REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS

ON THE QUESTION OF

SELECTING LOCALITIES FOR THE PERMANENT SURVEY OF

NARROW-GAUGE LINES;

TOGETHER WITH THE

APPENDICES AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 18th August, 1896.

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Railways Standing Committee Report No. 9.—[62.]—5904.
THURSDAY, 13th FEBRUARY, 1896.

1. NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAYS.—Mr. H. R. Williams moved, pursuant to amended notice, That the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines of railway be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report. Debate ensued. Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.
(Third Committee.)

E. H. CAMERON, Esq., M.L.A., Chairman;
The Hon. J. Buchanan, M.L.C.;
A. W. Craven, Esq., M.L.A.,
A. Harris, Esq., M.L.A.,

The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C. (Vice-Chairman),
W. A. Trenwith, Esq., M.L.A.,
J. S. White, Esq., M.L.A.

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* The compilation was a portion of the work of the Clerk of Committees, who is paid by annual salary.
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PERMANENT SURVEY OF NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAYS.

REPORT.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines, have the honour to report as follows:

1. This question was referred to the Committee in consequence of their Report on Narrow-gauge Railways, which was framed after the fullest evidence on both sides of the question had been sought, and information obtained from Europe, India, and other countries where narrow-gauge lines have been built during recent years.

The Report on the narrow-gauge principle was presented to the Legislative Assembly on the 10th October, 1895, and contained the following recommendations, viz.:

"1. That one or two trial lines, in suitable districts, be constructed on a gauge of 2 feet.

"2. That such districts be selected in the manner provided by the Railways Standing Committee Acts, the lines being submitted to the Assembly by the Minister for Railways, with the usual departmental estimate of the probable traffic, and the Engineer-in-Chief's estimate of the cost of constructing and equipping a 2-ft. line to carry that traffic, and to cope with any development that may reasonably be expected therein.

"3. That in addition to the departmental estimate of cost, tenders be invited for the construction and equipment (including rolling-stock) of the lines selected. Such tenders to be invited for the construction of lines—

(a) On the Deauville system;
(b) On the Bochumer-Verein system, with steel sleepers; and with 40-lb. steel rails and wooden sleepers;
(c) With wooden sleepers, and second-hand rails supplied by the Government.

"4. That the proposed lines, together with the estimates of traffic, cost, &c., and the various tenders sent in, be submitted to the Committee for inquiry and report."

No action was taken to give effect to these recommendations until four months had elapsed, when, on the 13th February, 1896, the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines was remitted to the Committee for consideration.

2. Applications from all parts of the colony for a visit of inspection have been received by the Committee, and numerous districts, in comparatively level as well as in hilly country, have urged their claims to a narrow-gauge railway.

In order to limit the number of inspections as much as possible, the Committee, on the 20th February, 1896, passed the following resolution:

"That districts desiring an inspection by the Committee be called on for a statement of their claims to a narrow-gauge railway, including statistics of population, cultivation, and other sources of traffic, in order that the Committee may form an opinion of the resources of each district before deciding to visit it."

With the aid of the information thus obtained, and the data contained in the Reports of the first Railways Standing Committee, as well as the knowledge of the colony gained during recent years by members of the present Committee, a number of districts, most of which are situated in the hilly and mountainous portions of the colony, were selected for inspection.
3. The following localities have been inspected:—

1. Bass River District.
2. Beech Forest District.
3. Carrajung District.
4. Gembrook District.
5. Gunbower and Cohuna District.
6. King River District.
7. McDonald’s Track District.
8. Mitta Mitta River District.
9. Moondarra and Walhalla District.
10. Orbost and Snowy River District.
11. Poowong East District.
12. Tolmie District.
13. Upper Murray District.

There are a number of other districts which have submitted applications for an inspection, but to visit all of them would take a considerable time, and it is essential that no further delay should take place in the construction of the trial lines which will afford a practical illustration of the utility of the 2-ft. gauge. The Committee, therefore, while not claiming to have inspected all the localities where a narrow-gauge line may be justified, decided on the 27th June last to report on the localities visited up to that date. It will be seen from the foregoing list that the districts inspected are situated in different portions of the colony, and afford a fair example of the localities which have been asking for railway facilities for many years past, but which it has been found impossible to supply with broad-gauge railways, except at an enormous cost.

4. In order to arrive at a conclusion as to the relative merits of the various districts visited, the Committee have taken evidence at various places in each locality. They have also endeavoured, as far as time would allow, to see as much of each locality as possible, in order that members of the Committee might obtain a correct idea of the natural features of the country and form their own opinions as to the quality of the soil, the character of the settlement, and the prospects of development. They have also obtained the reports of the surveyors who surveyed broad-gauge lines in some of the districts, and the papers with reference to applications made to the Railway Department for narrow-gauge railways. In most of the localities it has been found that there are two or three rival routes. The consideration of these rival routes has made the work of the Committee in some instances very difficult, and has necessarily taken up a good deal of time. During the inquiry the Committee have examined 367 witnesses, and have travelled 1,138 miles by road in the inspection of the different routes, and 2,268 miles by rail to and from the various districts.

5. After carefully considering the merits of the different localities visited, the Committee are of opinion that the most suitable districts for the trial lines and those presenting the strongest claims to a narrow-gauge railway are—

Wandin and Warburton District.
King River District.
Gembrook District.
Beech Forest District.

A description of each of these districts, including the physical features of the country, the settlement, and the products grown, is contained in the four following paragraphs.

WANDIN AND WARBURTON DISTRICT.

6. The Committee have placed this district first in the list as the most suitable locality of all those visited for the construction of one of the trial narrow-gauge lines. The country to be traversed is hilly, and, in some places, somewhat rough and broken. A 5ft. 3in. gauge railway to serve the district would be a very costly work. A broad-gauge line was proposed in the Railway Construction Bill of 1890, starting at Croydon—a station 18½ miles from Melbourne on the Healesville railway—and terminating at Launching Place. The estimated cost of this line was £14,665 per mile,
A narrow-gauge railway will greatly develop the industry, as the close proximity to the metropolis will give the growers a decided advantage over districts more remote from a market. A narrow-gauge railway will greatly develop the industry, notwithstanding any difficulties of transhipment. Strawberries are now sent from Wandin in considerable quantities by the express trains to Sydney, where they realize a high price, and, although transshipped at the Albury junction, the fruit sustains no injury.

While fruit-growing is extensively carried on in the district, other products have recently been taken to prospect for payable reefs. A number of miners, estimated at 400, find profitable employment in the Mining Warburton district. Very little deep sinking has been done, but energetic steps have been taken to make the journey from Lilydale to Warburton, a distance of 25 miles.

Lilydale being an important town and the business centre of the Upper Yarra district, the Committee recommend that the line should start from near the Lilydale station, which is 234 miles from Melbourne. A route can be obtained for a narrow-gauge railway to the Upper Yarra. The district is now a favorite resort for tourists, and there are numerous old-established houses for the accommodation of travellers at various points. The coaches traffic in the summer months is very large. At present it takes the coach from five to six hours to make the journey from Lilydale to Warburton.

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near South Wandin as possible. If the settlers in the forest are assisted to make a road from the settlement into South Wandin, the railway will be of great service to them. There is also a village settlement at Warburton West, close to the terminus of the proposed line, where there are 30 settlers and their families, on 620 acres. These settlements cannot succeed unless they are provided with some better means of getting their produce to market than at present exist. Owing to the proximity of the district to the metropolis, the settlers could find a ready market for the timber on their holdings if they could get it away.

The population to be served by this line is estimated at 3,370 persons, exclusive of miners and village settlers, and the number of holdings is stated to be upwards of 600; the area occupied being 80,000 acres. No district visited by the Committee presents better prospects for a payable railway.

**King River District.**

7. This district has been placed second on the list of the localities where the Committee think a trial narrow-gauge line should be built.

In August, last year, a broad-gauge railway, starting at Glenrowan and terminating at Edi, was remitted to the Committee. This line was estimated to cost £3,143 per mile, exclusive of land and rolling-stock, and the estimate of traffic submitted by the Department showed that, while the line would pay working-expenses, there would be a deficiency of £2,880 per annum in meeting the interest on the cost of construction. The Committee concluded their Report on the proposal for a broad-gauge railway from Glenrowan to Edi, as follows:

"After fully considering the question the Committee are of opinion that either of the suggested lines to the Upper King would result in a large annual loss, unless the fertile lands in the district are used for the growth of cereals and other products which will furnish freight for a railway, and the evidence as to the probability of the land being so used is not such as to justify the Committee in recommending the construction of the railway remitted to them."

When the Glenrowan to Edi line was rejected the residents of the Upper King took steps to ascertain at what price a narrow-gauge line could be constructed from Wangaratta to Edi. They obtained an offer from a firm in Melbourne to build a 2-ft. gauge line for £850 a mile exclusive of rolling-stock, or £1,150 a mile including engines and rolling-stock. When the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines was remitted to the Committee, the Upper King district submitted this offer to them, and asked them to take their claims for a narrow-gauge line into consideration with other districts, at the same time urging, that owing to the rise in the price of cereals and other farm produce the farmers were taking steps to cultivate the fertile lands of the district more extensively.

The Committee accordingly revisited the locality and inspected the Upper King district and the proposed routes for a railway from Wangaratta and Benalla.

The residents of the district had taken steps to place their case for a railway much more fully, before the Committee than was done on the occasion of their previous visit, and they satisfied the Committee that the rise in prices would cause the farmers to cultivate more extensively if railway facilities were afforded, and that a narrow-gauge line at the reduced cost of £1,200 a mile would probably be remunerative.

Evidence was also given that if the line were extended beyond Edi as far as the Whitfield post-office, which is about 30 miles from Wangaratta, all the residents of the Upper King, and the valleys running into it, would be within a reasonable distance of the terminus, and that the farmers on the tablelands at the head of the King towards Tolmie would use the line for the carriage of their produce to the northern markets.

The residents of the Upper King are now from 30 to 40 miles away from a railway. Their business town is Wangaratta, where they find a good market for their produce, which goes north to the mining centres at Chiltern, Rutherglen, and other places. There is also a large demand for timber for the alluvial mines at Rutherglen and Chiltern. The Upper King district is unanimously in favour of a line to Wangaratta; such a railway will not, however, serve the settlers in the parishes of Tatong and Rosethey, who would be accommodated by a line starting at Benalla.

