of the Mount Somers district, but before laying them before you I should like to make some remarks with regard to this branch line. I am an old resident, and I know the ins and outs of it from beginning to end. In 1873 a public meeting was called in the old Ashburton Library for the purpose of urging on the then Provincial Council to set aside a sum for the purpose of making a line of railway from Ashburton to Alford Forest and Mount Somers. In the year following, 1874, the Provincial Council granted the sum of £10,000, and expended part of that amount in the purchase of rails. In 1877, after the provinces were abolished, the General Government thought of appropriating this £10,000 by crediting it to the whole of the province. To this the Ashburton County Council objected, and they pointed out that it would be manifestly unfair to this district if the amount were credited to the old province, instead of the Ashburton County. The outcome of the agitation was that the General Government agreed to hand over the £10,000 to the County Council if they would make the railway from Ashburton to Mount Somers and Alford Forest. Some of the members of the County Council were, unfortunately for the interests of the Ashburton Township, very largely interested in the land on the south side of the river, and they were willing to give the land required for the railway *gratis*, which the settlers on the north side refused to do; and the result was that, instead of being taken towards the Ashburton Forks, the line started on the south side of the river and was taken up the south side of the South Branch. Whatever was the reason for deviating the line from the Forks, as originally proposed, it had nothing to do with the people at Mount Somers and Alford Forest. It was more a question of economy, but there was no intention at that time of taking the line towards the Rangitata, or the settlers would have been up in arms and have objected to it, and with good reason, too. In support of what I have said I wish to hand you some resolutions which have been passed by the Ashburton County Council, which will bear out what I have stated. [Copies of Minutes of Ashburton County Council put in; see Appendix D.] In 1881 a public meeting was held here and a deputation was appointed to go to Wellington and interview the Government in regard to the extension of the line, because the line had only been made as far as Anama, and it was urged by the public meeting that the deputation should interview the Government to see if the line could be extended to Mount Somers. I was one of the deputation, and when we interviewed the then Premier, Sir John Hall, he promised that the line would be extended. We understood this promise to mean an extension towards Mount Somers, because we never urged any other line than the one to Mount Somers.

222. What do you understand by "Mount Somers"?—The township. One of the deputation was a settler in the Alford Forest district, and he urged that the line should skirt the bush. At the end of 1882, when the question was raised about deviating the line, the County Council took the matter up, and a committee consisting of Messrs. Wright, Jackson, Lambie, Macfarlane, and Walker was appointed to consider and report on the subject. The report was as follows: [Copy of Report put in; see Appendix E.] This, you will find, supports what we are advocating; it also shows that there never was any intention of taking the line in any direction but Mount Somers. This report was adopted at a meeting held on the 10th January, 1883, a minute of which I now put in. [Copy of Minute put in; see Appendix F.] I now come to the matter of grain statistics, which I have endeavoured to collect. I beg to hand in a very complete statement of the area and the quality of the land within a certain radius from the point to which the committee wish the line to be extended, namely, the corner of Rural Section No. 26795. This statement gives the number of every section, also the area of each section, the quality of the land, and its producing capabilities. The summary of the statement is as follows: Of 28,969 acres, there are 1,455 acres the greater part of which, after sweetening, will produce very good wheat. It is at present heavy grass land, and swampy. Then there are 8,469 acres which will yield a fair crop of oats, if required, or can be utilized for turnips; but, even if we calculate that the producing capa-

bility of this land is only twenty bushels per acre of oats, it will give a total of 42,345 sacks of oats for a crop. Now, last year only 5,885 sacks of oats came down the Tinwald line, which clearly shows that at present this line is of little or no value to the people up there.

223. May it not show that the district is not cultivated at present?—It would not pay expenses, on account of having to cart it so far. Then, we have 13,874 acres fit for wheat, divided as follows: 7,212 acres, estimated yield, 20 bushels per acre; 4,552 acres, 25 bushels; 1,091 acres, 30 bushels; 667 acres, 35 bushels; 352 acres, 40 bushels: total, 13,874 acres; average yield, 23½ bushels per acre, making a total of 328,195 bushels of wheat. Last year only 8,723 sacks of wheat came down the line. Now, considering that there are 13,874 acres fit for wheat in the neighbourhood, it should be some inducement to the Government to extend the line, because there is no doubt that all this land which is carrying sheep would be put under crop, and yield a larger revenue to this line. Besides this area, there are 5,171 acres which, from a farmer's point of view, would have to be "worked" to get anything out of: it should be broken up and allowed to lie for a couple of years or so to sweeten. This has been done by a farmer up there named Toner, with the result that he threshed out thirty-three bushels of wheat to the acre. I have, however, only estimated twenty bushels per acre for this 5,171 acres, which gives us another 103,420 bushels. Adding this to the 328,195 bushels before mentioned, we have a grand total of 107,903½ sacks of wheat and 42,345 sacks of oats. I am sorry to say that some gentlemen who promised to come and give evidence have not been able to do so; but, as you have taken such full evidence at Mount Somers, I did not press them to come down. I should like to put in this statement formally; it can be sworn to, if necessary, as nearly correct. [Statement put in; see Appendix G.] I will also put in a map which I have had prepared, and which shows the sections referred to in the statement. [Map put in.]

224. Can you give me any information as to the stone in the district?—There is a stone quarry on the north branch of the Ashburton, which could be made accessible by a tramway.

225. What access is there to it now?—It is at present accessible by a cart-road. We worked the quarry for some time, but we found that the expense of cartage was so great that stone from Oamaru could be delivered at Ashburton at a cheaper rate than we could deliver it.

226. What quality is the stone?—It is very good, and has been spoken of very highly by some of the architects in Christchurch.

227. Is there much of it?—There is a very large quantity. If the railway were extended it would be an inducement to us to lay a tramway, but it would not pay if we had to cart it.

228. What kind of stone is it?—It is limestone. I may say that we tried the experiment of burning lime, which was very successful; but at present this part of the country and Christchurch are supplied from Otago.

229. Are you acquainted with that part of the country?—Pretty well.

230. Have you ever seen the coal seams which are reported to exist there?—No, but I have burned the coal.

231. Where did it come from?—I cannot say exactly; it may have been from Stour Creek.

232. *The Mayor.*] Are you aware of the reason why the present line, as completed, is of so little use to the people of Mount Somers and Alford Forest?—Yes; a great many of the farmers living above the Forks prefer to cart their produce to Ashburton rather than to cross the river and make use of the Tinwald line. A man up there who has upwards of six hundred acres of wheat has asked us to advertise for tenders to cart it to Ashburton instead of to the terminus at Anama or Cavendish, although it is a distance of only some six miles to the station, while it is sixteen miles to the Ashburton Township.

232A. *The Commissioner.*] How do you account for that?—Because they have to go up hill and round across the river by the traffic bridge, whereas it is down hill to Ashburton; but if the line were extended as we suggest there is no doubt that all this grain would come down that way.

233. If the line were made to Bowyer's Stream, would not those who had produce have still to cross Taylor's Creek?—Yes, but there are two bridges up there, which were built by the County Council.

234. What river do they object to cross?—The South Branch.

235. There is a bridge over the South Branch?—Yes, but they have to go up hill and then come down again..

236. Can you tell me the difference of height between the proposed terminus at Bowyer's Stream and the ridge at Mount Somers on the left bank of the South Branch? [The witness was unable to answer the question, but Mr. Baxter, the County Engineer, who was referred to, stated that the terminus at Bowyer's Stream was about 120ft. lower than the junction of the roads at Mount Somers Township.]

237. Do you not think that when the line was made to the new terminus indicated on the map a considerable number of persons would still find those objections to prevail which you have just stated were expressed by one person?—No doubt. I should not like to say that all the people will bring their grain this way, but I am sure that the largest number of people living about the neighbourhood in question and producing grain would bring their produce to the proposed station.

238. You are perhaps aware that it is somewhat up-hill from the southern part of the district you have indicated to the proposed station?—Yes.

Mr. JOSEPH IVES, M.H.R., examined.

239. *The Commissioner.*] You are able to give some information on this question?—I have collected some particulars from the Railway Department here with regard to the quantity of coals received at the Ashburton Railway-station during the past twelve months, and I find that the number of tons was 4,700. This is for the Ashburton Station only, but the quantity would be largely supplemented if Tinwald, Winslow, and the adjacent stations were included, all of which would be served by opening up the coal mine at Mount Somers. I have also ascertained from the Railway

