

it on in the same way as was done by my predecessor. The Clerk instructed me what was necessary to be done. I performed no other duties as Treasurer than those I have described. I did not prepare the annual estimate of receipts and expenditure. That was done by the Clerk. I signed it as Treasurer. I looked it over to see, as far as my knowledge enabled me, that it was correct. I was not aware that I was required as Treasurer to keep full and true accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the county. I did not keep any such accounts. The accounts were kept by the Clerk. I had not charge of the books and vouchers during my tenure of the office of Treasurer. They were in the charge of the Clerk. The Clerk was before my term of office both Clerk and Treasurer. In the latter capacity he had charge of the accounts and vouchers, and he retained that charge when I took the office of Treasurer. I never gave him any authority to do so. I presume he held them as a matter of course. I was not aware that I had to take charge of them. If I had supposed he was committing any irregularity I should have reported it to the Chairman. I should not have considered that as Treasurer I had any authority to take the books and papers out of his hands. Did not take any steps to see that the Clerk was keeping his accounts properly, except after the visit of the County Auditor. I used then to look over the books in company with the Clerk to see how improprieties pointed out by the Auditor had arisen, and to point out to the Clerk the necessity of attending to the Auditor's instructions. It was my duty to sign all cheques on the County Fund account. I think that every abstract on which a payment was made should bear upon its face a certificate—in the case of public works by the Inspector of Works, and in other cases by the officer responsible—that the work has been satisfactorily done or the service performed. I never looked over the Clerk's vouchers after payment had been made. I considered that the duty of the Auditor, and left it to him. I never issued any instructions to the Clerk as to the keeping of the accounts, or as to the certifying of abstracts, beyond requiring him to conform to the Auditor's instructions. Accounts for authorization were laid before the Council by the Clerk. Of late years these accounts have all been previously considered and approved by the Finance Committee. They were entered in a schedule, which was laid, with the claims, before the Council. I consider that it rested with the Finance Committee to say whether claims were properly due and payable. Salaries and travelling-allowances were not laid before the Finance Committee until of late years. They are now all laid before the Committee as well as before the Council. Payments were made under contract without submitting the account beforehand, the acceptance of the contract being an implied authority for the payment. Other expenditure similarly sanctioned by previous resolution was similarly made. Before certifying an abstract I satisfied myself as far as I could that the proposed payment was correct. Before signing cheques I satisfied myself that the proposed payments had been duly authorized by the Council. I would have either the accounts book or the abstract before me when I signed cheques, and I then compared the one or other with the cheque and saw that they agreed. I was quite aware that in numbers of instances cheques were drawn for a sum of money representing the claims of several persons specified on the face or on the back of the cheque, and that Mr. Boulton cashed these cheques. I stated to Mr. Boulton that I considered the practice objectionable, but he represented to me that it was convenient; and by signing such cheques I assented to the practice. I was not aware until the past year that the proceeds of these cheques, instead of being applied to the payment of the claims to satisfy which they were drawn, were frequently applied to wholly different purposes. I know now that this was the practice. I did not examine the Clerk's account to see that the sums which he received were duly paid into the bank and properly entered in his books. I was unable to do so, being frequently absent from town. I did find out that in one or two cases he had not paid money promptly to the bank, and I complained to him on the subject. I am unable to explain how it is that payments were frequently made on uncertified abstracts. In regard to members' travelling-allowances, the Clerk usually prepared a list of the sums due, and the cheques were signed according to the list. The abstract for a salary or other service payable by time should show the period for which the payment is made. I am not aware that in many cases the period for which the payment was made is not so stated. As to the missing rate-book, I was first informed of its loss by Mr. Boyes, the Chairman, who told me that the Auditor had reported to him to that effect. I took no steps in the matter, except, I think, that I spoke to the Clerk on the subject. He said it was mislaid, and he did not know where it was. I made no remark about it. I left the matter to the Chairman. I have never seen the book since it was laid upon the Council table in connection with some discussion as to uncollected rates. I was told by Pauline that he saw Boulton arrive at his farm on horseback carrying a large book on the front of his saddle. I have never heard of any other person having said he had seen the book. Boulton told me, on the day that he was examined by Mr. Batkin, or the day after, that he had burned the book. I believe that statement to be correct. As to rates written off, I remember the Council authorizing the writing-off of certain uncollected rates. The rates so ordered to be written off were made up from certain lists laid before the Council, which the members carefully went through, striking out the names and amounts of certain rates held to be uncollectable, and which were then ordered to be written off. It will be seen that the minute-book confirms my remembrance of what took place (See afternoon sitting). I also remember authority being given to write off the rates of the Martin's Bay settlers. I have no recollection of the Council authorizing the writing-off of the whole of the uncollected rates of the years 1881 to 1884 and of the year 1884-85. I believe the words "of rates, 1884-85," written over the line in the minutes of the 6th July, 1885, and also the words, "also of uncollected of years 1881 to 1884," have been interpolated. I am unable to say whether those words were there when the minutes were read and confirmed at the ensuing meeting. I have on one or two occasions received rates (when passing through a country district), but I never collected them. I paid all rates so received by me to the Clerk as soon as I came to town. I did not give receipts for them in any case except in the case of Mr. McDonnell, of Arrowtown. The sum I received from Mr. McDonnell was £3 12s. It was, I think, for rates of 1882-83. I received a sum of £1 0s. 8d. from a Mr. Cunningham, of Kingston