The Committee recommend that the narrow-gauge line to serve the Upper King district should start at Wangaratta and terminate for the present near the Whitfield post-office; about 30 miles from the starting-point. Although the Wangaratta route traverses easy country as far as Edi, the country becomes hilly beyond that place, and very sharp curves will have to be used, and a large quantity of earth removed, on
the first mile beyond Edi to get round a steep spur which runs right down into the river at this point. When the line is extended through to Mansfield, as it must be at some future time, it will traverse very rough and broken country, where the cost of a broad-gauge line would be enormous. The distance from the proposed terminus at Whitfield to Tolmie is about 15 miles by road, and through to Mansfield about 30 miles by road. By the route which has been inspected for a broad-gauge railway the distance from Whitfield to Tolmie is about 22 miles, and to Mansfield about 36 miles.

The population to be served by this line is estimated at 1,600 persons.

GEMBROOK DISTRICT.

8. The Committee have placed this district third on the list of the localities recommended for trial narrow-gauge lines. The country is very hilly, and in some places rough and broken. A broad-gauge line to Gembrook was included in the Railways Construction Bill of 1890. This line started at Beaconsfield, a station on the main Gippsland railway, distant 28 miles from Melbourne, and was estimated to cost £13,905 per mile, or £286,551 for 20·61 miles of railway.

The land in the Gembrook district is heavily timbered, but when cleared it is exceptionally good; the soil is of a rich chocolate character, equal to the best soil in Gippsland. The district is capable of maintaining a large population on small holdings. The good land extends for several miles on the east and north sides of Gembrook and to within a few miles of Fern Tree Gully on the west. Approaching the main Gippsland railway at Beaconsfield and Pakenham the land is poor for the most part, although some portions are well adapted for the growth of certain sorts of fruit, especially apples, pears, stone fruits, and nuts.

Although a considerable area of land has been cleared and put under the plough, cultivation is at present greatly retarded owing to the difficulties of transport. The roads are exceptionally bad; in winter they are almost impassable. Road-making is very costly owing to the depth of the soil in the rich land. The cost of carting from Gembrook to the nearest railway station is stated at from 10s. to 35s. per ton, according to the state of the roads.

The principal products grown at present are potatoes and other root crops, hay, fruit (especially apples, pears, peaches, plums, and all stone fruits, sweet chestnuts and nuts, also small fruits, such as raspberries, currants, gooseberries, and strawberries, which grow in the district to perfection), and vegetables. Cheese-making and dairying are carried on at present to a small extent; the strawberries, which grow in the district to perfection, and vegetables. Cheese-making and dairying are carried on at present to a small extent; the cleared land grows splendid grass, and most of the country is admirably adapted for dairying.

There will probably be a large traffic in timber and firewood if a narrow-gauge railway is built, as the line will tap a very extensive forest which is stated to run for many miles east from Gembrook, and the supply of marketable timber is said to be practically unlimited.

The passenger traffic will probably be a considerable item in the revenue of the line, owing to the proximity of Gembrook to Melbourne, the picturesque scenery throughout the district, and the cool and pleasant climate.

It is urged that this railway, if built, would be the means of opening up the mining country beyond Gembrook for mining purposes. It is stated that there are now upwards of 100 miners at work within 10 miles of Gembrook.

Several surveys have been made for a broad-gauge railway to Gembrook, and routes have been suggested from Oakleigh, Glen Iris, Dandenong, Beaconsfield, Pakenham, Nar-Nar-Goong, and Fern Tree Gully. The route from Fern Tree Gully traverses the best land, and would serve the greatest number of settlers. It is also the shortest to Melbourne, and divides the country better than any of the other routes, which would either be short spur lines or would run too close to the main Gippsland railway. The short spur of 7½ miles from Ringwood to Fern Tree Gully does not at present pay working expenses, and there is a loss of £3,171 per annum on this line, which cost about £8,000 per mile to build on the broad gauge. An extension to Gembrook would probably considerably lessen this heavy annual loss.

The evidence received by the Committee shows that a good route can be obtained from Fern Tree Gully (see evidence of Michael Elliott, C.E., page 105, and G. W. Robinson, engineer to the Fern Tree Gully Shire, page 102, Minutes of Evidence). The route from Fern Tree Gully will also be of service to a large number of the village settlers and selectors in the Dandenong Ranges. The Committee recommend that the narrow-gauge line start at Fern Tree Gully and terminate at about the river.
20 miles from that point; as near as possible to what is known as "Brömby's Hill;" the terminal station being located so that the line may be extended at a future time.

The population to be served by this line is estimated at 1,732 persons; exclusive of the settlers in the Dandenong Forest.

BEECH FOREST DISTRICT.

The Committee think this is a district where an experiment might be made with a 2-ft. gauge line to open up the country and to enable the selectors who have taken up land in the forest to utilize the very valuable timber on their holdings instead of destroying it by ringing; as is done at present.

A broad-gauge line has been surveyed from Colac, running south for 26-31 miles to tap a portion of the forest. The cost of this line was estimated in 1890 for the first Railways Standing Committee at £252,338, or £9,591 per mile. Between Colac and the Gellibrand River, a distance of 16 miles, the country is hilly and undulating and somewhat heavily timbered with stringybark, messmate, and a timber described as spotted gum. This portion of the route would not be very difficult for railway construction purposes. After crossing the Gellibrand the country becomes more hilly and the forest country is very mountainous, rough, and broken, and is covered with giant timber and dense undergrowth.

Between Colac and the Gellibrand River the country is poor and sparsely settled; most of the land being used for grazing, although a good deal of it is very poor grazing country. There are some small orchards on this portion of the route, and, from the results obtained, the soil appears to be well adapted for fruit-growing.

There is more settlement on the Gellibrand River than along the first 16 miles, and the land on the river flats is very good; the area of good land is, however, limited. Some fine samples of potatoes, fruit (especially apples), maize, root crops, and other products grown at the Gellibrand were shown to the Committee. For some 4 miles after leaving the river the country is similar to that for the first 16 miles from Colac, though somewhat better in quality. The forest country is then entered, and the soil improves, the land in the forest being of first-class quality when cleared. It is stated that this good land continues to within a mile or two of Moonlight Head, and that it extends over an area of 290 square miles.

A good deal of land has been selected in the forest, and is being slowly cleared sufficiently to admit of grass being sown. The cost and labour of clearing is very heavy, and the settlers who have taken up land have, in most instances, had to spend the capital with which they went into the forest, without getting much return for their outlay up to the present. Owing to the impassable nature of the roads, the selectors have not been able to send the timber on their holdings to a market; a good deal of it has consequently been destroyed. This destruction, which still continues, is a most regrettable fact.

The timber is very valuable. It consists of mountain ash, messmate, beech, blackwood, satin box, olive, pencil wood, musk, and sycamore. The trees are very large and well grown. Mr. William Howitt, a timber expert residing in Melbourne, who inspected the forest and gave evidence before the Committee, gives the average length and diameter of the different classes of timber as follows:

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<th>Timber</th>
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<th>Average diameter</th>
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<td>Beech</td>
<td>40 feet</td>
<td>3 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwood</td>
<td>40 feet</td>
<td>3 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain ash</td>
<td>60 feet</td>
<td>3 ft. 9in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satin box</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
<td>1 ft. 6½in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olive</td>
<td>14 feet</td>
<td>1 foot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pencil wood</td>
<td>14 feet</td>
<td>9 inches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musk</td>
<td>14 feet</td>
<td>1 foot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sycamore</td>
<td>14 feet</td>
<td>1 foot</td>
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This witness stated that the timber is of such a character that a good market could be found for it, not only in Melbourne, but also in Europe, some of the kinds being specially adapted for furniture and panel work.

Another timber expert, Mr. Robertson, Chairman of the Saw-millers' Association, was examined with reference to the commercial value of the timber along the route from Colac. He gave the following evidence:

"The timber that they all seemed to despise I pronounced the best for general purposes; that is the spotted gum or grey gum. It is a timber equal to the bluegum, if not better for many purposes. It is too soft for posts. It is good for sleepers and mining timber and for decking timber in bridges; it is milling timber. On the Plenty River we looked upon it as our best timber. For wheelwrights' work it is the best timber; it is better than billetwood for spokes."
Any line to the Beech Forest must depend on the bulk of its traffic at first on the carriage of timber, the supply of which is practically unlimited. There is a good local demand for timber at Colac for building purposes, and on the extensive plains north of Colac for fencing and station purposes. There is no timber on these plains; which extend for many miles, and the supply of fencing timber and firewood is drawn from the country south of the Colac and Camperdown line. Owing to the recent mining developments at Bokewood there is a considerable demand for mining timber in that locality. There is also the Geelong, Melbourne, and other markets in the colony, as well as the export trade, if such can be developed in the way indicated in the evidence of Mr. Howitt.

There is very little cultivation in the forest at present, most of the cleared land is pasture that is, land on which the big timber has been killed and from which the undergrowth has been cleared, being used for grazing purposes. The land when cleared grows splendid grass and is admirably adapted for dairying purposes and fattening stock. A lot of the country must always be used for those purposes as it is in many places too steep to cultivate profitably.

In addition to the broad-gauge survey previously made the Railway Department has recently had some surveys made for a 2-ft. gauge line from Colac to the forest, but the engineers now seem to favour the construction of a line from Forrest, the terminal station of the broad-gauge line which branches off the Geelong and Colac railway at Birregurra.

There is at present an annual loss of about £7,000 a year on this broad-gauge line, which is 193 miles in length; and it is suggested that if it were altered to the 2-ft. gauge and extended through the Beech Forest this large annual loss would be reduced. The country beyond Forrest is very rough and mountainous until the Dividing Range, which runs through the Beech Forest to Moonlight Head, is reached; and when a proposal was made in 1890 to extend the Birregurra-Forrest line to Barramunga, a distance of about 4 miles, Mr. J. Stoddart, who made an actual survey of the 4 miles, stated in his report that it was impracticable to take the line more than about 30 or 40 chains in any direction beyond the end of the survey. Mr. Walton, a surveyor who has lately inspected the country for the Department, has expressed the opinion that a practicable route can be obtained from Forrest on to the Dividing Range, and that a surface line can be obtained along the Divide. The residents of Barramunga and Apollo Bay (which is about 24 miles from Forrest) favour this route as do also some of the Beech Forest selectors. Others in the forest urge that, even if a line can be obtained, the grades will be very steep and the cost enormous compared with the Colac route. They also urge that, as the line would run along a high range, a very limited number in the forest could reach it and that for several miles after leaving Forrest only about a mile of country on either side would be served, as the route would run between the Barwon and Gellibrand rivers, which, it is alleged, cannot be crossed owing to the steepness of the hills.