Department that 218 tons of stone have been delivered at the Ashburton Railway-station during the last twelve months. The demand for stone would be considerably increased were the quarries at Alford Forest and Mount Somers opened up, as there is stone of excellent quality there. I am also of opinion that, if the railway were extended in the direction recommended by the committee of the Ashburton County Council, which reported on the route, timber for fencing and firewood would form a very important industry in this district. In the year 1873 or 1874 the Provincial Council of Canterbury voted £10,000 for a railway designated "the Ashburton and Mount Somers line." In corroboration of this I have a letter from Mr. Knowles, the late Under-Secretary for Public Works, in which it is referred to by that name, showing that it was the intention of the Provincial Government to extend the line from Ashburton to Mount Somers. The date of the letter is, "Wellington, 12th July, 1877," and in it the history of the purchase of the rails and refunding the amount for the rails appropriated to other lines is mentioned. In the year 1874 the rails arrived at Lyttelton, per "Northampton," "Eastern Monarch," "Hereford," and "Taunton." These rails were afterwards taken possession of by the General Government. Within the last twelve or eighteen months a counter agitation has been raised by the settlers at Rangitata, the grounds and objects of which were set forth in a petition to the Minister for Public Works. It was stated in that petition that the Engineer-in-Chief for the Middle Island had recommended the extension of the line for a distance of three miles beyond the present terminus along the South Branch of the Ashburton River. In my place in the House of Assembly, in 1882, I moved for all papers bearing on the subject of the Mount Somers Railway and its extension, and on searching through those papers I could find no such recommendation. I am therefore at a loss to understand how the residents in the Rangitata district could have obtained that knowledge that the Engineer-in-Chief had made that recommendation. They also stated that they had been induced to take up land on the understanding that the railway would be made in that district. The railway to Mount Somers was projected as early as 1873 or 1874, some years before the settlers purchased the land or located themselves in the district mentioned in their petition: in fact, it was only in 1878 that the agitation in reference to this railway commenced. The petitioners also alleged that "the public Treasury has received a large sum of money from the undersigned for the purchase of land, in full reliance that the said railway would be constructed." The land in the neighbourhood is owned by two or three individuals at the outside: therefore any extension in the direction of the survey made as far as the Cliff or Rock—the extension up the South Branch—could not possibly be of any service to the petitioners, inasmuch as their land lies considerably to the southward. On the other hand, if the line were to cross the South Ashburton River and go on to Bowyer's Stream, it would be the means of serving a large number of small settlers who have been located in the district some years, and who have been induced to take up land on the strength of this railway being constructed. If the line were so extended it would very largely increase cultivation and settlement, and would tend to render the line payable—which is at present unremunerative—by the increase of freight and passenger traffic. Reserves had been made for railway purposes in the Mount Somers district many years back, and the residents had been induced to build what was the nucleus of a township on the strength of those reserves having been made. Mr. Williams, the District Engineer, was requested to report on this question in 1878, and sent in the following report: "I have the honour to forward you herewith a plan showing the route which I would suggest for above railway. My instructions inform me that the line is to be located on the south side of the Ashburton River. The line shown on the plan (in red) crosses the South Branch of that river at a place which I consider the most favourable. A bridge at this point would probably not require to exceed 500ft. in length, with sound banks on either side; while a bridge lower down, close to the fork, would probably require to be at least double the above length. It will no doubt be found desirable to continue a line in the direction of Alford Forest, for the sake of the timber." From this it will be seen that it was the intention of the Government and the County Council (who had charge of the work from the time the agitation was set on foot) to carry the line over the South Branch of the Ashburton River. It was originally intended to carry it up the forks from Ashburton, but for the sake of economy, to save bridging, it was considered advisable to utilize the bridge on the main line and start the line from Tinwald; and that, in my opinion, was the only reason the diversion was made.

240. Have you any further information to give?—I have nothing more to add, except that I think, in the interests of the colony at large, if the line were to cross the river and be extended to Bowyer's Stream, there would be some chance that it would pay; whereas if it were continued on the south side of the South Branch it could not serve the districts of Mount Somers and Alford Forest, as the terminus would be removed something like three or four miles from the bulk of the inhabitants, and when they had their wool or other produce on their drays they might as well take it Methven, or even to Ashburton.

241. You consider that any extension of the line up the river would serve neither the petitioners nor the Alford Forest and Mount Somers people?—There can be no question about it.

242. *The Mayor.*] Are you aware that the proprietor of Westerfield has signed the petition?—Yes.

243. And you are also aware that the present line goes through his estate?—Yes.

244. Would it benefit Westerfield if the line were continued?—In no possible way: it would rather injure it, in as far, at least, as obtaining timber is concerned, as he would have to pay more for the cartage of timber. But if, on the other hand, the line were extended to Bowyer's Stream he would get his timber cheaper.

245. Then you are clearly of opinion that it could not benefit Westerfield in any way?—Certainly; it would rather injure it, in my opinion.

246. Are you also aware that the Rangitata Estate, the property of the late Sir Cracroft Wilson, is represented in that petition?—Yes; but it is many miles from the present terminus, and could not be benefited in any way.

247. Where is that estate situated?—It is between the Hinds and the Rangitata Rivers.

248. Do you know whether the bulk of that estate is not nearer to the main trunk line?—Yes; it is many miles nearer.

249. Are there any other petitioners in the same category?—Yes, there are many others who signed the petition who would not be benefited. The only way they could be benefited would be by the construction of a branch line from Valetta. I forgot to say, in my earlier remarks, that the Minister for Public Works, in his Financial Statement on the 27th August, 1878, said, "Of the eight branch railways named in 'The Canterbury Railways Land Reservation Bill, 1877,' one is provided for in the general estimates and two are taken by companies, leaving five for which provision has not yet been made—namely, Oxford to Malvern line, 11 miles; Whitecliffs to Rakaia Gorge, 22 miles; Ashburton to Alford Forest, 20 miles; Albury to Fairlie Creek, 10 miles; Orari to Hilton, 13 miles: total, 70 miles.

250. *The Commissioner.*] Are you aware that twenty-one miles have been already constructed?—Yes; but they have made a considerable deviation from the original line proposed. The original line would not have been more than about twenty miles.

Mr. JOSHUA TUCKER, examined.

251. *The Commissioner.*] Are you engaged in the coal trade in the Mount Somers district?—In the Ashburton.

252. What coal is imported here?—Chiefly Newcastle.

253. Is any coal brought down the Tinwald line?—I have never known any. We have sold twenty or thirty tons, which were carted down some two years ago.

254. What price did you get for that coal?—I think about £1 10s. a ton. That was the ruling price of native coal.

255. Does that coal find a ready sale here?—As readily as the Malvern coal.

256. Are you acquainted with the Malvern coal?—Yes; we have sold about four hundred tons of it during the last year.

257. What do you think of the quality of the Mount Somers coal?—I think it is of as good quality as the Malvern coal.

258. To what cause do you attribute so little of the Mount Somers coal reaching this place?—The cost of cartage.

259. Where does the Malvern coal come from?—Some from Whitecliffs, some from Homebush, and some from Springfield.

260. Have any of those mines got to contend with the cost of cartage?—I think that Mr. McIlwraith, at Homebush, has several miles of tramway.

261. Would it not facilitate the traffic in the Mount Somers district if a similar tramway were made?—Yes, to bring it down to the railway.

262. At any rate, do you consider that, if facilities were given, you could find a large sale for that coal here?—I could sell a thousand tons. Last year we sold 2,970 tons of coal, Newcastle and native.

263. Are you acquainted with the timber trade of this place?—Yes.

264. Is there much consumption here of the timber from the Alford Forest?—We have been getting one-half by rail and one-half by road, as it is much the same thing. About sixteen tons, or four truck-loads, per week of fencing timber is what we use.

265. Is the trade capable of extension?—I believe so; in fact, on Monday last no less than six teams went up from the Ashburton to bring down firewood from Alford Forest.

266. In the four truck-loads per week do you include firewood?—No. Of firewood we sell about twelve tons per week, but there comes into the Ashburton about twenty tons per week.

267. Is there any consumption of the Alford Forest timber anywhere else but here—to the southward, for instance?—We frequently send it to the Hinds, or Rangitata, or Ealing. We have to keep a stock here and send it on from here. The greater portion of the firewood used here is brought from Waimate by train; some is brought from Mount Peel, which is carted twelve miles from the Waihi; and some from Orari, which is carted about eight miles.

268. What do you consider the total timber trade?—I think there would be about forty tons a week of fencing material and firewood.

269. Is the Alford Forest of such a character as to be capable of supplying that, as far as quality is concerned?—At present it supplies all fencing-posts and stakes, and I believe it could supply all the firewood. We have only been able to get two truck-loads of black pine firewood from the Waimate in the last four weeks, and we have had a difficulty in getting it from the Waihi Bush; so that we shall have to get our firewood either from the Peninsula or from Alford Forest.

270. Is it good firewood?—Yes; but birch is not so good as black pine.

271. *The Mayor.*] Do you think, if the railway were extended to the point indicated at Bowyer's Stream, that it would pay the farmers to cart it then?—No; they would bring it down by the railway.

272. *The Commissioner.*] You think that extending the railway to the point indicated would determine all timber traffic by train?—Well, at least seven-eighths of it: some people if there is a railway alongside their door will not use it.

273. *The Mayor.*] Is it not a fact that it takes them three days to bring a load of firewood to the Ashburton?—Yes.

274. *The Commissioner.*]—I was led to understand that in many cases it was as cheap, if not cheaper, to bring produce to Ashburton from the district in question by drays rather than by train at present?—I believe it is, at present. The carters will cart down direct by road in fine weather in preference to taking it to the Anama Station.

275. The length of the extension proposed is only about three miles and a half. Do you think that the extension for so short a distance as that will have the desired effect?—I think the distance

is longer than that, but if the line were extended to Bowyer's Stream they would be able to go three trips a day.

276. Does it not seem to you somewhat obscure how such a short extension should make so large a difference in the question of cartage?—Well, at present they can only make one trip a day.

277. But they cannot make even one trip a day when they come to Ashburton instead of to the station?—If they come to the Ashburton it generally takes them three days to come and go. Waggoners as a rule only make two trips a week.

278. Then, they prefer to make a journey of three days instead of one?—Yes, because they get the back cartage.

279. I was told at Mount Somers that the principal difficulty arose from the want of the necessary station accommodation at Anama?—That is more the case for produce. I had a threshing-machine last season, and we threshed 6,000 sacks of grain, equal to 24,000 bushels, in that district, of which not 1,000 came down by the line, because there was no accommodation in the way of sheds at the Anama terminus.

