

181. I want you to say, Mr. Ford, to the best of your recollection, whether Mr. Wrigg had left the corps, ceased to be a member of the corps, before you left it?—I did not leave it. I got leave of absence to go away to the diggings.

182. Had Mr. Wrigg left the district before you left for the diggings?—I could not tell you.

183. Of whom was this corps composed: were they men belonging to the district?—Mostly all men belonging to the left wing of the 1st Waikatos.

184. Had they a knowledge of the district?—Yes, they were living there, settling on the land.

185. I want to know whether the men who joined that corps had a general knowledge of the district previous to joining?—Yes, they had to go out and look at the land to see whether they would take that land or not.

186. I want to know whether or not these men knew the district; whether they were resident in the district at the time they joined that corps?—The men, I think, knew the district very well, because the land extended a good distance, and we used to go out pig-hunting when things were quiet.

187. You knew Trooper McDonald?—Yes.

188. What was his reputation—was he regarded as a good man? Was he a man you would regard as being possessed of an ordinary amount of courage, and so on?—I should say he was a strictly reliable man.

189. And a courageous man—or otherwise?—Well, I never had an opportunity of proving whether he was more courageous than any other man. He had never been in any force before he joined the Troopers.

190. Did he know the district?—Just as much as the rest of them.

191. He belonged to the 1st Waikatos?—I do not know whether he did or not.

192. Have you any idea how long he had been there at the time he joined?—He came with the left wing, and his brother-in-law.

193. How long had this corps been formed at the time that Bennett White was murdered?—It could not have been very long.

194. How long do you suppose?—Well, I do not know the date that Bennett White was murdered, nor the actual date when the corps was formed.

195. Mr. Wrigg has said that at the time he and Trooper McDonald went along on this memorable occasion and carried the despatches that that was the first occasion in which they had been along that coast. Is that true to the best of your knowledge and belief?—I do not know whether McDonald could have been. The troop used to go down the beach to keep the road open.

196. Is it within your knowledge or not that McDonald had been along that road before from Opotiki to Tauranga?—If the troop went he would be with them. I do not know.

197. Had any members of the corps been along the road before?—As far as my recollection carries me, I think the troop had been down the beach.

198. So far as you know, had any member of that corps at that time been along the coast between Tauranga and Opotiki?—I could not swear, sir.

199. You had not been along yourself?—I could not remember.

200. Not from Tauranga to Opotiki?—I could not remember.

201. Were there any men who were permanently settled in the district—men who had been there for any length of time before?—I think there was one man who originally belonged to the Wanganui Cavalry that settled in Opotiki, which was there before our corps was formed, and I think that man was there before we arrived.

202. Do you think it is at all likely, Mr. Ford, that, had there been any men in that troop who knew the road, do you think it is at all likely that Captain Gwynneth would have sent two men who did not know the road?—There was no danger in the road—only the beach.

203. Is it at all likely that Captain Gwynneth would have sent men to carry the despatches who did not know the road if he had had at his command men who did know the road?—I think they were all tarred with one brush. We had to go out. We had patrolled the beach.

204. My question was as to whether or not any members of that troop knew the road from Opotiki to Tauranga?—I do not know.

205. You said you were a constant attendant at the parades of the troop?—Quite correct.

206. You have seen that document put in that purports to be a camp order?—Yes.

207. Have you seen other camp orders?—I have.

208. Does this camp order resemble one, or is it anything like what you consider a camp order should be, or what a camp order ordinarily was?—It reads something like a daily camp order.

209. You have no doubt as to its genuineness?—That I could not say.

210. You said that you wrote to a newspaper on one or two occasions. Why did you write?—Because I heard that Mr. Wrigg, formerly cornet of the Bay of Plenty Cavalry, had received the New Zealand Cross, and I wanted to know why. Then I found out that it was for carrying the despatches to Tauranga, notifying the murder of Bennett White and the mailman. Then I wrote to the papers contradicting it.

211. One of the reasons was you did not think Mr. Wrigg was entitled it?—That was the reason.

212. You did not think he had done anything particularly meritorious?—He had not done anything meritorious.

213. You also said, Mr. Ford, that it was a practice to patrol that portion of the road between Opotiki and Ohiwa?—Correct, sir.

214. Was that done every day?—As far as my recollection carries me, there were so many men told off to patrol the beach every day.

215. For the purpose of keeping it open?—Yes.

216. Was it a common or uncommon thing for men—for troopers—to go along that beach?—That I could not say; it is so long ago.