As a 2-ft. gauge preliminary survey has been made from Colac, the cost of that route can be estimated. The Committee recommend that a similar survey should be made from Forrest, and, after joining the Colac survey in the Beech Forest, should be continued right through to Wattle Hill, a distance of about 35 miles from Forrest; that a thorough inspection of the country adjoining each route should be made by the Department with a view to satisfying the Committee as to which route will best serve the settlers in the forest. If this is done the Committee will be able to compare the cost of the lines and their relative usefulness, and then fix the starting point. With the information at present before them they are not able to do so, and have, therefore, been obliged to postpone deciding the route which the Beech Forest line should take.

It is stated that there are 697 people living on their selections in the Beech Forest; that 105,762 acres have been selected, of which 28,043 acres have been partially cleared. Of the cleared area 18,673 acres have been put under grass.

10. The building of narrow-gauge lines in the four districts selected by the Committee, if properly carried out, will afford a full and fair test of the utility of the 2-ft. gauge for branch feeders to the main trunk railways of the colony. The estimates furnished by the railway engineers in 1890–91, which are quoted in this Report as an illustration of the expenditure proposed a few years ago in the localities under consideration, can, no doubt, be largely reduced to-day. The present Engineer-in-
Chief states that, roughly estimated, the 1890-91 prices can be reduced by 50 per cent. Still, anything like one-half of the expenditure previously proposed on branch railways to country districts cannot be contemplated, unless Parliament is prepared to face a large increase of the present annual railway deficit. Moreover, the experience of recent years makes the Committee very doubtful whether 5ft. 3in. gauge lines can be actually built for 50 per cent. less than the 1890-91 estimates. With the exception of the coal lines, all the railways built at an average of £1,872 per mile since 1892 are constructed in the easiest portions of the mallee country, where the earthworks are extremely light and where there are few waterways requiring bridges or culverts. The mallee lines have, moreover, been constructed in some instances without ballast or fencing, and the cost of construction does not include any charge for engines and rolling-stock. When the actual expenditure on a line in hilly country is considered, it is found that the Outtrim line cost over £10,000 per mile without rolling-stock. The latest estimate before the Committee for easy country—Rupanyup to Banyena—was given at £2,675 per mile without rolling-stock. The offers which the Committee have received from outside, and the evidence they have obtained from Europe, India, and other countries lead them to believe that the country districts can be fairly served with 2-ft. narrow-gauge lines at a cost of £800 per mile in easy country, varying upwards according to the character of the country. As the country becomes rougher and more difficult the comparison between the two gauges becomes more favorable to the 2-ft. gauge. Taking the Engineer-in-Chief’s lowest estimate for broad-gauge railways in different classes of country, and the prices given by narrow-gauge engineers for 2-ft. gauge lines, they compare as follows:—

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<th></th>
<th>Engineer-in-Chief’s Estimate, Broad Gauge, Mt. Sin.</th>
<th>Outside Estimates, Narrow Gauge, 2 ft.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Easy country</td>
<td>£2,200</td>
<td>£800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medium country</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Difficult country</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>£2,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Very difficult country</td>
<td>£12,000</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it is considered what the difference per mile amounts to over two or three hundred miles of railway, the great importance of the saving in first cost, and the consequent annual saving in interest, is apparent. There are now about 30 broad-gauge spur lines in the colony (exclusive of recent extensions on which local rates are charged), and these spurs give the following results:—

Total length of 30 lines:......540 miles.
Capital cost, excluding rolling-stock (to 30th June, 1894):......£3,220,829.
Cost per mile:......£4,964.
Revenue earned (1893-4):......£74,681.
Local working expenses:......£84,311.
Annual loss on working:......£9,630.
Interest on capital at 4 per cent. per annum:......£128,881.
Total annual loss:......£138,461.

Taking into consideration the excessive cost of building these lines, the roadside stations erected and the staff required to work the same, the waste of power in the rolling-stock used, and the heavy locomotive and maintenance charges, and looking at the results obtained, the Committee believe that the problem of supplying cheap transport facilities to the country districts may be solved with the narrow gauge cheaply constructed and equipped and economically worked, local rates being charged as on recently constructed broad-gauge extensions.

11. It will be seen that the 30 lines referred to do not fall very far short of paying working expenses, the annual loss being principally the interest on the heavy first cost of construction. On the lines recently built the cost of the traffic working has been greatly reduced by the system adopted of issuing tickets on the train, and doing away with the roadside station staffs. The heaviest part of the annual working cost on most broad-gauge branches now is the maintenance charge. This amounts to £65 per mile of line, or £1,300 per annum for a 20-mile spur. It is claimed that the maintenance charge will be very much less per mile on the 2-ft. gauge, on account of the
lighter character of the engines and rolling-stock used, and the fact that a lesser width of formation will have to be kept in order. The locomotive charges are also said to be heavier on the broad-gauge branches, as the larger engines use more coal and oil than the narrow-gauge locomotives, and there is not sufficient traffic to haul to admit of the engines used on the broad gauge working up to their full capacity. An illustration is afforded of the great waste of haulage power by analyzing the freight carried on some of the branch lines for twelve months. Taking 7 lines, of a total length of 134 miles, it is found that 4,220 trains were run to carry 62,818 passengers and 58,341 tons of goods, an average of less than 15 passengers and 14 tons of goods to each train. The narrow-gauge railways should be equipped with a view to the greatest economy in the cost of working, the main object of the lines—to enable the producers in the country districts to get their produce on to the main trunk railways at a cost which will be little compared with the cost of carriage over bad roads—being steadily kept in view.

12. The narrow-gauge rolling-stock is estimated to cost about £300 per mile for engines, carriages, and trucks. This sum must be added to the capital cost of the lines. It was claimed by the railway engineers, when giving evidence on the narrow-gauge question, that there was enough broad-gauge rolling-stock on hand to work at least another 1,000 miles of railway, and this statement was urged as a strong reason for not departing from the standard gauge. It is now stated that there is not sufficient rolling-stock for the present railway system, so that, as far as the first cost of the lines is concerned, the cost of engines and rolling-stock must be counted in both cases. At least £500 per mile will probably be required to provide engines and rolling-stock on new broad-gauge railways. In 1890 the price was estimated for the first Committee by the Railways Commissioners at £1,014 per mile.

It is of great importance that, in selecting engines and rolling-stock for the narrow-gauge railways, suitable and efficient standards should be adopted. The engines should be of the latest and most powerful type for the gauge. The goods stock should be selected from types which will give the largest proportion of paying to dead load. In connexion with this matter the Committee would call special attention to the facts contained in paragraph 18 of their Report on the question of narrow-gauge railways. It is there pointed out what an enormous amount of dead weight is hauled on broad-gauge branch lines, and a comparison is made between the most efficient passenger and goods stock used on the Victorian railways and the rolling-stock used on the 2-ft. gauge in other countries.

13. In view of the great importance to the country districts of the trial which is to be made of the 2-ft. gauge, the Committee have given a great deal of consideration to the question as to how it would be best to carry out the surveys with a view to expediting the construction of the lines. All the narrow-gauge surveys carried out by the Department hitherto are made subservient to broad-gauge surveys previously made, and full advantage does not appear to be taken of the capabilities of the 2-ft. gauge. The departmental estimate of the cost of 2-ft. lines is greatly in excess of the estimate of narrow-gauge engineers and actual offers from reputable firms to build the lines.

The two estimates (without rolling-stock) compare as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engineer-in-Chief's Estimates</th>
<th>Outside Estimates and offers to build the Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Easy country</td>
<td>£1,600 per mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medium country</td>
<td>£2,200 per mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Difficult country</td>
<td>£4,200 per mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Very difficult country</td>
<td>£9,500 per mile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Committee pointed out in their previous Report what, in their opinion, was one of the reasons of this difference, when they stated that "the engineers of the Department adhere too closely to the standard of construction adopted for our broad-gauge railways. The estimate for a 2-ft. line is simply an estimate for one of our ordinary railways narrowed to 2 feet. There is the same material, stations, fencing, and other equipment, and the same convenience, and it is to be worked in the same way as the present broad-gauge branch lines, which result in such a serious annual loss."

Attached to this Report is an offer to survey and complete the construction of a narrow-gauge line from Wangaratta to Whitfield (30 miles), within nine months, for £34,825, including rolling-stock and equipment, the wages to be paid to be in no case less than the Government minimum rate. Offers like this indicate what a wide margin there is between the estimates of the Engineer-in-Chief and the prices at
which outside firms are ready to undertake the construction of the lines. The Committee think that the experiment about to be made is so important that, subject to proper supervision by a competent narrow-gauge engineer specially appointed by the Government, narrow-gauge firms and their engineers should be afforded the fullest opportunity of showing what they can do with the 2½ ft. gauge.

14. When the trial lines have been constructed it will probably be found possible to afford narrow-gauge railway facilities, at a comparatively low cost, to several of the other districts inspected by the Committee, viz.: —

McDonald's Track and Poowong East District.
Carrajung District.
Orbost and Snowy River District.
Upper Murray and Mitta Mitta River Districts.
Moondarra and Walhalla District.
Tohnie District.

A description of the settlement and resources of each of these districts, the products raised, and the physical features of the country, is contained in the six following paragraphs.

**McDonald's Track and Poowong East District.**

15. Of the various localities visited by the Committee, the McDonald's Track and Poowong East District is one of the best after those selected for the trial lines. The district lies between the main Gippsland and Great Southern railways. McDonald's track runs along the main ridge of the hills which lie between the two great Gippsland trunk lines. The north-eastern portion is at present tapped by two broad-gauge cockspurs, running from Moe to Thorpdale, 11½ miles, and from Morwell to North Mirboo, 20 miles. These two spur's are of the usual costly character. The Thorpdale spur cost £116,719, and there is a loss of £5,416 a year on it. The North Mirboo line cost £153,700, and there is a loss of £7,379 a year on it.