280. That was the only reason for not taking it to the neighbouring station?—That was the only reason I heard. I asked the people why they did not send it to the station, and they said it was because there was no accommodation. But in the case of timber it does not matter if it lies there for a few days.

281. How does the combined railway freight and cartage, with loading and unloading, compare with the direct cartage to Ashburton?—The difference is quite immaterial.

282. Then, do you think the carters lower their rates in order to compete with the railway?—They have never lowered them. We paid the same rates eight years ago that we do now.

283. *The Mayor.*] To what extent would it reduce the price of Mount Somers coal if the extension were carried out?—The freight would be about 6s. 6d. per ton. The rates for carting from Mount Somers would be £1 per ton.

284. *The Commissioner.*] What is the cost of cartage of timber?—About 4s. 6d. per 100ft., and about £1 to £1 2s. 6d. per ton; sometimes as much as £1 5s., but it varies according to the quantity.

285. That includes all the charges—the carters themselves load and unload?—Yes.

286. Do you know what the distance is from the present new terminus of the railway at Caven-dish to the coal mine?—No.

287. You are not acquainted with that district personally?—Only the bush land and the agricultural land on this side.

288. You have not seen the coal seams which are reported to exist in Taylor's Creek?—

289. *The Mayor.*] The saving on coals would be about 13s. a ton if brought down by rail instead of by cartage?—Yes.

290. *The Commissioner.*] You told us that the cartage was 20s.?—Yes.

291. But the coal mine is seven miles beyond the present terminus?—I am only speaking of the railway.

292. *The Mayor.*] Then, you think that the price of the Mount Somers coal would be under £1 in Ashburton?—I have been told so by the coal proprietors.

293. Do you not think that the Mount Somers coal would displace the Malvern coal entirely?—I do not like to say "entirely," because people have fancies; but I believe it would be largely consumed.

294. *The Commissioner.*] Do you know who the coal mine on the Stour Creek belongs to?—No.

Mr. EDWARD COOKSON, examined.

295. *The Commissioner.*] What is your occupation?—I am a coach proprietor. I had a mail contract for eight or nine years from Ashburton to Mount Somers. I used to take the road up the Forks, by the Spread-eagle, and then crossed the river near Valetta, where the South Branch, the Alford Stream, and Buccleugh Stream all meet in one place, thence I went up back of Buccleugh, and from there on near the point at Bowyer's Stream, and on to Mount Somers.

296. Does that passenger traffic still continue?—No; since the line was opened it goes from the terminus.

297. Can you give me any idea of the amount of passenger traffic?—Sometimes it was more and sometimes it was less. I could not give the number of passengers, as it was so irregular. It was very good in the early part of my contract; in fact, it was very fair, take it right through, until after the opening of the Methven line, when it fell off, as the passengers went by the Methven line.

298. There still remained to you some traffic?—A little, but it did not pay.

299. Do you think there would be any increase of passenger traffic if the line were extended to Bowyer's Stream, as proposed?—Yes; but it would get none of the people from the Forks.

300. Why would it not get any of the Forks passengers?—It would be a long way from the Spread-eagle to the station, and I do not think any of those people would go round that way to come down here. I used to get a good many passengers from that road, and I used to get them from Westerfield.

301. Do you think there would be any passengers from other parts of the country except the district in question, as shown on the map?—You would not get any passengers from the Forks.

302. Is there any passenger traffic to be got from the district to the southward, over the Hinds way?—Not many of them, as the country is in large holdings. The extension as proposed would make no difference to that part of the country as far as passenger traffic is concerned. It would increase the passenger traffic from the bush, if convenient; but there are a lot of people at the Methven end who would still go to Methven.

303. Then the passenger traffic would be divided?—It is divided. I know I have found it out. Had it not been for the Methven line I do not think there would have been a line in New Zealand which would have paid better for general traffic than the Mount Somers line.

304. *The Mayor.*] Is it not a fact that the great majority of passengers from there either ride or drive into the Ashburton?—Yes; a good many go by Methven and round by Rakaia to Ashburton.

305. *The Commissioner.*] How do you account for their going round by the Rakaia to the Ashburton, when they have the Anama Station close by?—Because it is nearer to the greater portion of the people at the north end, and they can go by Methven better than by Anama. They come down by the express to Ashburton, and they can go and come in one day.

306. Do you not think that the diversion of the traffic is to be accounted for by the fact that there is a daily train from Methven and a train only twice a week on the Anama line?—That might make some difference, although I do not think it would make much. People at that end of the bush took to using the Methven line from the time when it was first opened. I did not get one of the passengers from the day that line opened.

307. *The Mayor.*] If the proposed extension to Bowyer's Stream were opened do you think that, with a daily train, the passenger traffic would come that way instead of by Methven?—It might. It would certainly increase the population. You must bear in mind that I am judging from my coaching experience, and there is a great difference between coach traffic and railway traffic.

Mr. GEORGE ST. HILL, examined.

308. *The Commissioner.*] You are a builder in Ashburton?—Yes.

309. Have you had much experience with the Mount Somers building stones?—Yes.

310. They are limestones?—Yes.

311. Do these stones command a ready sale here?—They would if they could be got. The only stone available is the Anama stone, but that is very hard for working. As it is now, we send to Oamaru for stone; but if the Anama stone were supplied to the builder he would have to estimate the cost of working it, and we could supply the material from Oamaru and work it for the same cost that it would take to work the Anama stone. So we have to send seventy to a hundred miles for stone, instead of getting it close by.

312. Is the Alford Forest and Mount Somers stone easily worked?—Yes; and if this railway were made we could get the stone within some twenty-three miles, instead of sending for it to Oamaru.

313. What do you use it for?—Facings, and so on.

314. Do the people prefer it to brick?—It is almost prohibitive now; but if the railway were extended to Mount Somers it would reduce the cost of the material, and it would undoubtedly be used more generally than it is now.

315. In that case, do you think there would be a considerable consumption of it?—I should think so, if we could get it cheaper.

316. What do you use Oamaru stone for?—For quoins and arches.

317. For ornamental work only?—Yes; but it is useful as well as ornamental.

318. Do you approve of using Oamaru stone for house-building?—Yes, decidedly.

319. Do you not find it very porous and spongy?—No; it turns green at first, but it hardens afterwards, when it is exposed to the atmosphere.

320. Where is the stone situated at Mount Somers that you speak of as suitable for building?—I refer to Peache's quarry.

321. *The Mayor.*] Is it not a fact that there are several houses built of brick with stone facings in this township?—Yes; and I have no doubt that if it could be got easier it would be much more largely used, as the timber must get scarcer.

322. *The Commissioner.*] Then, you are of opinion that there would be a considerable traffic in stone?—Yes.

323. *The Mayor.*] Have you not found that the Mount Somers stone is much closer than the Oamaru stone, and not so spongy?—Yes.

324. *The Commissioner.*] Can you give me any information as to the lime produced there?—No, I cannot; but if the line were opened we could get lime from there instead of from Dunedin.

325. Do you get it from Dunedin?—Yes, I believe it comes from Dunedin.

326. Is there much lime used in this neighbourhood?—Mr. Tucker could answer that better than I can.

[Mr. TUCKER stated that about five tons a month was used, but the consumption had been as high as twenty tons. No lime had been used for manure.]

Mr. DONALD WILLIAMSON, re-examined.

327. *The Commissioner.*] You wish to make a further statement?—I should like to supplement the evidence of the last witness in regard to lime. I may state that in former days I was a stonemason by trade, and I have had considerable experience in working lime. A good many years ago I worked some of the Mount Somers lime at Alford Station in brick work. I afterwards worked lime in Timaru that came from Otago, and from Pleasant Point, and from Pareora, and I considered that the Mount Somers lime, which I used at the Alford Station, was superior to any of those limes.

328. The Dunedin lime which is imported into Christchurch is well thought of. Do you think the Mount Somers lime is equal to that?—I think it is better than that.

329. In fact, you think it would be much used in trade if it were procurable?—Yes. I may say that the method of estimating the value of lime is the quantity of sand which you can add to it and still make a good mortar, and that is a test that the Mount Somers lime will stand.

330. If the carriage were facilitated, do you think the lime could be produced up there as cheaply as elsewhere?—Yes, as there is bush there to burn it, and native coal also, which is one of the best materials for burning lime, as it retains the heat for so long.

331. Are the coal and the lime near together?—Quite close, as I understand. I may add, too, with regard to lime, that a great quantity of the land in this country would be much benefited by

the addition of lime to the soil as a manure. In the meantime, however, the cost of carriage makes lime such an expensive article that it is quite prohibitive, so far as using it for manure is concerned.

332. You think that before very long farmers will use it as a manure?—If it can be obtained at a reasonable price. I have been looking forward to that for years.

333. I have been told by farmers that the land in this neighbourhood requires lime more than any other manure?—That is my experience. I am told, also, that lime kills the grub with which farmers are so much troubled.

SATURDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 1884.

Mr. WILLIAM CAMPBELL WALKER, Chairman of the Ashburton County Council, examined.

