

300. He joined the Bay of Plenty Cavalry, which were called out for service about that time?
Yes.

301. Mr. Wrigg says he left soon after July, 1867, and went to Southland. How long was it after he left Opotiki when you heard from him again?—I do not think until thirty years. I do not think I heard from him till June of 1897.

302. Till some time last year, I suppose?—Until June, 1897.

303. That was about thirty years?—Yes.

304. Have you a letter from Mr. Wrigg, dated 26th June?—Here is a letter, dated Auckland, the 26th June, 1897.

305. Is that the opening of the correspondence?—Yes, as far as I remember. [Letter, dated 26th June, 1897, put in—Exhibit No. 13.]

306. *The Chairman.*] You put in that as evidence?—Yes.

307. *Mr. Hutchison.*] You replied to that letter, Captain Bower?—Yes.

308. We have your reply—the letter you produced this morning?—Yes.

309. You had a letter of the 16th July from Mr. Wrigg—it has also been produced—in which he asked you to send a certificate?—Yes; this is it. [Exhibit No. 5.]

310. You wrote a reply to that, which we also have—at least, it is in print—dated 24th July, in which you say, “Napier, 24th July, 1897.—Dear Sir,—In reply to your letter of the 16th instant, I have much pleasure in stating my recollection of what occurred at Opotiki, when you volunteered to ride with despatches to Tauranga. When Bennett White was found murdered by hostile Natives, the late Colonel St. John, then commanding the district, called for volunteers to ride with despatches to Tauranga, when Cornet Wrigg, of the Bay of Plenty Volunteer Cavalry, at once rode to the front and said he would go if a trooper would accompany him. This a trooper, whose name I forget, volunteered to do, and the two were sent. Their service was most dangerous, their route being along the beach, where Natives were known to be in force, and the rivers were in flood. They reached Tauranga, and returned from thence to Opotiki the next day, thus completing an arduous and very dangerous duty.—I remain, &c., M. N. Bowen, late District Adjutant, Opotiki.” Was that your answer to Mr. Wrigg’s letter of the 16th?—Yes.

311. At that time, Captain Bower, putting aside altogether the letter that you got from Mr. Wrigg of the 16th July, were the circumstances you wrote about in your recollection or not?—Yes, I thought so, at the time.

312. You do not mention any date in this letter as to when the ride took place?—No, because I was not aware of it.

313. You were not aware when the ride took place—of the actual ride; it is stated to have been on the 29th June, 1867?—I have since ascertained that.

314. We will take that as the date when the despatches were sent from Opotiki to Tauranga?—Yes.

315. Are you sure you were in Opotiki on that date?—I think I was, but believe I was not now. That was a thing I did not find out till after.

316. Look at this letter of the 16th July last year; see this passage in it, Captain Bower: “I think I had better refresh your memory as to how two came to volunteer. The evening we found Bennett White’s body, on parade Major St. John asked for a volunteer to carry despatches to Tauranga. I immediately rode to the front and volunteered, provided I had a trooper, when Trooper McDonald volunteered. The rivers were in flood at the season of year, and those we did not swim had to head until we got a ford. The risks, as you were aware, were great upon all sides.” I ask you to say whether you remember being in Opotiki when the news of Bennett White’s murder reached there?—My impression was that I was.

317. What is your reply now?—It is no mere hearsay evidence that I was there.

318. You have certified to a fact here, and I want to know whether you certified to that fact from your own knowledge or from Mr. Wrigg’s suggestion?—When I wrote Mr. Wrigg’s letter I really thought I did recollect the circumstance, but it must seem now I did not.

319. You gave a certificate which would imply you knew personally?—At the time I wrote the certificate I thought so.

320. Are there any circumstances which would lead you to say positively now, one way or the other, that you were in Opotiki when the report of the murder came in?—I have had hearsay evidence from my old brother-officers. That is the only thing I know.

321. Who were your brother-officers?—Major Mair, for one.

322. Did he recall any circumstance to your mind?—No; he referred to his own diary.

323. Is your name mentioned in his diary?—Yes, it is.

324. As having been absent from Opotiki on the 29th June, 1867? What is your own belief: were you there on that date?—I really do not know.

325. Can you recall to mind any incident that would bring to your recollection whether you were at Opotiki on the 28th June, when the news of the murders came in?—To this day my impression is that I was there.

326. You cannot recall any incident: it is only your impression?—That is all.

327. Can you recall any incident like a troop parade, where a volunteer was called for to carry despatches to Tauranga?—Well, no, not now.

328. Did you last year?—Oh, yes, I did last year.

329. You recollected the event last year, and have forgotten it this year?—It is curious to explain, but that is the impression left on my mind.

330. In July last year you thought you recollected it, but now you are not so sure?—No.

331. Had you yourself gone over this road?—Yes, hundreds of times.

332. You knew generally the state of the district in June, 1867?—Yes.

333. Where was the danger in June, 1867?—Between Opotiki and Ohawa.