Broad-gauge lines have been surveyed in various directions to serve the western and south-eastern portions of the district. One of these surveys runs right through the centre of the country from Monomeith, on the Great Southern line, to join the existing spur which ends at Thorpdale. Another runs from Leongatha to join the other existing spur at North Mirboo. Other cross-surveys have been made from Dromin to Poowong East, from Warragul to Korumburra, and from Warragul to Leongatha. The construction of a short broad-gauge line from Warragul (Bloomfield), for about 11 miles towards McDonald's Track, was recommended by the first Railways Standing Committee; the estimated cost of the Department being reduced by the Committee from £17,528 per mile to £7,000 per mile.

This district is hilly and mountainous, and the country is rough, broken, and heavily timbered. Crossing the ridge along which McDonald's track runs, the country is very rugged and precipitous, and the cost of any line crossing the district from the main Gippsland to the Great Southern line must be very heavy.

The land in the district is, for the most part, of excellent quality, and although a good deal of the central portion is too steep to be profitably cultivated, there is a large area admirably adapted for the growth of potatoes and other root crops, onions, maize, barley, oats, peas, and all kinds of vegetables. The land which is too hilly for cultivation is very good grazing land, well adapted for dairying and fattening stock.

There is a large area of heavily timbered country. Much of the timber, which consists principally of messmate, blackwood, blue gum, white gum, and mountain ash, is suitable for saw-milling purposes. At present a great deal of this timber is destroyed by the settlers in clearing their land, as the state of the roads and the difficulties of transport prevent it being utilized.

Most of the country has been selected, and a large amount of work has been done in ringing the heavy timber and clearing the dense undergrowth.

In view of the great cost of making cross lines between the two present trunk railways, and the fact that these cross lines, when constructed, will only serve a limited area owing to the deep gullies intervening between the ranges, it will probably be found best to open up this extensive district by the construction of lines from the Great Southern line to join the existing cockspurs at Thorpdale and North Mirboo. These spurs are very awkwardly located as they terminate at present, all the traffic being
taken east to the main Gippsland line away from its destination at the metropolis. The Committee would recommend that an officer should be sent to thoroughly inspect the district and report fully as to whether 2-ft. lines could be obtained, at a reasonable cost, from Leongatha to North Mirboo, and from Nyora or some adjacent station through Poowong East to Thorpdale. It might then be found advantageous to turn the present broad-gauge spurs into 2-ft. lines and connect them with the Great Southern railway. The more important of the two suggested lines, and that which should be first reported on, is the one from Leongatha to North Mirboo and on to Morwell.

**CARRAJUNG DISTRICT.**

16. The Committee have inspected the country lying between Traralgon, on the main Gippsland railway, and Alberton, on the Great Southern line. A broad-gauge railway has been surveyed between these two places, the principal object of the line being to serve the Carrajung district, a very rich strip of country, about 18 miles in length and ranging in width from 2 to 5 miles, lying between the two Gippsland trunk lines.

The distance from Traralgon to Alberton by the survey is about 55 miles, and the through line was estimated in 1890 to cost £623,255, or £11,311 per mile. A section of this line was recommended by the first Railways Standing Committee from Traralgon to Merriman’s Creek—a distance of 11 miles; at a cost of £5,000 per mile. A Bill was brought in to give effect to the recommendation but was rejected by the Legislative Council.

Since 1890, a number of the Carrajung selectors have abandoned their holdings, being unable to make a living off their land, owing it is stated, to the prohibitive cost of carting over the bad roads between Carrajung and Traralgon. The abandoned land is being rapidly overgrown with scrub and young timber.

The Carrajung land in its original state is heavily timbered; but when cleared it is of exceptional quality—admirably suited for the growth of potatoes and other root crops, cereals, and other products, and for dairying and fattening stock. A good deal of it is too hilly for cultivation, and must always be used for dairying and grazing. Hardly anything is grown in the district at present.

The cost of cartage to Traralgon is stated to be from 30s. per ton in summer to £3 10s. in winter.

The timber in the district is very good, and there is a large area covered with valuable trees, principally blue gum, mountain ash, messmate, and blackwood. If a market could be found for this timber it would be a good source of revenue to a railway.

There is not much good land from Traralgon for 20 miles until the Carrajung country is entered. There is a limited area of agricultural land at Upper Flynn’s Creek, 6 miles from Traralgon: For the next 4 or 5 miles the country is poor and the timber on it is only fit for firewood. At Merriman’s Creek, which is about 11 miles from Traralgon, there is also a limited area of good land, but for the next 6 miles the country is poor; the good Carrajung country is then reached and extends for about 18 miles as already described.

The country to be traversed to get to this good land is very hilly and difficult, especially beyond Merriman’s Creek. Where the broad-gauge survey crosses that creek the height above sea-level is 430 feet. Six miles further on, at a point known as “Tom’s Cap,” it is 1,030 feet; and 6 miles beyond “Tom’s Cap,” at the township of Carrajung, the altitude is 1,600 feet. It has been suggested that by keeping to the valley of Merriman’s Creek a much cheaper route could be obtained to serve the Carrajung country. The Committee suggest that an inspection be made, with a view to ascertain if a route can be obtained for an inexpensive 2-ft. gauge line in the direction suggested.

**ORBOST AND SNOWY RIVER DISTRICT.**

17. Instead of extending the broad-gauge railway system from Bairnsdale through Bruthen to the settlement at Orbost on the Snowy River—a distance of about 60 miles—a proposal has been made to build a 2-ft. gauge line from Cunningham; at the eastern end of the Gippsland Lakes; to Orbost.

The Railway Department has had a preliminary survey made of this line on the 2-ft. gauge. The route selected by the Department runs along the south side of
Lake Tyers, keeping near the sea shore for several miles, and crosses the Snowy River about 6 miles north of Orbost. The length of the line is 34 miles 89 chains, with a 'T' in 40 grade and 5-chain curves. With the exception of that part of the route where the survey crosses the mouth of Lake Tyers, the country traversed is hilly and thickly timbered. The cost of the 2-ft. line was estimated by the Engineer-in-Chief at £101,003, or £2,827 per mile.

The country between Cunningham and the Snowy River is exceptionally poor and there is hardly any land fit for cultivation or even for grazing purposes. This fact militates greatly against the construction of any line to Orbost. The land along the Snowy River, however, is very rich and fertile. It is estimated that there is an area of 25,000 acres along the river flats, of which 12,000 acres are stated to be suitable for cultivation, and the bulk of the remaining 13,000 acres is said to be first-class fattening land for sheep and cattle. Beyond Orbost the country is poor until the Murrangower district is reached. This locality is about 17 miles from Orbost, and there is a lot of good land there.

After leaving Cunningham there is hardly any settlement until the Snowy River is reached. At the Snowy River the land is nearly all occupied, the population within a radius of 15 miles of the township, being estimated by the Government Statist at 1,400. The number of holdings is stated to be 73. There is very little settlement beyond Orbost. A good deal of land has been selected at Murrangower, but owing to the great difficulties of getting goods into the settlement, and the impossibility of getting anything away at a reasonable price, most of the selectors are not now in occupation of their blocks.

A railway from Cunningham to Orbost must at present depend almost entirely on the traffic furnished by the settlement at the Snowy River and the carriage of goods and stores for the mines on the new field at the Bemm River; the only traffic until Orbost is reached being the passenger traffic to Lake Tyers House, a favorite tourists’ resort, and the timber from the hills round Lake Tyers. Some of this timber, more especially the ironbark, is of first-class quality; the quantity of good timber available, however, appears to be limited. The principal product grown on the Snowy River at present is maize, the yield being from 60 to 140 bushels per acre. The quantity raised last year at the Snowy River alone was about 22,000 bags; the yield this year, according to the Government Statist, amounted to 36,340 bags, off 1,878 acres; in 1893 the yield was 32,000 bags. A large area of land, suitable for the cultivation of maize, has not yet been placed under crop. Although maize is the principal product grown, the climate and the soil are admirably suited for other crops. Heavy yields of potatoes, sugar-beet, and other root crops are obtained. The yield obtained this year from 80 acres of root crops is stated to have been 708 tons. The soil is adapted for intense culture, and almost anything can be grown on the river flats. A good deal of the land is, however, subject to inundation, and the settlers have suffered very severely from floods during recent years.

Presuming that the whole of the 12,000 acres which are fit for cultivation were put under crop, the quantity of produce that would go by a railway to Cunningham is not assured, as the railway would have to compete with the water carriage from Marlow, at the mouth of the river. Last year, out of the 22,000 bags raised, 20,000 bags went by sea and 2,000 by road to Cunningham. The Snowy River entrance is, however, very uncertain, and delays often take place in getting produce away. Everything sent to Cunningham goes thence to Melbourne by water, the charge being so low that the railway to Bairnsdale cannot compete with the water carriage.

Important mining developments have taken place recently about 35 miles beyond Orbost, at the Bemm River. The traffic to this mining field goes through Orbost.

Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the best route for a railway to Orbost. The Railway Department have kept to the coast route; but that line, if terminated, as it should be, on the west side of the Snowy River, nearly opposite the township, could be built for a sum considerably less than the departmental estimate. Some of the residents of Cunningham urge that if a line is made from that place, it should go round the north end of Lake Tyers to open up the country and to obtain the timber traffic from the north of Lake Tyers. Several of the Orbost residents favour a line to Bairnsdale. The latter line would, no doubt, obtain a lot of traffic which would not go to a line terminating at Cunningham, especially the fat stock—pigs, sheep, and cattle—from the Snowy River. The best way to serve the district and
the outlay which would be justified must depend on the result of the mining developments which are taking place in the Buchan district, north of Lake Tyers, at the Bemm River, and at other places in the district.

**Upper Murray and Mitta Mitta River Districts.**

18. Two routes for a broad-gauge railway have been surveyed through the *Upper Murray district.*

One of the lines surveyed would be an extension of the existing spur—Broad-gauge surveys—25 4 miles in length—which starts at Wodonga and runs in an easterly direction to Tallangatta, a town of considerable size on the Mitta Mitta River, distant 212 3 miles by rail from Melbourne. This survey runs across country at a distance from the Murray ranging from 10 to 20 miles, through Koetong, Berringama, Wabba, Cudgewa, and Corryong, terminating close to the river at the small township of Towong.