334. *The Commissioner.*] Have you any evidence to bring forward?—I beg to hand in the report of a committee of the Ashburton County Council, dated the 29th November, 1882. [Report read and put in; see Appennix E]. In support of that report I wish to state that the County Council took a great deal of trouble in going over the district, and they endeavoured to find out from all concerned what was the best and fairest way of meeting the traffic. They were unanimously of opinion that the route should be—crossing the South Branch of the Ashburton at or near the traffic bridge, and going as far north as Bowyer's Stream. They found, from the evidence of all interested, that no more traffic from the south could be brought in by continuing the line further up the south bank: that any further extension up the south bank simply meant making a mineral line; and, as there were minerals on both sides of the river, and also taking into consideration that it might be a fair matter for owners of minerals to make such a line themselves, they declined to recommend that a purely mineral line should be constructed up the south bank of the river. They were of opinion that no agricultural or passenger traffic could be secured by extending the line any farther in that direction; and, in proof of that, I may state that all the settlers on the Rangitata Plains and the Gawler Downs—in fact, all those gentlemen who signed the petition against the extension of the railway northwards—were already served and did not require any further extension.

335. What petitioners do you refer to: many of the petitioners representing property to the south and west are not residents on the Plain at all?—I refer to their petition, as there is no other. We took the evidence of Mr Baxter, our Engineer, as to the feasibility and the economy of carrying the line across the present traffic bridge, and I would suggest to the Commission that he should be called in to give evidence on that point, as it is a purely professional one. He advised us that it was both practicable and economical; and we therefore recommended that the line should be taken across the traffic bridge, and extended as far north as Bowyer's Stream. Shortly after that report of the committee was handed in and forwarded to the Government the late Minister for Public Works, Mr. Johnston, made it known to us officially that the department objected to combined bridges, and that, as far as economy was concerned, they had ample funds at their disposal to extend the line across a bridge of their own. That being so, the County Council did not wish in any way to press the matter of the combined bridge, as it was purely on economical grounds that they had brought it forward. Now, however, the present Minister for Public Works, advised by Mr. Maxwell and the officers of his department, has stated that economy is a matter of great consideration, and that the vote of the House will not be sufficient to extend the line across the river if a bridge has to be built. I should like, therefore, to lay great stress on the recommendation of the County Council to take the line across the traffic bridge, on the economical ground of saving a second bridge; and I should also be glad if the Commission would hear Mr. Baxter's evidence on the question of cost. Speaking as a settler, I do not think there can be any hesitation in recommending that course, because, although a combined bridge is exceedingly inconvenient and even dangerous in a locality like the neighbourhood of this town, where we have daily instances of both, yet in a locality like Mount Somers, where the railway traffic will be two or three trains a day at a maximum, and the dray and wheel traffic will be reasonable, there need not be any real conflict between the two, and I should say that economy in such a case should certainly decide the question. As regards the traffic of that district, I see that several estimates have been given in the evidence you have already had before you. I do not think that any of the evidence I have seen gives sufficient indication of the irregular trade, if I may so speak, between the Alford Forest and Ashburton and its neighbourhood. I am in a position to speak from personal knowledge, having lived for five or six years on the direct line between Alford Forest and Ashburton. For two years I lived at Greenstreet, on the Forks Road, and since at Valetta, and I can say that at certain seasons of the year, when the ordinary work of farmers is slack, as, for instance, before harvest, the number of drays travelling backwards and forwards, for nothing but timber, is astonishing. The trade is in so many hands that it is exceedingly difficult to get any reliable statistics on the subject, but I am quite certain that, if the railway were extended as far as Bowyer's Stream, instead of the timber being sent for by farmers with their own drays, it would all come to Ashburton, where there would be depôts. The statement of any Ashburton timber dealer as to the timber trade is exceedingly misleading, and I would ask you to receive such evidence with caution, as likely to mislead.

336. You have stated all the objections you see to the extension of the line up the south side of the South Branch?—The only properties such a line would benefit are pastoral, and are fairly served already; or mineral, which might fairly make their own line.

337. Can you tell me whether taking the line round by the traffic bridge would increase the length of the line?—I have no doubt that it would, slightly.

338. To such an extent as would counterbalance the saving gained by using the bridge?—As far as I recollect, Mr. Baxter stated that the cost of altering the bridge would be £700, and I do not think a railway bridge could be constructed for less than £4,000 or £5,000. The length of the line would not be increased by more than half a mile at the outside. There is another point which I might state—I do not know whether it has been brought before you—that the traffic at present is small.

Mr. Cookson referred to the fact that the Methven line spoiled his trade. The two questions hang together in this way: that Mr. Cookson's coach ran two days a week, and the present train does the same. Now, it is very hard for people to fit their business to those two days, and naturally, therefore, the Methven line takes a considerable amount of traffic. I do not know whether the Commissioner would feel justified in recommending any arrangement, but I have no doubt that a daily train would considerably increase the traffic; and if such a train could run down every day and return at night I am quite certain that the traffic would gradually increase, and the line would be able to compete fairly on its merits with Methven.

339. Can you give me any idea of the amount of traffic on the Methven line, or, rather, to what extent it pays expenses?—I do not know anything about the financial part of the line, but I do not think it can pay expenses, or a rate would not be required.

340. Have you any idea whether the development of this line which is now in question would interfere with the traffic on the Methven line?—No, I think it would rather stimulate the trade with Ashburton in this direction. I do not think that much trade goes round by Methven for Ashburton from the Mount Somers district, except passenger traffic.

341. Have you any acquaintance with the coal seams in the district?—I am well acquainted with Mr. Tripp's coal seam, above Mount Somers.

342. That is up the river?—Yes.

343. What description of coal is it, from your observation?—It is a very good specimen of lignite, superior to Malvern Hill coal for domestic purposes. I have burned it for nearly twenty years.

344. Do you know how thick the seam is?—About 14ft. or 15ft. is exposed, but the bottom of the seam has never been reached, and it has been worked in a purely amateur way.

345. Then, is the seam thicker than 14ft.?—It may be; the creek runs over the bottom of it.

346. Would the cost of working be great?—A professional opinion was given some years ago, by a gentleman engaged in Malvern Hill coal-working, to the effect that it could be quarried at from 2s. 6d. to 5s. a ton; so that, by adding what the railway charges would be, the cost of delivery could be calculated. I should think that it could be delivered in Ashburton for 15s. a ton, counting everything.

347. How far is the seam from the terminus?—It is about six miles from Mount Somers. It would not cost more than 5s. or 6s. a ton to bring it down to the railway.

348. Is the country such between the mine and the terminus that a tramway could be laid down without great cost or difficulty?—Yes; it is simply a succession of level terraces: there would be one or two creeks to bridge, that is all; and the tramway would also serve the stone on the road.

349. Have you any knowledge of other deposits of coal than that you have mentioned?—I know another on the south bank of the South Branch of the Ashburton, and I believe the seams crop out of every hillside between Mount Hutt and the Hinds.

350. Have you any further evidence you wish to give?—No; I think that is all.

Mr. WILLIAM BAXTER, C.E., County Engineer, examined.

351. *The Commissioner.*] There has been some talk about using the present traffic bridge for the purposes of the proposed diversion: can you tell me if it would increase the length of the line by that route?—It would, slightly.

352. You do not know to what extent?—It would be, approximately, about thirty chains.

353. What do you suppose would be necessary to do to the present traffic bridge to carry an engine?—It would be necessary to adjust the trusses and to have new rail-beams; the other portions are already strong enough. The rail-beams would have to be strengthened, as they are only 9in. by 4in.

354. Have you any idea of the cost of the work?—I set it down at a little over £600; but I stated it as £700 to the Chairman of the County Council, to be on the safe side.

355. Do you know the length of the bridge?—It is 600ft., approximately.

356. Has there been a survey made for railway purposes as far as Bowyer's Stream?—I am not aware that there has been any official survey. All the information I communicated to the County Council was based upon data which I had prepared in connection with the water supply. I had plans of the district, and most of the levels, and I ascertained that it was practicable to make a railway across that bridge and to Mount Somers, with a pretty sharp curve at the north end of the bridge.

357. Would there be any expensive earthworks as far as Bowyer's Stream?—The earthworks would be quite inexpensive. The greater portion would be very cheap, and the worst gradient would be about 1 in 60.

MONDAY, 28TH JANUARY, 1884.

Mr. CHARLES PERCY COX, examined.

358. *The Commissioner.*] Have you resided in the Mount Somers district?—Yes; I was a resident in that district for about sixteen or seventeen years, and in the Ashburton district nearly thirty years.

359. And what is your idea as to the requirements of the district in regard to a railway-line?—One of the chief difficulties and drawbacks of the district generally is the want of timber. There is a considerable amount of timber in the Alford Forest which is very suitable for use throughout the district, but it is so difficult and expensive to get it down that on many occasions timber identically the same is brought from Oxford to Ashburton, a distance of some one hundred and fifty miles, cheaper than it can be drayed down from Alford Forest. As an illustration, I may mention that

the Yards Company were recently about to erect large yards at Tinwald. We called for tenders, and found that we could get the timber larger and better from Alford Forest than from Oxford; but we had to accept almost all of it from Oxford, because the carriage was so much cheaper.

360. Do you not think that the construction of the line as far as it has gone will alter that state of things?—Not as far as it has gone. The line was open then, and, although we accepted one tender from Alford Forest, we had, in the end, to complete it by getting the timber brought down from Oxford. I think it has been given in evidence before you, from others who know better than I do, that a great deal of timber in use in Ashburton has come from the Bluff and other places in the south.

361. Do you know if the Alford Forest is capable of supplying the demand?—Yes, as far as timber suitable for fencing and firewood is concerned. The timber fit for sawing is very limited, although there is some.

