

646. And their general habits you are fully acquainted with?—Yes.

647. During the Native wars you also had gained a wide experience and intimate knowledge of their methods of warfare?—Yes.

648. Do you think it is at all consistent with the Native method of war to commit a murder, depredation, and then wait about the place afterwards; or was it not rather, after murdering or doing whatever they were bent upon, they would leave immediately afterwards?—As far as my experience goes, they generally put as great a distance between the scene of the action and themselves as they possibly could.

649. We have it in evidence that the day that Bennett White and the Native were murdered, or at all events very shortly afterwards—almost immediately afterwards—the knowledge of the event was conveyed to the commanding officer at Opotiki, and the country was scoured by men in the endeavour to get at the Maoris?—Yes.

650. It has also been alleged that Cornet Wrigg and Trooper McDonald carried the despatches from Opotiki to Tauranga, passed the country that had been scoured by these troops, and passed the place where the murder had been committed the day after the troops had been searching for the Natives. That being so, I ask you, do you think that Cornet Wrigg and Trooper McDonald did any action which entailed any great danger, or necessitated any great danger on their part?—At the time those despatches were carried there was no danger along the road at all.

651. Probably that was one of the safest roads in the district?—Parties were out scouring the district for several days, besides a party out trying to intercept the Natives.

652. Do you know that an escort was sent out?—I do not know whether an escort went on this occasion or not, not being there, but parties were out every day.

653. I suppose, Major Mair, you knew the road between Opotiki and Tauranga perfectly?—Perfectly well. I was fired at one time close to the spot where Bennett White was murdered.

654. What rivers do you consider there are on that coast?—After leaving Opotiki there is a small river, the Waiotahi, which at high water you might have to swim. The next was Ohiwa, where there was a Native ferryman, and your horse had to be swum over that river. And the next was the Whakatane. There were Europeans and Natives living there. There was a ferryman there also, and your horse had to swim that river. The next was the Matata. There was a camp there, and your horse had to be ferried over there also. The next was a small river, the Waitaha, which you could always cross. The next was the Waihi, where you had to wait for the tide; then you reached Maketu.

655. And the rivers were in friendly country?—All except the Waiotahi and the Ohiwa.

656. Was there always a ferryman at Ohiwa?—Yes, a Maori ferryman.

657. Do you know of any occasion where difficulty had been encountered in crossing there on account of the ferryman, or anything of that kind?—No; there was a man paid regularly. I cannot call to mind any occasion on which he was absent.

658. You have no knowledge?—I travelled as often as any man on the coast and never found him absent.

659. You always travelled without an escort?—Sometimes an escort went as far as Ohiwa with me. Coming back I had to take my chance.

660. You have said, Major Mair, you were second in command at Opotiki?—Yes.

661. And Major St. John was there at the time this murder took place?—Yes.

662. Would any order with reference to the conveying of despatches to Tauranga or anywhere else have emanated from the commanding officer?—Yes.

663. If Captain Gwynneth sent despatches on his own initiative to Colonel Harington, would you not have regarded that as a most extraordinary proceeding on his part?—Yes.

664. You think it improbable any such thing should have occurred? You said "extraordinary"?—I did not say "extraordinary." Major St. John was there directing all the operations that took place.

665. You say on the same occasion Trooper McDonald met you at Maketu, and gave you despatches. Your journal states that was Cornet Wrigg with Trooper McDonald?—That I do not know. I have no recollection of ever seeing Mr. Wrigg until he was pointed out to me on Wednesday last. I have no recollection of seeing him in my life before.

666. Had Cornet Wrigg done anything in connection with the carrying of despatches that merited special recommendation you could not but know something of it?—I must have heard of it.

667. And you in the absence of Major St. John would have been the proper person to make any recommendation with regard to the bestowal of anything?—Yes.

668. Are you sure, Major Mair, from the best of your knowledge and belief, that you never saw Mr. Wrigg until you saw him the other day?—He has been an utter stranger to me. I never saw him until here on Wednesday.

669. You do not recollect seeing him at Opotiki?—No.

670. There were a number of men there. Is it at all likely that if he had been there you would not have come in contact with him there?—I have heard Mr. Wrigg's name mentioned some several years afterwards.

671. Not in connection with anything that occurred at Opotiki, or in connection with that district?—No. I remember the officers of that corps, but have no recollection of Mr. Wrigg.

672. You said that the district along there, between Opotiki and Tauranga, was at that time partially settled, and that there were accommodation-houses and hotels along the route?—There was a hotel at Whakatane, and a store and two or three settlers. Then, at Matata, the next place, there was an accommodation-house kept by this man Kati that I mentioned as having brought the news of the murders to Tauranga.

673. Was there any stopping-place between Whakatane and Opotiki?—There was only a ferryman at Ohiwa, and the Native village at Ohope.