For the first 8 miles after leaving Tallangatta the land is of fair quality, but onwards for 24 miles to the margin of Berringama the country, excepting an area south of Koetong, is generally of a poor description. This piece of country, which is sparsely settled, is a serious obstacle to any extension of the Tallangatta line to the *Upper Murray.* From Berringama onwards there is a large extent of good country.

The other survey, after leaving the Wodonga-Tallangatta line at Bethanga-road railway station, keeps to the valley of the Murray River and terminates at Walwa, a small township about 20 miles down the river from Towong.

The length and estimated cost of these lines were given in 1890 as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Cost per mile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tallangatta, via Koetong and Corryong, to Towong</td>
<td>58.64</td>
<td>13,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethanga-road, via Talgarno, to Walwa</td>
<td>59.89</td>
<td>10,240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These high estimates of cost indicate the character of the country, which is hilly and mountainous, and in many places rugged and broken. The ranges are thickly covered with timber, a great deal of which is of poor quality, consisting of stringybark and inferior classes of gum. The quantity of good timber is said to be limited.

The Upper Murray district is a very extensive and important one, although isolated at present. A railway would tap a great extent of territory, not only on the Victorian but also on the New South Wales side of the river. It is estimated locally that a line would serve 2,982 square miles of country—1,547 square miles in Victoria and 1,435 in New South Wales.

While much of the land on the ranges and mountains is poor and unfit even for grazing, there is a large area of first-class grazing land, especially along the valleys of the Murray River and the numerous streams running into it. There is also a considerable extent of good agricultural land along some of these valleys, especially the valleys of Walwa, Cudgewa, Nariel, and Thowgla creeks. Very little produce, however—not even enough for local consumption—is grown in the district at present, the land being nearly all used for grazing.

The Upper Murray is the most extensive cattle district in Victoria, and it is stated that Melbourne draws one-third of its meat supply from the locality. In the area above described it is estimated locally that there are 73,400 head of cattle—54,900 in Victoria and 24,500 in New South Wales; sheep, 258,000—42,000 in Victoria and 216,000 in New South Wales. There are three bridges over the Upper Murray between the two colonies—at Talgarno, Jinjellie, and Tintaldra. During the last five years 14,300 head of fat cattle and 8,000 fat sheep have crossed at the Tintaldra Bridge from New South Wales *en route* for the Melbourne market, to be trucked from Tallangatta.

The land throughout the district is nearly all occupied, and there is a good deal of settlement on comparatively small holdings, especially at Talgarno on the Murray, in the Cudgewa Valley, and round Corryong. The population on both sides of the river is locally estimated to number about 6,500 persons, of whom about 3,700 are located on the Victorian side.

Several of the graziers in the Upper Murray district express doubts as to whether the transfer of cattle from the narrow to the broad gauge could be conducted without injury to fat stock. This fact can be better ascertained after a practical test.
of the 2-ft. gauge has been made on the trial lines recommended by the Committee. The Upper Murray district would not be a suitable place to make a trial line. It may be mentioned that graziers object to use the broad gauge with a 1 in 30 grade owing to the injury to their fat stock, and a broad-gauge line to the Upper Murray with easy grades is out of the question at present, owing to the cost involved.

The Committee believe, from the evidence submitted, that it will be found that the transfer of fat cattle can be carried out at junction stations without damage to the stock, and that they will suffer less from the handling when transferred than they do at present when trucked over steep grades on broad-gauge lines; such as the Beechworth and Yackandandah railway.

Mitta Mitta River District.

It is suggested that a narrow-gauge line should be carried up the valley of the Mitta Mitta River in a southerly direction from Tallangatta. The Committee inspected the district as far as Eskdale, a small mining centre about 26 miles from Tallangatta, where there are now about 300 miners working. Most of the land along the valley is occupied and is used for grazing and dairying: Mining developments have recently taken place at Eskdale, and it is stated that there is a considerable area of good land up the valley as far as Mitta Mitta township, which is 12 miles from Eskdale. A good deal of mining is carried on round Mitta Mitta township, Granite Flat, and up the valleys of the various streams running into the Mitta Mitta River. There are not sufficient prospects, however, to justify the construction of a line at present, and it would not be a suitable place to make a trial narrow-gauge line. It was suggested that, the Glen Wills and Omeo districts could be served by a line up the valley of the Mitta Mitta better than by a line up the Tambo Valley from Bruthen. If this is hereafter found to be the case it would greatly improve the claims of the Mitta Mitta district to a narrow-gauge railway.

Moondarra and Walhalla District.

19. The great importance of Walhalla as a mining centre gives that town strong claims to railway facilities, but the precipitous character of the country between Moondarra and Walhalla makes it unsuitable as a place for the building of a trial line. The object sought to be attained by the construction of the trial lines would not be effected by building a narrow-gauge railway to Walhalla, as the latter part of the route is so exceptionally broken and rough that it is not a fair sample of the country districts in the hilly portions of Victoria.

A broad-gauge railway has been surveyed from Moe to Walhalla; the estimated cost of this line was given in 1890 as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Length Miles</th>
<th>Cost per mile £</th>
<th>Total £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moe to Moondarra</td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>10.588</td>
<td>161,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moondarra to Walhalla</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>27.907</td>
<td>242,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>£16,866</td>
<td>£404,789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This high estimate of cost, although it could, no doubt, be largely reduced at the present time, will give some idea of the character of the country. While the first portion of the route as far as Moondarra is hilly country, there are no special engineering difficulties on it. Beyond Moondarra, however, the country becomes very rugged and precipitous, and unless the sharp bluffs which are met with in the mountains can be rounded with curves of small radius the cost of any railway to Walhalla must be excessive. The very sharp curves admissible on the 2-ft. gauge would give such a line a great advantage in relative cost of construction over the broad gauge.

The land between Moe and Tyers River, a distance of about 11 miles, is of poor quality; but round Moondarra the land is good, the soil being of a volcanic nature. Most of the Moondarra country is occupied by farmers and graziers. After passing through Moondarra the country is, for the most part, too rugged; and the soil too poor for cultivation.

All the country from Moe to within a few miles of Walhalla is thickly timbered; but round Walhalla the hills have been denuded, to a great extent, of timber for use in the mines. The distance timber for mining purposes has to be carted
or trammed is becoming a serious question at Walhalla. It is alleged that thousands of tons of quartz from comparatively poor lodes could be profitably, crushed, in addition to that at present obtained from the richer lodes, if cheap fuel were readily available. The principal mines state that they would use Victorian coal if they had a railway. The farmers at Moondarra now find a good market for their produce at Walhalla, where there is a population of 2,616 in the town alone, and 3,894 in the Walhalla Shire. The mines require a large quantity of stores and timber annually. The cost of cartage to Walhalla at present is very heavy, averaging about £2 per ton from the Toongabbie railway station. Three coaches are running daily to and from Walhalla, and there is a considerable passenger traffic. The mining field is a very rich and extensive one, and the prospects of permanency and further development, not only at Walhalla but throughout the shire, are very favorable.

The estimates framed by the Engineer-in-Chief, and the evidence submitted to the Committee when dealing with the narrow-gauge question a few months ago, lead them to believe that it may be found possible to construct a suitable line to Walhalla for a cost approximating to £3,000 or £4,000 per mile.

**Tolmie District.**

20. This district lies about midway between Mansfield and Whitfield, the proposed terminus of the narrow-gauge line to the King Valley. The Committee visited the district and took evidence as to the settlement and cultivation last year when inquiring into the proposed broad-gauge line to Edi. They have been asked by the farmers to take the claims of the district into consideration when dealing with the narrow-gauge question. In dealing with the King River district the Committee have stated that the suggested line to Whitfield must, at some future time, be extended through to Mansfield. Between Whitfield and Tolmie and between Tolmie and Mansfield there is a lot of mountainous and broken country. One of the late engineers of the Railway Department (Mr. J. H. Davies) describes the route which he inspected for a broad-gauge line through the country as follows:—"Between Whitfield (30 miles from Wangaratta) and 46½ miles the section shows heavy earthworks, including two tunnels, of an aggregate length of 780 lineal yards, and two ravines each requiring an embankment or viaduct of about 100 feet high to cross; steepest gradient, 1 in 30, and numerous sharp curves, a large proportion of which are 5 chains radius. Between 46½ miles and 52 miles (Tolmie station site) the earthworks are moderate. From Tolmie station site to Barwite, a distance of 8 miles, there is a total descent of 1,260 feet, and for about 7½ miles of that distance a nearly continuous descending grade of 1 in 30, with numerous 5-chain curves, and expensive earthworks. From the Barwite station site, on the Broken River, near the foot of the Wombat Ranges, a distance of 6 miles to Mansfield, the curves would be easy, gradients 1 in 40, earthworks moderate." Mr. Davies adds—"The construction of the latter 6 miles would virtually amount to an extension to the foot of the Wombat Ranges of the present railway from Tallarook to Mansfield, and would by so much shorten the distance to Mansfield for many of the residents of the tableland."

The Committee think that this suggestion should receive attention. If the 6 miles referred to can be constructed at a reasonable rate, it would be of great assistance to the farmers in the southern part of the Tolmie district, while several of those residing in the northern portion of the district gave evidence before the Committee that the narrow-gauge extension from Wangaratta to Whitfield would be of great use to them.

There is a lot of good agricultural land round Tolmie; the roads are very bad, and the cost of carting deters cultivation. The population in the ranges is estimated at 736, the number of holdings being 123, and there are upwards of 3,000 acres under cultivation, the principal products being oats and potatoes, for both of which the soil and climate are admirably adapted. The cultivated area is increasing year by year as the settlers get their land cleared.

21. Two other districts have been inspected by the Committee, viz., the Gubower and Cohuna District and the Bass Valley District.