362. Do you consider that the supply in Alford Forest will last long?—It would last a considerable time: there are at least five thousand or six thousand acres untouched. A great deal has been destroyed by fire which might have been used, but to what extent that has reduced the quantity I am not able to say.

363. There appears to be eight thousand acres of Government Forest Reserve: is there much timber on that?—Over parts of it, but the fire has run through it, and I am uncertain as to what remains. I think there is a considerable amount still under timber.

364. There is a question of two routes for an extension of the railway—one up the south side of the South Branch of the Ashburton, the other to go towards Bowyer's Stream: have you any idea which of these would be the most useful to the neighbourhood in general, not including only that part of the district?—I think there is no question that the one to Bowyer's Stream and to the Forest would be much the best in every way. First of all, it would open up a very rich agricultural district; secondly, it would give a good supply of timber for fencing and firewood purposes; thirdly, it would give a good supply of stone of various qualities for building purposes; and, lastly, it would open up a supply of coal. Now, of these four I could give you reliable information, of the two latter particularly. Of the coal, the Springfield coal sells freely in Ashburton, but it cannot be got. The supply is so uncertain that you cannot procure it. There is one very valuable pit of the Mount Somers coal, which I have worked for several years myself; it is, in places, exposed for a thickness of 40ft. on a gully. We used to take drays underneath, clear off the soil, and take out several tons at a time. The cost of working it was merely nominal. There used to be a fair local demand for it, but when the railway was opened from Malvern Hills the carriage was so much cheaper to Ashburton by rail, that the pit I refer to was almost shut up. The cost of cartage to Ashburton was greater than that for which the Malvern Hills coal could be delivered, and this practically closed the pit.

365. Where is the pit situated?—That particular one is situated up the Ashburton, about four miles above Hood's hotel, at Mount Somers Township; but there are a number of other seams, apparently of similar quality, under Alford Forest: therefore the Bowyer's Stream extension would open up timber as well as coal.

366. Is there any reliable information of other deposits besides the one you mention?—Yes, there are a number—I know of several myself—varying from 6ft. to 10ft., situated throughout the bush. I may mention that Captain Hutton and my nephew, who is Assistant Colonial Geologist, were up there the other day, and they pointed out to the residents a seam of coal which they believed would be as good as the best Malvern coal.

367. Was it any size?—It was some few feet in thickness, cropping out of the side of the hill.

368. Seeing that there is an objection to the cartage on the ground of expense, do you think that the line, if it were extended to Bowyer's Stream, would be used for carrying coal?—Yes, largely. I think that coal, timber, and stone would all be brought down by it.

369. The extension proposed would only reduce the cartage as at present existing by 3 miles 50 chains?—Still, that would make a considerable difference in the cost of delivery at Ashburton, as it is uphill and across two rivers. With regard to the agricultural land, which I mentioned as one of the reasons for extending the line, I may say that last week I saw some crops of wheat there that were over 6ft. high. The owners estimated the yield as at least sixty bushels an acre. I was with a practical man, and he fully agreed with me that the yield would be equal to that estimate.

370. The crops alone give a very intermittent traffic for the railway: do you think there is any chance of the district being settled with people so that the traffic would be increased?—That is, I think, exactly the class of country that would be settled, as it is good strong land, and all that is required to bring population is convenient means of transit.

371. Have you any idea of the railway requirements farther south—is there any extension that can assist the settlers there?—There is good land south that by-and-by would afford room for a large population. At present there are not a great number of people there. The land is in the hands of large landholders, who hold blocks of four or five thousand acres each.

372. Do you think the extension up towards the Gorge would help them at all?—No, I do not see that it could. I do not think that the extension either up the Gorge or south would be of such general use to the railway or to the outside public as the extension back to Alford Forest would be, because in whatever direction the railway goes it would benefit those living there, but the extension to Alford Forest would, I think, be of advantage to the whole district, by giving them very much cheaper timber, coal, and building stone. With regard to the building stone, I some years ago submitted samples to the Cathedral Commission at the time when they invited samples to be sent in, and the Mount Somers stone was selected out of them all as the best. I was asked to supply it, but the want of railway communication or sufficient means of cheap transit prevented it from being used. It was, however, put on the records as the best out of all the samples sent in, and an offer was sent to me to know if I could supply the stone for the cathedral. I then sent samples to

Melbourne, and I received two or three reports from builders and other experts in stone there to the effect that it was a most valuable building stone: the opinions as to the value varied from 4s. 6d. up to 7s. per foot.

373. Have you any idea whether there would be a sale for such stone in Australia?—I was told so then, but that was some years ago. The want of transit prevented anything being done. The valuation of the builder of the celebrated church in Melbourne was 7s. 6d. a foot, but it could be delivered in Ashburton at from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a foot with the help of a railway, and this shows what an immense saving it would be. I should imagine from those reports that there would be a demand in Melbourne and elsewhere, for ornamental work, of choice specimens of this stone.

374. Is there much of such stone in the Alford district?—Yes; there are three or four quarries lying along through the bush. They are situated within the precincts of the bush, and each of them would be served by this line.

375. What is the nearest point of access to the present line for the settlers in the Upper Hinds and Rangitata district?—Valetta or Westerfield Stations, or direct to the main line. The distance would be from fifteen to twenty miles.

376. Mr. Peter thought it would be more economical for the carriage of produce to bring the line from Methven towards Alford Forest, rather than to take it from Cavendish terminus northwards into that district?—I think it is very desirable that the two should be connected together, and whether the one is taken back or the other forward it will be equally a step in the same direction; but the extension back from Methven would not serve the township and the lower half of the district, whereas I think there would be a very large traffic in these materials—coal, timber, and stone—to the township, which would not be served by the Methven line. I do not know that there is any more information I can give you.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

SUMMARY.

NUMBER of occupiers' family, including himself, 437; number of hands employed permanently, 79; total population, 516. Area of freehold, 43,326 acres. Acreage fit for agriculture, 27,047 acres; fit for pastoral purposes, 16,279 acres: total, 43,326 acres. Acreage in crop, 2,825 acres; in English grass, 7,004 acres; in turnips, 3,605 acres; bush land, 5,465 acres; tussock, 24,281 acres; mineral (coal and stone), 146 acres: total, 43,326 acres.

APPENDIX B.

THERE are 20,799 acres of freehold, the property of nineteen owners, in the Ashburton Gorge District that would be benefited by the proposed extension of the Tinwald line on the south side of the river. Of this, 9,690 acres are owned by ten absentees, and neither fenced nor worked in any way. Ten per cent. of the whole, or, say, two thousand acres, would be a liberal estimate of land fit for agriculture. The resident population within the line, including men, women, and children, amounts to forty.

Ashburton, 14th December, 1883.—I hereby certify that the foregoing statistics were taken by me, and that I believe the same to be correct.—W. R. BOYLE.

Signed and declared by the said W. R. Boyle, before me,—C. PERCY COX, J.P.

APPENDIX C.

EXTRACTS from Minutes of Proceedings of Ashburton Borough Council.

16TH OCTOBER, 1882.—*Resolved*, "That this Council is of opinion that the proposed extension of the Mount Somers Railway southward of the South Branch of the Ashburton River would not meet the requirements of the large body of settlers in the Mount Somers and Alford Forest Districts, and that to render the line remunerative it will be necessary to extend it to the Mount Somers Township. Therefore, for colonial as well as local reasons, this Council agrees with the petition praying that the said railway may be extended to the Mount Somers Township. As it is understood that the Hon. the Minister for Public Works will shortly visit the South Island, this Council earnestly and respectfully requests that gentleman to visit the district, when he would have an opportunity of judging as to the route which would pay the colony best, and promote the interests of the greatest number of settlers."

30th October, 1882.—Letter of thanks read from residents of Mount Somers and Alford Forest for prompt and energetic action taken by the Ashburton Borough Council relative to the extension of the Mount Somers Railway.

8th December, 1882.—*Visit of Minister for Public Works.*

20th August, 1883.—Letter from Mount Somers Road Board enclosing copy of resolution *re* the necessity for extending the Mount Somers Railway towards Bowyer's Stream, and requesting the Council to urge the same on the Minister for Public Works. *Resolved*, "That the request be granted, and this Council requests the Government to carry the railway as stated in Board's letter."

17th September, 1883.—Letter from Mount Somers Road Board enclosing copy of resolution, and requesting the Council to take action in this matter. Mr. Friedlander's letter of 3rd September was read. *Resolved*, "That this Council forms itself into a committee, with power to add to its number, to collect evidence to lay before the Royal Commission on the Mount Somers Railway."

APPENDIX D.

COPIES of Minutes, Ashburton County Council.

14TH MARCH, 1877.—(Minute.)—Letters from the Hon. the Minister for Public Works and Hon. E. Richardson respecting rails for Mount Somers Railway. Proposed by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Bullock, "That the ten thousand pounds' worth of rails bought by the late Provincial Government of Canterbury for the Mount Somers Railway cannot, in justice to the Ashburton County, be taken possession of and credited generally to the provincial district, and that this Council respectfully requests the Government to hold these rails in trust for the purpose for which they were bought."

11th December, 1877.—Mr. Bullock proposed, and Mr. C. Reed seconded, "That, as the sum of £500 has been voted for the survey of the Ashburton-Alford Forest Railway, the Government be requested to undertake the work with as little delay as possible."—Carried unanimously.

