

440. You might also at the same time give us the number of extra sleepers required for points and crossings?—Yes.

441. There is another item here, "Freight on rails, &c., and sleepers, £632 7s. 8d.": was that paid by the Public Works Department to the Railway Department?—Yes.

442. You did not pay it?—No.

443. There is another item, "Maintenance of section, £316": can you explain that to us? Of course, you will remember there was no traffic on the line at this time—that the line was not running?—Does not the Public Works Department maintain the line for a short period after the line is open—I think, for three months?

444. I was with you and Mr. Ronayne at the time you handed over the line to the Railway Department: did you not hand the line over absolutely, except the relief sidings?—Yes.

445. Did you have anything more to do with it after that day?—No.

446. So that its maintenance would have been previous to your handing it over to the Railway Department?—I think there is an allowance made to the Railway Department by the Public Works Department for the cost of maintenance for the first three months after handing over.

447. Suppose the Railway Department in their returns claim to have maintained the line from the day they took it over until they got entire possession, could there be another claim for maintenance for the same period?—Although the Railway Department did the work of maintenance, there would be an allowance of two or three months made by the Public Works Department. I cannot speak as to the fact; I am merely speaking as to the possibility.

448. Were you in charge of the line when it was taken over by the Government in 1895?—No; Mr. Wilson was in charge. I was his assistant.

449. You had no Inspector at the tunnel?—No, not during the work of piercing.

450. You did it all yourself?—Yes.

451. Did you put up buildings in the Belgrove yard—there are two new buildings there, the Stationmaster's house and a platelayer's cottage?—The Stationmaster's house was shifted, but it was added to.

452. Can you tell us the value of the new cottage and the additions made to the Stationmaster's house?—No, not offhand.

453. Can you tell us this afternoon, and also the value of the platelayer's cottage at the other end of the tunnel?—Yes.

454. There was a building which you had originally as an office, and which has been shifted to the Belgrove yard: can you give us the value of that building when it was taken possession of by the Government?—Yes, I will do so.

455. You had a siding that was placed across the road-crossing at Spooner's Range?—Yes.

456. Was that done by the Government after they took possession?—Yes.

457. And afterwards taken up?—Yes.

458. There is an expenditure of £35 for taking up that siding: was that a reasonable expenditure?—Yes.

459. Taking the item of £4,263 for ballasting, platelaying, &c., you cannot say whether that was the amount spent on it or not?—No, because the accounts were not kept here.

460. But you can say that the permanent-way was carried on economically?—Yes; it was done under the co-operative system and paid by schedule.

461. And you consider that platelaying and ballasting is work that can be carried on economically under the co-operative system?—Yes.

THOMAS ROBERTS recalled and further examined.

462. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Roberts, will you now give us the information in answer to the questions which I asked you this morning?—Yes. You asked me for the number of sleepers on curves and on the straight. There were 2 miles and 5 chains of curves in the total length of 6 miles 29 chains. Sleepers on straight, 8,600; sleepers on curves, 4,550; sidings, 52 chains—that would mean about 1,600 sleepers more.

463. Do you make any additions for the long sleepers at the points and crossings, for instance?—No. That will make a total of, say, 15,000 sleepers.

464. Can you give us an approximate value for them?—I do not know how many were silver-pine sleepers, because no accounts were kept here. As to the birch sleepers, the first cost was 2s. delivered at Belgrove.

465. In estimating the value of the birch sleepers used on that section would there be any charge for railway freight?—Not much; we hired the railway occasionally to run them through to the other side of the tunnel.

466. I mean there would be no charge for freight on the railway outside of that section?—There would be a charge, because we had some from Wai-iti.

467. Now, about the rails and fastenings?—You asked me to give you the length of the ballast-pit siding. Ballast-pit siding, 41 chains, rails to go into the pit and for a lay-by. Then, there were two bridges in the river-bed to get over streams; and the sidings, 52 chains—32 chains at Belgrove, and 20 chains at Spooner's Range.

468. Does that include the siding you took up?—Yes.

469. I mean the relief sidings?—Those would be about 10 chains the two.

470. *Mr. Hudson.*] Do I understand that the 20 chains taken up at Spooner's Range were utilised in putting up those relief sidings?—Yes, in part.

471. What became of the balance?—They were used on the line further on.

472. Not on this particular section?—Yes, because they were 53 lb. rails. The "fifty-threes" extended to about 27·50.

473. What is the weight of the other rails?—56 lb.