The residents in both these localities have presented strong claims to railway facilities, but urge that the country to be traversed in each instance is of such a character that it ought to be possible to supply them with broad-gauge lines at a very low cost.
This district is located between the Bendigo and Kerang line and the River Murray; and the residents ask for a line from Rochester or Elmore, to Gunbower or Cohuna. The distance from Elmore to Gunbower is 43.51 miles, and from Elmore to Cohuna 58.90 miles. A line from Elmore to Cohuna was estimated in 1890, for the first Railways Standing Committee, at £293,744, or £5,162 per mile. The country to be traversed is practically level, and if there is any district in the colony where an inexpensive broad-gauge line can be built, it ought to be in this one. The district is well settled for the most part, the area of the holdings, as a rule, being from 300 to 500 acres. In the southern part of the district the principal product grown is wheat. In the northern portion, round Gunbower and Cohuna, a great deal of money, both public and private, has been spent in irrigation works, and the irrigated land is now used principally for fattening stock. Full advantage cannot be taken of the benefits to be derived from the expenditure on irrigation unless facilities are afforded to the settlers in the irrigable area to get produce away. A good deal of settlement on small holdings has recently taken place on Gunbower Island. The settlers on this island cannot use the river to get their produce away, as it is impossible to reach it. It is stated that there is a lot of good red gum timber in the Gunbower State Forest, and on that part of Gunbower Island where settlement has been allowed to take place.

As Bendigo is the market for the fat stock raised in the district, some of the graziers object to the narrow gauge because of the necessity of transfer at the junction station, and state that they would not use a narrow-gauge line if built. If it were only for the stock traffic, there would be no necessity for any line in the district, but the farmers who cultivate their land feel the want of a railway badly, owing to the distance which they have to cart their produce.

**Bass Valley District.**

Although a good deal of the country in the Bass Valley district is hilly and heavily timbered, it is stated that an almost level route for a broad-gauge line could be obtained down the valley of the Bass River. There is a lot of good land in the parishes of Jumbunna, Woolamai, and Wonthaggi well adapted for the growth of potatoes and other root crops, oats, barley, maize, and fruit of various sorts; also for dairying and fattening stock. There is also a lot of good timber in the district, and it is claimed that with railway facilities the coal resources of Kilcunda, which is located in the southern portion of the locality, would be developed.

The Committee would suggest that the Engineer-in-Chief should be asked to submit an estimate for the lowest cost at which a broad-gauge line can be built to serve the Bass Valley district.

22. In concluding this Report the Committee desire to add that they are of opinion that steps should be taken to place on the land served by new railways some responsibility for any loss which may arise in connexion with the construction and working of the same.

23. The following extracts from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee show the divisions that took place during the consideration of the Report on this question:

**TUESDAY, 28th JULY, 1896.**

The Committee proceeded to consider the starting and terminal points of lines in the several districts selected for permanent surveys of narrow-gauge railways.

Mr. Melville moved, That the starting and terminal points of any line be not named by the Committee at present, but that the Report be confined to the selection of districts.

And, after debate—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division, Section 5, Railways Act No. 137.</th>
<th>Ayes, 1.</th>
<th>Noes, 6.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Melville</td>
<td>The Chairman, Mr. Burton, Mr. Craven, Mr. Harris, Mr. Morey, Mr. J. S. White.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so it passed in the negative.
Mr. Harris moved, That Lilydale be the starting point of the line to the Wandin and Warburton district, and that the terminal point be near the junction of the Little Yarra and Warburton roads at the township known as Yarra Junction.

The Chairman intimated that, as the Wandin and Warburton line passed through his constituency, he could not take part in the discussion, or vote on the question; he would therefore leave the Committee to decide the starting and terminal points of the railway.

And, after discussion on the motion moved by Mr. Harris—

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Craven moved, That Wangaratta be the starting point and Whitfield the terminal point of the line to serve the King River district.

Mr. J. S. White moved, as an amendment, That "Wangaratta" be omitted, with a view to insert in place thereof "Benalla."

And, after debate—

Question—That "Wangaratta," proposed to be omitted, stand part of the question—put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5.

Mr. Burton,
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Melville,
Mr. Morey.

Noes, 2.

The Chairman,
Mr. J. S. White.

And so it was resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That Wangaratta be the starting point and Whitfield the terminal point of the line to serve the King River district—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Craven moved, That Fern Tree Gully be the starting point of the Gembrook line, and that the terminal point be at a distance of about 20 miles from Fern Tree Gully.

And, after debate—

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

The Committee adjourned.

TUESDAY, 13th AUGUST, 1896.

The Committee proceeded to consider their Report on the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines.

The Report was read by the Clerk of Committees.

Paragraphs 1 to 8, inclusive, agreed to

Paragraph 9—

Mr. J. S. White moved, That paragraph 9 be agreed to.

Mr. Melville moved, as an amendment, That the Committee recommend that the permanent survey for the Beech Forest line start at Colac and terminate at Wattle Hill.

And, after debate—

Question—That the amendment moved by Mr. Melville be agreed to—put.

The Committee divided—

Ayes, 1.

Mr. Melville.

Noes, 6.

The Chairman,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Melville,
Mr. Morey,
Mr. J. S. White.

And so it passed in the negative.

Question—That paragraph 9 be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Paragraphs 10 to 12, inclusive, agreed to.

Paragraph 13—

Mr. Craven moved, That the following words be omitted from this paragraph:—"All the narrow-gauge surveys carried out by the Department hitherto are made subservient to broad-gauge surveys previously made, and full advantage does not appear to be taken of the capabilities of the 2-ft. gauge."

And, after discussion—

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the paragraph—put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 6.

The Chairman,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Melville,
Mr. Morey,
Mr. J. S. White.

Noes, 1.

Mr. Craven.

And so it was resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. J. S. White moved, That the words "a competent narrow-gauge engineer specially appointed by the Government" be inserted before the word "Government" in paragraph 13, page 14.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Paragraph 13, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraphs 14 to 18, inclusive, agreed to.
Paragraph 19 amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 20 and 21 agreed to.
Mr. Melville moved, That the following new paragraph be added to the Report, viz.:—

"Those recommendations for the construction of trial narrow-gauge railways are subject to the recommendations contained in paragraph 9 of the Committee's Fourth General Report."

Question—That this paragraph be added to the Report—put.
The Committee divided.

Ayes, 2.
Mr. Melville,
Mr. J. S. White.

Noes, 5.
The Chairman,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Morey.

And so it passed in the negative.
Mr. Harris moved, That the following new paragraph be added to the Report, viz.:—

"22. In concluding this Report the Committee desire to add that they are of opinion that steps should be taken to place on the land served by new railways some responsibility for any loss which may arise in connexion with the construction and working of the same."

Question—That this paragraph be added to the Report—put and resolved in the affirmative.
Paragraph 23 agreed to.
Mr. Morey moved, That the Report as amended be adopted.
Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.
Ordered—That the Report be signed by the Chairman and presented to the Legislative Assembly.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Parliament House,
Melbourne, 18th August, 1896.
INDEX TO APPENDICES.

A.—Offer to build a narrow-gauge line from Waigaratta to Whitfield—30 miles—for £34,825, including engines and rolling-stock.

B.—Report by C. W. R. Lawson, C.E., on the country between Edi and Whitfield.

C.—Report by Edmund Walton, engineer and surveyor, Railway Department, on inspection of suggested line from Forrest to Beech Forest and Joanna River.
A NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAY FROM WANGARATTA TO WHITFIELD.

214 Queen-street, Melbourne, 6th August, 1896.

The Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, Parliament House, Melbourne.

Sir,

We have been requested by the Chairman of the Wangaratta and Edi Railway League to renew the offer made by us, as contained in a tender addressed to Mr. Chomley on 26th December, 1895, which tender* was handed in to your Committee by Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, as appears from Minutes of Evidence.

Referring to letter accompanying tender, we beg to make the following remarks:—

It is distinctly understood that the line will run along one side only of the public road.

Re Clearing.—We beg to state that all trees along the line will be removed so far as to obviate all danger.

Re Labour.—Wages paid by us will in no case be less than the Government minimum rate.

It having come to our knowledge that there is a desire to have the proposed line extended from the point near Edi, where the original line of 22 miles in length ends, for a further distance of 8 miles, to near Whitfield, we instructed our engineer, Mr. C. W. R. Lawson, to proceed to the district and make a careful examination of the route of the proposed extension.

Having received Mr. Lawson's report, we now offer to construct said extension of 8 miles, with one siding and with station at the Whitfield terminus, also extension of telephone line to this point, along with the original line as tendered for, and under the same conditions, for the lump sum of Thirty-four thousand eight hundred and twenty-five pounds (£34,825).

Should our tender be accepted we are prepared to commence work at once, and to furnish weekly, to the person whom you may appoint, permanent surveys of the line for approval.

The line to be completed within nine (9) months from date of signing of contract.

We agree to lodge the usual deposit of five per cent. (5%) on the amount of tender.

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

D. DIERCKS & CO. LTD.

D. Diercks, General Manager.

APPENDIX B.

REPORT BY MR. C. W. R. LAWSON, C.E., ON THE COUNTRY BETWEEN WANGARATTA AND WHITFIELD.

Heidelberg, 7th August, 1896.

MEMO. FOR MESSRS. DIERCKS & CO. LTD.

As directed by you I have made an examination of the route of the proposed narrow-gauge railway from Wangaratta to Whitfield, more particularly the suggested extension between Edi and Whitfield, a distance of about 8 miles.

With regard to this, I wish particularly to point out that the first mile beyond Edi will be more difficult and expensive to construct than any other portion of this railway, for the reason that a steep spur from the adjoining ranges runs right down into the river at this point, rising very abruptly from it. The road to Whitfield has been carried over this spur, rising to a height of about 30 feet above the river, and though the siding cuttings are very heavy, yet the gradients are very steep, in places being as much as 1 in 15 or thereabouts; the road then descends to the level of the valley again.

In order not to destroy the usefulness of the line, by having a steep gradient on such a short portion of its length, I consider it would be better not to go over this spur, which in any case would be expensive, but to go round it, keeping just above the flood level of the river. In order to do this, however, very sharp curves will have to be used, and a large quantity of earth removed, the side of the hill being extremely precipitous for a short distance. As you may judge, this work will render the construction of this part of the line much more costly to construct than the remainder of it.

After passing this spur, the line would follow, generally, the course of the main road to Whitfield, and indeed, excepting where it would be necessary to cut off sharp bends, can be built on the road between the formation and the fence. The gradients would be easy, the country being practically level, but the earthworks and the bridges and culverts would be more expensive than the portion between Wangaratta and Edi. I have already given you a memorandum with reference to the cost, and shall be happy to supply any further information in my possession that you may require.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CHAS. W. R. LAWSON, C.E.