5th February, 1878.—Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: Moved by Mr. Wason, seconded by Mr. Bullock, and carried unanimously, "That this Council approves of the general direction of the line of railway proposed by the General Government from Ashburton to Mount Somers and Alford Forest." Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Saunders, and carried: "The Council is of opinion that it is not desirable to construct the railway on the 1-chain reserves made for the public road, but, wherever necessary to follow the course of such roads, a special reserve 1 chain wide should be taken from the adjoining sections prior to their being Crown-granted." Moved by Mr. Bullock, seconded by Mr. Reed, and carried, "That a committee, consisting of Messrs. Saunders, Wright, and the Chairman, be appointed to confer with the landowners on the proposed line of railway to Mount Somers and Alford Forest, and negotiate for the dedication of the land required for such railway prior to the work being commenced."

6th March, 1878.—Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: Moved by Mr. Bullock, seconded by Mr. Reed, and carried, "That Mr. Williams's suggestion *re* amended route of Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway be approved of, and that the Government be requested to proceed with the survey as soon as possible."

3rd April, 1878.—Ashburton and Mount Somers Railway: Letter from the Resident Engineer stating that the first twenty miles of the proposed line will be surveyed at once, was read and placed before the Council. Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: *Resolved*, "That the Government be asked on what date the Council can calculate on receiving those rails for the Mount Somers Railway which are to be supplied in lieu of those used by the Government."

3rd May, 1878.—Ashburton and Mount Somers Railway: *Resolved*, "That 40lb. steel rails be obtained in lieu of the iron rails to be replaced by the Government." Letter from the Under-Secretary, Public Works, stating there would be no delay in the delivery of the rails required for the Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway, was read and placed before the Council. Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: *Resolved*, "That the Upper Ashburton Road Board be written to, requesting them to reserve a portion of Reserve 2064 for the above-named railway." Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Reed, and carried, "That the Government be requested to purchase on behalf of this Council as many 40lb. steel rails, including the ten thousand pounds' worth of rails to replace those provided by the Canterbury Provincial Government for the Mount Somers Railway, as will suffice for the construction of twenty miles of railway and sidings." Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Bullock, and carried, "That the Engineer-in-Chief be communicated with as to the expediency of dispensing with the base-plates and fang-bolts and using dogs in the joint sleepers on the Mount Somers Railway."

5th June, 1878.—Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: Mr. Allan McLean waited on the Council with reference to certain fencing on his property on the proposed route of the above-named line. The Council explained their views of the matter, and Mr. McLean then retired satisfied. Letter from the Under-Secretary, Crown Lands Office, stating that the arrangement suggested by the Council *re* construction of the railway on the 1-chain reserves made for public roads is practically being carried out, was read and placed before the Council. Letter from the Under-Secretary, General Crown Lands Office, *re* special reserve of 1 chain wide for this line, was read and placed before the Council: *Resolved*, "That the Resident Engineer be requested to forward a tracing of Reserve 2064, showing where the above line passes through that reserve."

3rd July, 1878.—Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: Letter from the Under-Secretary for Public Works *re* sole-plates and fang-bolts for the above-named railway was read and placed before the Council.

31st July, 1878.—Mount Somers and Alford Forest Railway: Letter from the Under-Secretary for Public Works, *re* authorizing the Government to charge to the county the estimated cost of the rails of the above railway, was read and placed before the Council.—Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Reid, and carried, "That the action of the Chairman in this matter be approved of."

27th November, 1878.—Mount Somers Railway: *Resolved*, "That the rails, as per statement contained in letter from Hon. Minister for Public Works, be taken delivery of by the Council."

9th December, 1878.—Mount Somers Railway: Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Wason, and carried, "That the Minister for Public Works be asked to call for tenders for the construction of the Ashburton and Mount Somers Railway, so that the work may be commenced immediately after the harvest."

5th February, 1879.—Mount Somers Railway: Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Grigg, and carried, "That the Chairman, Mr. Wason, and the mover be requested to wait upon the Hon. Minister for Public Works at the first opportunity and urge the claims of the district to have the Ashburton and Mount Somers Railway proceeded with without further delay."

2nd April, 1879.—Mount Somers Railway-stations: *Resolved*, "That the Chairman write to the Government respecting the stations, as mentioned in Mr. Reed's letter, and the same be recom-

mended for adoption." Rails: Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Reed, and carried, "That the letter, as drafted, be sent to the Engineer."

4th June, 1879.—Moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Reed, and carried, "That the Minister for Public Works be asked when work will be commenced on the Ashburton and Mount Somers Railway, as many men were seeking employment, and unless the work be commenced at once there is little prospect of its being ready for use by next harvest."

APPENDIX E.

REPORT of Committee of the Ashburton County Council.

THE committee appointed to investigate the question of diverting the Mount Somers Railway across the South Branch of the Ashburton River—present: Messrs. Wright, Jackson, Lambie, McFarlane, and Walker (Chairman)—beg to report as follows: "That during the last month they have visited the district affected, from Methven southwards, including Alford Forest, Mount Somers, Upper Ashburton, as far as Lake Clearwater, Gawlor Downs and the Rangitata Plains, and have endeavoured to discover the wishes of all classes of settlers on the subject. In preference to any of the three routes surveyed by the Public Works Department, the committee beg to recommend the following, viz., that the line should be carried round by the traffic bridge, which can be strengthened at a small cost for railway purposes, to Bowyer's Stream." W. C. WALKER, Chairman.

29th November, 1882.

PETITION referred to in Mr. Walker's Evidence.

Ashburton, 13th December, 1883.

To the Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

WE, the undersigned, landowners of the County of Ashburton, respectfully request that the Tinwald-Mount Somers Railway may be extended a further distance of about three miles towards the valley of the Upper Ashburton, in accordance with the recommendation of the Engineer-in-Chief for the Middle Island.

We desire to point out that the Mount Somers Railway has been promised for many years past, and that its tardy construction has been a serious loss to many who purchased land in the district on the faith of that promise.

The attempt now being made to divert this line to Alford Forest is opposed to our interests, and in direct contradiction of the action of the Alford Forest settlers themselves in 1878, when they voted for their district being included in the rating area for the Rakaia-Methven line of railway, when this line was projected in opposition to the line from Tinwald to Mount Somers, which was promoted by the Ashburton County Council.

The public Treasury has received a large sum of money from the undersigned for the purchase of land in full reliance that the said railway would be constructed, and there is moreover a considerable area of Crown land, which will be readily sold should the Mount Somers Railway be extended a few miles further, in the direction advised by the Engineer-in-Chief.

In reply to those who urge that this line should have been carried to Alford Forest up the forks of the Ashburton, we call attention to the fact that the area of agricultural land south of the Ashburton which this branch railway opens up is two or three times greater than the entire area of agricultural land in the Ashburton Forks and Alford Forest districts, and of which a large proportion will be fairly accommodated by the railway in the course we advocate.

That, although the preponderance of population at the present time may be greater in the Alford Forest district, yet in a few years a much greater population may be expected to be located south of the Ashburton and in the upper valley of that river.

We therefore pray that no deviation may be made in the route of this railway from that indicated by the Engineer-in-Chief.

The area of land which we hold is stated opposite our names: Garrick and Cowlishaw, 3,030 acres; D. Morrow, 6,000 acres; McG. Watt and Jas. Coskerie, 5,500; W. S. Peter, 18,000 acres; A. Strachey, by his attorney, J. E. Pounds, 2,000 acres; F. Raine, by his agent (tenant), Hugh Cassidy, 680 acres; Geo. Roberts, by A. Roberts, 2,400 acres; C. J. Harper, 3,400 acres; Green and Scrint, 865 acres; Richard Strachey, by his agent, C. J. Harper, 1,000 acres; C. G. Howden, by his attorney, J. E. Ponds, 5,500 acres; M. Studholme, 5,000 acres; John Ballantyne, 2,000 acres; A. B. Napier, by his agent, C. J. Harper, 1,000 acres; E. C. Mouldey, 881 acres; James Dellow, 15 acres; James Corbett, 330 acres; Jas. J. Boyd, 1,280 acres; J. Whitelaw, 912 acres; D. Scott, per J. Whitelaw, 250 acres; J. H. Twentymen, 1,846 acres; G. Harry Gordon, for Colonial Bank of New Zealand, 500 acres; Leonard Harper, trustee Cracroft Estate, 3,500 acres: total, 65,389 acres.

APPENDIX F.

MINUTE referred to in Mr. Friedlander's Evidence.

10th January, 1883.

AFTER the adjournment it was moved by Mr. Walker, seconded by Mr. Jackson, and carried, "That the report of the Mount Somers Railway Committee, as read, be adopted." Resolved, "That the Chairman communicate with the Minister for Public Works, asking him when he will be in Ashburton, and if possible three days notice be given; and that notice be given by special messenger, if necessary, to each County Councillor." Resolved, "That a copy of report be sent to the Minister for Public Works and to the petitioners."

APPENDIX G.

Memorandum for H. Friedlander, Esq. Tinwald, 8th November, 1883.
 THE following number of sacks of grain came down the Tinwald branch last grain season: Wheat (sacks of 4 bushels), 8,723; oats, 5,885; barley, 339. J. W. SMITH.

Alford Forest and Mount Somers, County of Ashburton.

SUMMARY of LAND in this District as classified in the accompanying Papers.

Classification.	Remarks.	Area.
Heavy grass ...	The greater part of this land, after sweetening, will produce good wheat ...	Acres. 1,455
Oats and grass ...	This land will yield a fair crop of oats if required ...	8,469
Wheat ...	Estimated yield, 20 bushels per acre ...	7,212
Wheat ...	Estimated yield, 25 bushels per acre ...	4,552
Wheat ...	Estimated yield, 30 bushels per acre ...	1,091
Wheat ...	Estimated yield, 35 bushels per acre ...	667
Wheat ...	Estimated yield, 40 bushels per acre ...	352
[Or an average yield of about 23½ bushels per acre on the whole area of 13,874 acres: 328,195 bushels.]		
A ...	This land is a block on the Alford Estate which, if broken up for for twelve or eighteen months, is capable of yielding a good crop. Mr. Toner, on one portion, adopted this plan, and threshed 33 bushels of wheat to the acre ...	5,171
Total area ...		28,969

ALFORD FOREST and MOUNT SOMERS DISTRICT, COUNTY of ASHBURTON, NEW ZEALAND.

		Description of Land.							Description of Land.									
No. of Section.	Area.	Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.					No. of Section.	Area.	Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.					
				20	25	30	35	40					20	25	30	35	40	
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.		Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
17409	23	23							19573	20	20							
7	30	30							10731	20	20							
8	20	20							22634	20			20					
20357	87	87							20560	20	20							
96	50						50		22485	20			20					
17767	20						20		23384	47			47					
6	20				20				22229	60	30		30					
17007	28				28				21265	20			20					
8	20		20						15063	35								
17763	20	20							4	20		35		75				
4	20	20							16890	20								
60	109		109						89	35								
1	20		20						23237	30		30						
8	20		20						20007	127	127							
70	20			20					19630	76	76							
21481	34				34				1	164	164							
0	34				34				19693	20			20					
18547	20		20						21513	50				50				
6	29		29						22639	24		24						
5	41		41						8	26		26						
4	124				124				14188	50			50					
17009	20		20						7	50			50					
10	20				20				266	23			23					
17162	20	20							7	20			20					
17759	40			40					24053	140		140						
17801	20			20					29579	149		149						
17771	20			20					8	192		192						
3	30			30					674	99		99						
5	25					25			23903									
6	37				37				5	244			244					
16718	76					76			6									
56	25				25				4	267			267					
19908	110		110						26796	903				903				
9	384		384						23819	52			52					
15202	99				99				34046	56			56					
20650	50				50				5	24			24					
14906	40				40				26962	527				527				
22638	50	50							3	200				200				
20200	19				19				27180	100				100				

ALFORD FOREST and MOUNT SOMERS DISTRICT—continued.

No. of Section.	Description of Land.								No. of Section.	Description of Land.								
	Area.	Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.						Area.	Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.					
				20	25	30	35	40					20	25	30	35	40	
Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	
28330	83	..	..	83	..	..	..	..	24095	20	..	..	..	20	..	..	..
1	55	..	..	55	..	..	..	..	23663	20	..	..	..	20	..	..	..
2	38	..	..	38	..	..	..	..	18801	50	..	..	..	50	..	..	..
189	158	..	..	158	..	..	..	..	14541	20	..	..	..	20	..	..	..
26964	100	..	..	100	..	..	..	..	33737	3	..	..	3	..	..	..	..
29573	200	..	..	200	..	..	..	..	30702	200	..	200	..	..	..	..	..
27148	193	..	193	..	..	..	..	..	1	111	..	111	..	..	..	..	..
29570	393	..	..	393	..	..	..	..	700	106	..	106	..	..	..	..	..
1	674	..	..	674	..	..	..	..	699	99	..	99	..	..	..	..	..
2	175	..	..	175	..	..	..	..	8	200	..	200	..	..	..	..	..
32148	51	..	51	..	..	..	..	..	25143	130	..	130	..	..	..	..	..
33188	20	..	..	20	..	..	..	..	25993	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
29673	299	..	..	299	..	..	..	..	25994	27	..	27	..	..	..	..	..
32223	124	..	124	..	..	..	..	..	30782	100	..	100	..	..	..	..	..
29601	210	..	..	210	..	..	..	..	31079	104	..	104	..	..	..	..	..
597	384	..	..	384	..	..	..	..	8	103	..	103	..	..	..	..	..
575	480	..	..	480	..	..	..	..	31115	107	..	107	..	..	..	..	..
4	408	..	..	408	..	..	..	..	25656	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
599	69	..	..	..	69	..	..	..	25979	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
600	84	..	..	84	..	..	..	..	28553	50	..	..	..	50	..	..	..
27790	50	..	..	50	..	..	..	..	4	50	..	..	..	50	..	..	..
1	50	..	..	50	..	..	..	..	85	60	..	..	..	60	..	..	..
34048	50	..	50	..	..	..	..	..	6	40	..	..	..	40	..	..	..
53	18	..	..	18	..	..	..	..	9	60	..	..	..	60	..	..	..
54	11	..	..	11	..	..	..	..	90	40	..	..	..	40	..	..	..
55	36	..	..	36	..	..	..	..	23546	86	..	..	..	86	..	..	..
26966	191	..	..	191	..	..	..	..	7	107	..	..	..	107	..	..	..
29576	41	..	..	41	..	..	..	..	746	24	..	24	..	..	..	..	..
32131	9	..	..	9	..	..	..	..	25183	38	..	38	..	..	..	..	..
3	158	..	..	158	..	..	..	..	22836	50	..	50	..	..	..	..	..
29598	83	..	..	83	..	..	..	..	29155	102	..	..	102	..	..	..	..
26961	118	..	118	..	..	..	..	..	901	27	..	..	27	..	..	..	..
29671	915	..	..	915	..	..	..	..	25746	100	..	..	..	100	..	..	..
2	326	..	..	326	..	..	..	..	19905*	15	..	15	..	..	..	..	..
29965	50	..	..	50	..	..	..	..	4	13	..	13	..	..	..	..	..
32134	46	..	46	..	..	..	..	..	16638	205	..	..	..	205	..	..	..
5	8	..	8	..	..	..	..	..	24661	32	..	32	..	..	..	..	..
6	69	..	69	..	..	..	..	..	26351	51	..	51	..	..	..	..	..
7	8	..	8	..	..	..	..	..	29923	136	..	..	..	..	..	136	..
8	31	..	31	..	..	..	..	..	30184	*447	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
29580	18	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18572	20	..	..	..	20	..	..	..
1	77	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18571	40	..	..	..	40	..	..	..
2	215	..	120	223	..	..	..	..	15229	100	..	..	..	..	..	100	..
3	33	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14635	50	..	..	..	..	..	50	..
26798	89	..	..	89	..	..	..	..	21076	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
95	200	..	..	..	..	200	..	..	30630	16	..	16	..	..	..	..	..
32718	30	30	..	..	..	..	..	..	21074	100	..	100	..	..	..	..	..
34060	54	54	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	48	..	48	..	..	..	..	..
32562	19	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	22834	45	..	..	..	..	..	45	..
26960	227	..	227	..	..	..	..	..	31114	29	..	29	..	..	..	..	..
23058	138	138	..	..	..	..	..	..	18408	50	..	..	..	..	..	50	..
9	198	198	..	..	..	..	..	..	23921	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
60	50	50	..	..	..	..	..	..	14070	100	..	..	..	..	..	100	..
62	194	194	..	..	..	..	..	..	20371	55	..	25	..	30	..	..	..
18397	20	20	..	..	..	..	..	..	0	115	..	..	..	..	..	115	..
6	44	44	..	..	..	..	..	..	29700	63	..	63	..	..	..	..	..
33999	56	..	56	..	..	..	..	..	22185	50	..	..	..	..	..	50	..
22004	43	..	..	43	..	..	..	..	20574	28	..	28	..	..	..	..	..
18245	211	..	..	..	211	..	..	..	921	21	..	..	..	..	..	21	..
6	340	..	..	..	340	..	..	..	28914	32	..	32	..	..	..	..	..
4	263	..	..	..	263	..	..	..	21233	50	..	50	..	..	..	..	..
513	42	..	..	..	42	..	..	..	23915	51	..	51	..	..	..	..	..
16719	134	..	..	..	134	..	..	..	4819	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..
18512	47	47	23512	30	30	..
15492	22	22	482	20	20	..
19632	50	14751	20	20	..
3	150	150	931	20	20	..
8478	20	20	930	20	20	..
19506	100	100	19120	58	58	..
14431	52	52	26121	373	..	373
28323	78	78	14750	20	20	..
27670	10	10	23481	84	84	..
24472	50	..	25	75	25103	80	80	..
3	50	31376	115	115
23725	50	50	..	31286	163	..	163
1	50	50	..	26033	124	..	124
24338	30	30	..	31287	7	..	7
9	20	20	..	31779	491	..	491
18302	80	80	..	840	392	..	392
1	20	20	..	1	249	..	249
87	10	10	..	29535	*88