* This tender for the construction of a narrow-gauge railway from Wangaratta to Edi appears on page 64 of the Minutes of Evidence.
APPENDIX C.

REPORT BY MR. WALTON ON INSPECTION OF SUGGESTED LINE FROM FORREST TO BEECH FOREST AND JOANNA RIVER.

Railway Department,
Baramunga, 1st January, 1896.

FORREST TO BEECH FOREST AND JOANNA RIVER.—TRIAL SURVEY.

Memo. for Mr. Kernot.

During the Christmas holidays I have been extending my inspection of country from Mount Sabine to Princetown, and from coast to Gellibrand River; there are still some parts of the country to inspect, but I fancy I have a good idea of the whole.

I would recommend the survey be extended along the main range, from "Webb’s selection" to the head of Joanna River; I think nearly a surface narrow-gauge line can be obtained, with easy grades, say 1 in 50, and very few 2-chain radius curves.

The soil and timber is good all the way, and is rapidly being taken up and cleared. I estimate the whole of this range with three miles north and six miles south is available for selections, with splendid patches of timber for saw-mill sites, the timber being of the bluegum species, with a few patches of beech and blackwood.

If a line were made at once the timber could be utilized by the saw-mills and would assist the selectors in clearing the ground, but if the selectors are not given facilities to get the timber away they will ring it and destroy a very valuable commodity which would assist to make the railway pay right away from the start, during the time the selections were being cleared up.

You will see by heights on attached plan that the slopes are steep, but not more so than about the older settled parts in the neighbourhood of "Gardiner’s Hotel."

The line would also open up a very large tourist traffic, as it would only be about ten miles away from the coast in most cases.

I don’t see any reason to look out for any extensions, as the country between Princetown and Port Campbell and for some miles inland is of a very inferior quality. If this line were made a narrow gauge, it might be advisable to alter the line from Forrest to Birregurra so as to make a day’s work for the running gang, viz., 110 miles trip in and out.

(Signed) EDMUND WALTON.
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.
INDEX TO EVIDENCE AND TO LISTS OF WITNESSES.

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## Wandin and Warburton District.

### List of Witnesses.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Witness Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>Walker, J.</td>
<td>farmer and brickmaker, Mooroolbark</td>
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<td>Brown, M.</td>
<td>farmer, Wandin South</td>
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<td>Child, F.</td>
<td>fruit-grocer, Mooroolbark</td>
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<td>Richardson, W.</td>
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<td>Harrison, F. T.</td>
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<td>Pomery, J.</td>
<td>farm manager, Mooroolbark</td>
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<td>Clegg, E.</td>
<td>farmer, Mooroolbark</td>
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<td>Collings, T. G.</td>
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<td>Hurst, D. W.</td>
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<td>Burne, S. H.</td>
<td>selector, Monbulk Forest Settlement</td>
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<td>Batty, A. J.</td>
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<td>Evans, R.</td>
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<td>Harris, F. J.</td>
<td>gardener, Monbulk Forest Settlement</td>
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<td>McCarty, D.</td>
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<td>Healy, P.</td>
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<td>McLennan, D.</td>
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<td>Mattingley, A. J.</td>
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<td>Peacock, W.</td>
<td>jam manufacturer, Wandin</td>
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<td>Blankney, J.</td>
<td>blacksmith and Chairman Board of Advice, Wandin</td>
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<td>Overton, G. F.</td>
<td>fruit-grower, Wandin</td>
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<td>Paul, H. W.</td>
<td>secretary, Lilydale Shire Council</td>
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<td>Smith, W. H.</td>
<td>fruit-grower, Seville</td>
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<td>Wallace, J.</td>
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<td>Aitkin, W. S.</td>
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<td>Gardiner, J.</td>
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<td>bootmaker, Seville</td>
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<td>farmer, Launching Place</td>
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<td>farmer, Hoodle's Creek</td>
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<td>Kett, W. T.</td>
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<td>Ross, J. W.</td>
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<td>hotelkeeper, Warburton</td>
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<td>Buller, E. J.</td>
<td>hotelkeeper, Lilydale, and land-owner, Warburton</td>
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<td>Talbot, T.</td>
<td>miner, Reefton</td>
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<td>Bowden, J. G.</td>
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<td>Hellierington, K.</td>
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<td>Redgell, J.</td>
<td>storekeeper and postmaster, McMahon's Creek</td>
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<td>Don, R.</td>
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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WANDIN AND WARBURTON NARROW-GAUGE EXTENSIONS.

(Taken at South Mooroolbark.)

WEDNESDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

Mr. CAMERON, in the Chair;

The Hon. D. McIlvane, M.L.C.  Mr. Burton,

The Hon. E. Morey, M.L.C.  Mr. Harris.

James Walker, sworn and examined.

1. To the Chairman.—I reside at Mooroolbark; I hold about 240 acres freehold. I have under cultivation 20 acres; 10 acres of fruit, and I grow oats, potatoes and other vegetables; off the trees that are in full bearing I might get a ton to the acre. The trees are from twelve to fourteen years old, and I have 2 acres in of two-year-old trees. The ton to the acre refers to the smaller fruits, such as plums and cherries. I have also apples, off which I get a little over a ton to the acre; the trees are 18 feet apart and some 30 feet. Off some trees I may get twenty cases and off others only four or five. The last lot I sent down was 56 cases; we pick them as quickly as we can and very seldom count them. The line from Croydon to South Wandin would suit us best here. I am starting another industry; I have just sent away the first truck load of fire bricks; that would be a source of revenue to the railway. I would continue that on a larger scale if there were a line. It costs me 10s. a 1,000 to get them to Croydon, and £1 13s. 4d. a truck from there. For the other bricks they charge only 1s. 6d. a ton, and for mine they charge 3s. 4d. I have none of them sold yet, but I think there will be a demand for them; they are a very fair brick. I would like you to try and get that freight reduced. I am going to have a depot in town and store them there; the Government should encourage colonial industry. My bricks are not any heavier than the others, and we load and unload them ourselves. The station-master weighed two of my bricks yesterday, the weight being 14 lbs.

2. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I have just commenced making the bricks. They have been making them at South Yarra, and selling them from £5 to £7 a 1,000, and for the imported article they charge £9 and £10, and up to £12 a 1,000. I got them tested at the Government workshops, and at the Fulton Foundry, and at the rolling mills in Dudley street, and the manager of the last stated they were the best he had ever tried. The Government workshops tested two of mine and two of the South Yarra, and the men, when the bricks were taken out, did not know which was which till I pointed out mine. Mine stood and the other went like a pat of butter. I believe mine stand as well as the imported. Mine was tested right in the centre of the furnace and the South Yarra brick against the wall, and there was not the full force of fire on it, but a portion of it was melted down; mine suffered only at the corner where the force of the current came. At the Fulton Foundry it bore the weight of the crucible as well as the heat, and I saw he was going to put them in a second time; very few bricks will stand that. They did not give me a certificate; in fact, they do not like to let it be known that they do stand the fire; it is in the interest of the importers not to. I never asked the Government for a certificate. I have millions of tons of the clay; all it requires is just to be opened up. If we had a railway it could go on a large scale, and it would give a great deal of employment. I sent them to the Tasmanian Exhibition and got a first class certificate.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(Taken at Wandin South.)

MAX BROWN, sworn and examined.

3. To the Chairman.—I am a farmer in this district; I hold 39 acres. I have been in the district three years. I rent the land. The lease is for a term of five or six years. I am acting as secretary to the railway league. —[The witness read the following statement:]——

Information with regard to the South Wandin District.—For the use of the Railways Standing Committee.

The district commonly known as South Wandin consists of part of the East Riding of the shire of Lilydale, and part of the parish of Mooroolbark. Apart from its great capabilities for fruit and vegetable cultivation, this district would, from its proximity to the Dandenong Ranges, with their endless variety of fern-clad gullies and limpid streams, present unusual attractions to the tourist and to the citizen desirous of establishing a country residence within easy distance of town, were reasonable railway facilities extended to it. With regard to the capabilities of the soil of the South Wandin district, it has not been thought needful to multiply evidence, and therefore only two or three typical witnesses have been requested to give evidence. It may, however, be pointed out that the original selections in the South Wandin district have, it is believed, been subdivided to a greater extent than in any other part of the parishes of Wandin Yallock and Mooroolbark; and as a practical proof of the superior value of the well-managed small holding, one resident who is in receipt of a comfortable income from the produce of 4 acres of ground has been asked to give evidence. In this connexion the attention of the Committee is also directed to the results obtained by the co-operative society of fruit-growers, known as the Wandin Fresh Fruit Supply Co., a majority of the partners in which belonged to the South Wandin district. This company contributed to the railways £180 in one season as freight appertaining to 29 acres of orchard ground, but as evidence with regard to this company has been arranged to be given elsewhere, it is not desired to do more than refer to it here. As showing the attractive nature of the district in spite of its lack of railway facilities, it may be stated that the population of...
the pastoral district of South Wandin has more than doubled during the last five years. As the Committee must to some extent be aware, the surrounding district comprises an immense area of black and chocolate soil of an agricultural and pastoral nature. The pastoral district of South Wandin is no exception, and the Committee should be aware of the vast potential for agricultural and pastoral development in the area.

The Committee has been informed that the rainfall in the South Wandin district is about 20 inches per annum. The Committee was also informed that the soil in the South Wandin district is capable of becoming one of the finest soil in the world. The soil is a very good living to be made with fruit, and the crops are good. We get from 2½ tons to 5 tons per acre of raspberries. We have got from a small piece at the rate of 5 tons several years in succession, but the average is about 2½ tons with ordinary cultivation. There is no other outlet for us; the hill is in the way; it is impossible to get over it with any load. Any line coming within a reasonable distance would suit us. If we were beyond the factory I would rather send to Lilydale because the hills are too bad a way. We have no preference for any particular line. Any line that came through the South Wandin district would suit us. I have only burned my timber, not made any other use of it. There was magnificent timber on it—three kinds—blackwood, messmate, and gum. There have been saw-mills, but they have all left. The carriage ate up the price of the stuff. Until recent years the roads were impassable. The sleepers were out for the Lilydale line 13 miles from here.