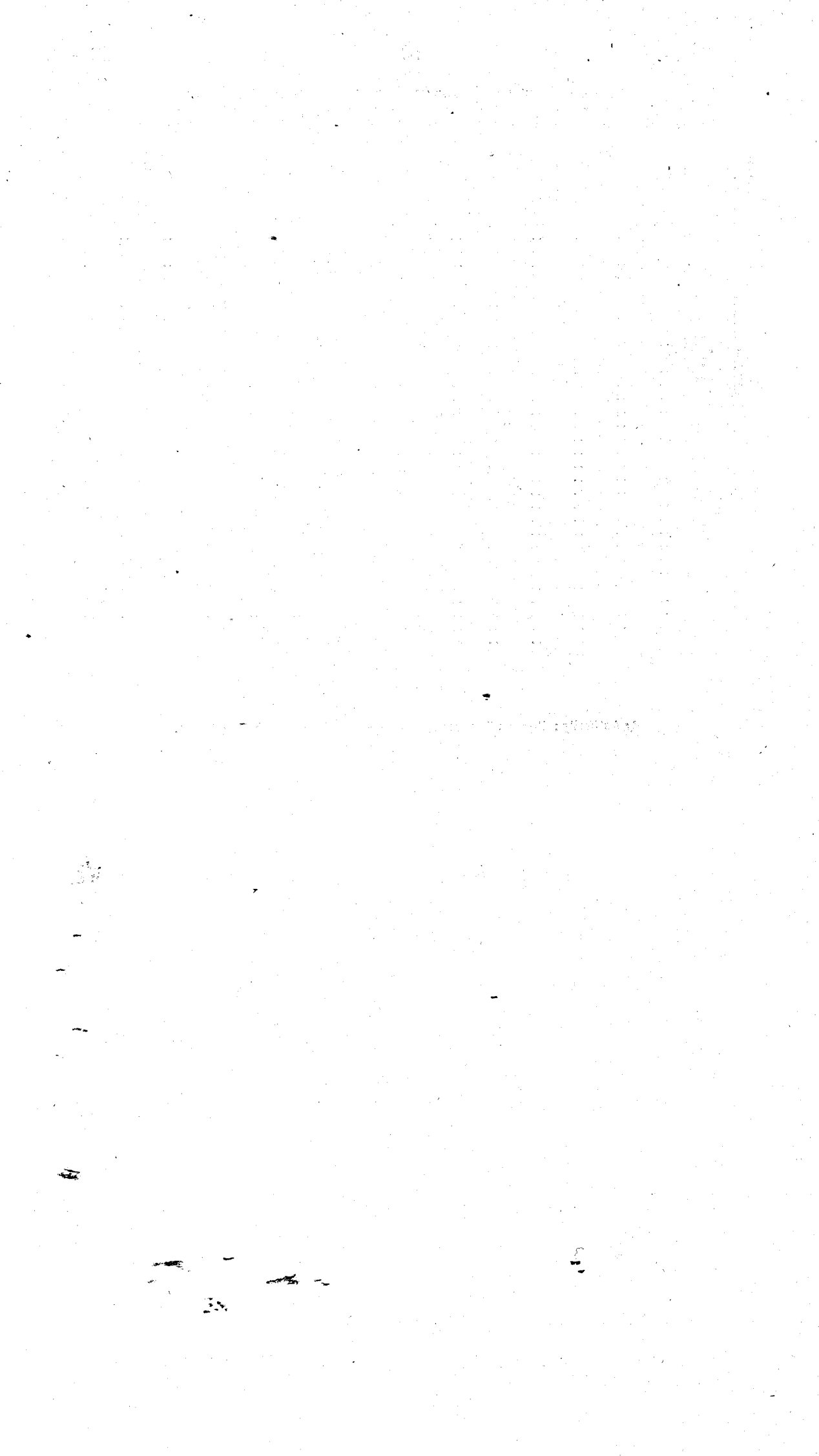
Total acres marked thus *, 5,171. See Class A in Summary.

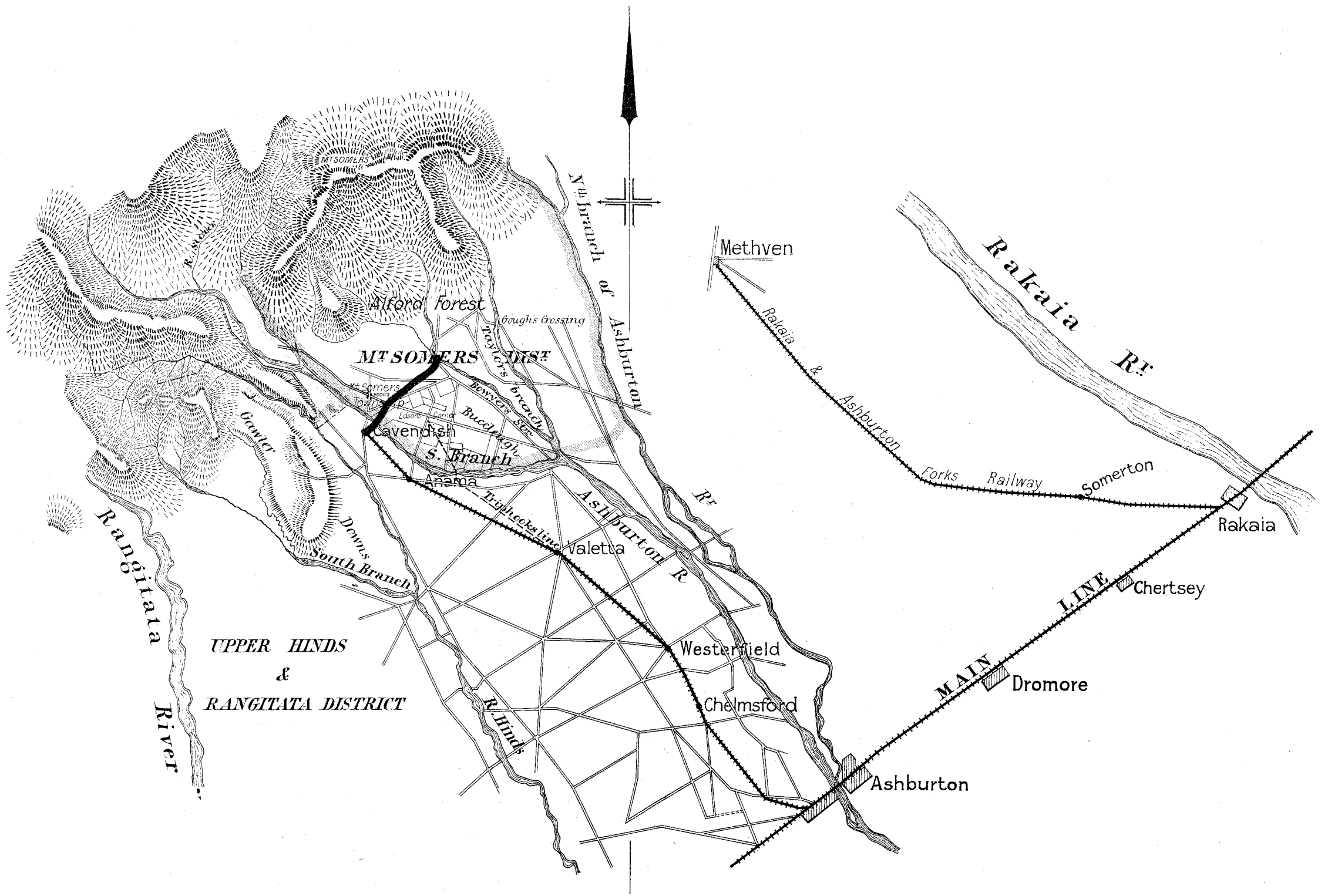
ALFORD FOREST and MOUNT SOMERS DISTRICT—*continued.*

No. of Section.	Description of Land.									No. of Section.	Description of Land.								
	Area.	Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.					Area.		Heavy Grass.	Oats and Grass.	Wheat. Estimated Yield in Bushels per Acre.						
				20	25	30	35	40					20	25	30	35	40		
Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	
6	*37	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6	71	..	71	..	..	..	..	..	..
7	*102	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7	31	..	31	..	..	..	..	..	..
8	*116	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34148	*283	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
9	*130	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34078	*192	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
40	*144	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9	*24	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1	*171	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	29114	*50	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2	*77	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	272	*70	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3	*45	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	*80	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
4	*22	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0	*450	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	*217	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	*123	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
6	*40	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	*82	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
7	*217	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	388	*101	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
8	*190	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	294	*214	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
9	*218	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	273	*53	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
50	*350	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30626	439	..	439	..	..	..	..	..	..
1	*87	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7	118	..	118	..	..	..	..	..	..
2	*50	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30628	252	..	252	..	..	..	..	..	..
3	*20	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9	48	..	48	..	..	..	..	..	..
30191	*49	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34074	5	..	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
187	*61	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	29389	50	..	50	..	..	..	..	..	..
8	*26	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	650	24	..	24	..	..	..	..	..	..
90	*87	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	699	285	..	285	..	..	..	..	..	..
185	*134	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	651	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..	..
6	*184	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	992	27	..	..	..	27	..	..	..	..
192	*41	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30001	56	..	..	..	56	..	..	..	..
34143	43	..	43	..	..	..	..	..	94	81	..	81	..	..	..	..	..	..
2	17	..	17	..	..	..	..	..	5	34	..	34	..	..	..	..	..	..
1	61	..	61	..	..	..	..	..	6	20	..	20	..	..	..	..	..	..
0	*95	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18570	20	..	..	..	20	..	..	..	..
4	*4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..			..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	87	..	87	..	..	..	..	..			..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
										28,969	1,455	8,469	7,212	4,552	1,091	667	352		

Total acres marked thus *, 5,171. See Class A in Summary.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBUY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1884.

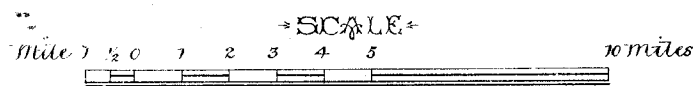




TINWALD & M^TSOMERS RAILWAY EXTENSION.

PLAN TO ACCOMPANY REPORT

of Commission, appointed 2nd January 1884.



Note Proposed extensions thus