5. To the Hon. E. Jones.—We used to consider it cost £20 an acre to clear the land. I should think it would not pay to split the timber, and I would not set about the land. I have picked a crop of raspberries 2 tons to the acre from a piece of land that has been planted fifteen months. If a narrow-gauge railway were built here there would be a good quantity of fruit sent by it. I send now about 32 tons a year; if there were a railway we should make it 40 tons very shortly. I cannot tell what we pay to the railway per ton. A great deal of high-class fruit goes by passenger train, which is a different scale. A ton of raspberries is sold for £4 per ton. An apple tree would be cheaper before bearing than in poorer land; in our land they are eight to ten years before they are in bearing. They will bear some fruit in four or five years, and from four or five years they increase about a case a year. A peach tree is in good bearing from four to ten years.

6. To the Hon. D. Melville.—A family can live well on 10 acres here. An industrions man would get a return of fruit in the second year and the third year he would get a main crop. Of 200 acres only half is poor land, which will not grow fruit. I have picked a crop of raspberries 2 tons to the acre from a piece of land that has been planted fifteen months. If a narrow-gauge railway were built here there would be a good quantity of fruit sent by it. I send now about 32 tons a year; if there were a railway we should make it 40 tons very shortly. I cannot tell what we pay to the railway per ton. A great deal of high-class fruit goes by passenger train, which is a different scale. A ton of raspberries is sold for £4 per ton. An apple tree would be cheaper before bearing than in poorer land; in our land they are eight to ten years before they are in bearing. They will bear some fruit in four or five years, and from four or five years they increase about a case a year. A peach tree is in good bearing from four to ten years.

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6. To the Hon. D. Melville.—A family can live well on 10 acres here. An industrions man would get a return of fruit in the second year and the third year he would get a main crop. Of 200 acres only half is poor land, which will not grow fruit. I have picked a crop of raspberries 2 tons to the acre from a piece of land that has been planted fifteen months. If a narrow-gauge railway were built here there would be a good quantity of fruit sent by it. I send now about 32 tons a year; if there were a railway we should make it 40 tons very shortly. I cannot tell what we pay to the railway per ton. A great deal of high-class fruit goes by passenger train, which is a different scale. A ton of raspberries is sold for £4 per ton. An apple tree would be cheaper before bearing than in poorer land; in our land they are eight to ten years before they are in bearing. They will bear some fruit in four or five years, and from four or five years they increase about a case a year. A peach tree is in good bearing from four to ten years.

8. To the Hon. D. Melville.—I think the raspberries have paid the best; strawberries next, then apples and cherries; the latter are a very well-paying fruit. The raspberry has been pre-eminent the fruit grown in this district. If a railway were made, very few would send by their own ears; very few would send new to Melbourne direct; though we have to send ten miles to the station. A ton of raspberries will be very cheap. Speaking for myself only, I would not mind guaranteeing to send the same amount of raspberries by railway.
9. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, residing alongside Mr. Child’s. I have been there over 30 years. I hold 120 acres. I have about 40 acres under cultivation, 8 acres fruit, and we grow potatoes and corn. We get from 5 to 7 tons of potatoes to the acre. We used to grow a great quantity of raspberries, but now we grow mostly apples and pears. We send about 30 or 60 tons by rail in a year. I agree with the evidence given by Mr. Child; any line that came within a short distance of this place would be acceptable to me. I am not wedded to any particular route so long as it comes through the centre of the district, and not too far from a railway station; at present we have ten miles to go to the railway station.

10. To the Hon. E. Morey.—We are greatly troubled by the birds in the orchards. A very small bird called the silver-eye and the parrots are very troublesome, eating nearly all the fruits and destroying a great quantity. We have to shoot them.

Edward William Sherwood, sworn and examined.

11. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, residing one and a half miles along the road. I have been in the district a little over four years, and have 4 acres under cultivation; that is all I own. It was virgin land when I bought it. I am married. Four acres will keep a family well. It was very heavily timbered when I went there. I have cleared it. It cost about £15 an acre to clear. I burned the timber and split some into posts and rails. I could not sell it, there was no way to take it into Lilydale. I grow raspberries, strawberries, peaches, and cherries. I sold my fruit by rail to Melbourne; the greater part of it goes to Sydney. The place is not in thorough working order yet. I sent over 4 tons this year. I made about £130 off 1 1/2 acres of strawberries and a few peaches and Cape gooseberries. There were no fruit trees on when I bought it. My other fruit trees do not return anything yet. I should think 10 acres is quite sufficient for one man to look after, and for that he must work hard and have somebody with him. I do not believe in horses; my land is all hand-worked. I think that pays as well as using horses to plough and scythe. I have horses to take the fruit into Lilydale, but after that I turn them out to grass; I pay for that; if I required food for them I would have to buy it, and I would rather do that.

12. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I believe there is a good soil in the district though there is no appearance of it on my fruit.

13. To the Hon. D. Metcalfe.—If we had a cheap narrow-gauge railway I believe it would pay interest and working expenses as well as any line will pay; no line will pay from the start, but I think after twelve or eighteen months a line to Wandin would pay well. I am a tailor’s cutter by trade, and I expect to succeed as a gardener.

Francis Thomas Harrison, sworn and examined.

14. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit and vegetable grower, residing about a mile down the road. I have been there seven and a half years. I hold 80 acres of purchased land. I have about 18 acres under cultivation. I grow principally raspberries, potatoes, and other vegetables. The distance is so great to cart vegetables that I have had to give that up. I grow cabbages and cauliflower; they would pay handsomely if we had railway communication close at hand. They thrive remarkably well in this district. I use to cultivate on a sandy soil before I came here, and I find that vegetables grow better here. There is a good rainfall here, not too much for the land, but it prevents us getting on with our work. I have grown very good potatoes this year. Being a new place, there is not a great quantity off my place at present, but it is increasing. I have 6 acres under raspberries; that will mean more tomato next year, as we get from 2 1/2 to 3 tons an acre. I send all mine by rail; very little is carted from here to Melbourne. If we had a railway within a mile or two, I would guarantee from my place 50 tons instead of the present quantity. I did at one time cart posts and rails to Lilydale, to send down to Melbourne, but the cost was so great that it did not pay; if we had a railway it would pay handsomely. If there were a railway we would grow vegetables and fruit combined. The season is fairly early with us, but we can grow vegetables all through it. I have dug potatoes here in November. We can grow root crops here. This land is splendid for market gardening. I should say every family should have 20 acres. In the district there are thousands of acres fit for cultivation. It would cost from £15 to £20 an acre to clear it. If we could take the timber to Melbourne as firewood, and sell it, it would pay the expense of clearing the land.

The witness withdraws.

Jonathan Pomeroy, sworn and examined.

15. To the Chairman.—I am managing a place near here for a gentleman in Melbourne—70 acres. I am growing vegetables and fruit, 4 acres of fruit, 1 acre in full bearing, the rest young trees. I have been here one year; the owner lives in South Melbourne. It does not pay him to keep me managing; but it will presently. I have been growing vegetables this summer, and have put in one-third of an acre of beans, and got about 60 or 70 cwt. off that, and I could have got a lot more only it did not pay to pick them and take them to Lilydale. As regards the land, it is the best bit of land I have seen in the colony. Most of the land is about the same in this neighbourhood, with some not so good. I hope in a year or two to grow a lot of fruit and make it pay. I have been farming all my life and have not seen a bit of ground in the colony I would like better.

16. To the Hon. D. Metcalfe.—If I had 20 acres of this land myself I would think myself well off, I would not ask anybody for any more.

17. To the Chairman.—I do not send any firewood to Melbourne; we burn the timber.

18. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I have been sending my stuff away in small quantities from Lilydale.

The witness withdraws.
Enoch Clegg, sworn and examined.

19. To the Chairman.—I reside half-mile from here, eight miles from Lilydale. I am not a fruit-grower; I am waiting for the railway. I have 70 acres. I have 16 acres under cultivation, with 1/2 acres of young raspberries, an acre of fruit trees, and the remainder cedars; we grow hay; it did not turn out well last year, it was grown rather late. I am a carrier and a universal provider. I got plenty to do on this road, rather too much sometimes. When I started five years ago I did about 2 tons a year, and now we do 250 out and in. I do not take out all the place produces by a long way. Five years ago we used to carry about 250 passengers a year, and now carry about 1,200. There are a few tourists come this way, and those that come express surprise at the place, and wonder it is not better known, being so near Melbourne, and such a beautiful climate. Directly they leave Lilydale they find the atmosphere change, and they wonder the place is not better known being so near the city. So long as the line came anywhere near we would be perfectly satisfied, say 1½ to 2 miles from this hall. The jam factory is about 2 miles from here. We would be satisfied if it were as near as the factory.

20. To the Hon. D. Melville.—I have no doubt the railway would pay. As to narrow gauge, I have my own personal opinions about that, I do not know the feelings of the district on the subject. I cannot see that the narrow gauge would suit for fruit-growing, because of the knocking about. Good fruit-growers would like to know about how the fruit was going to be handled. If it had to be transhipped at Lilydale, it would make one more handling which might mean mischief to good fruit. I have the regular passenger coach to Lilydale, running 26 miles a day. The fare is 1s. 6d. each way, 13 miles. If the railway is made, we will then make a living out of our land, and sit under our vine and fig tree.

21. To the Hon. E. Morley.—A truck from Lilydale to Melbourne costs from 18s. to 21s. I had timber split for 1s. a ton; it is easy wood to split.

The witness withdrew.

Thomas George Collings, sworn and examined.

22. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower. I reside about 3½ miles from here. About 6 miles from Lilydale, and 3½ from Croydon. I use the Lilydale station on account of the badness of the roads to Croydon. You have seen the best road to-day. I have 19 acres under cultivation—fruit, intensive culture. I have 36 acres altogether, and have been here 15 years. The orchard is about twelve years old, and is in full bearing. I send my fruit to Melbourne, averaging 40 cases a week by the Lilydale line. It goes to the Western Market. The pears are a high grade, and I send them to Swallow and Ariell. I have never computed the number of tons I send by rail. I send gooseberries, cherries, and raspberries.

23. To the Hon. E. Morley.—At present my fruit has produced 300 cases more than any year before; I have had nine cases off some trees and none off others. The returns from the middleman have been 2s. 9d., 3s., and 3s. 3d.; windfalls, 2s. and 2s. 2d. Swallow and Ariell’s price is 4s. 6d. a case, and they return all cases and save me the commission for selling. I have sent a very large quantity of the Williams pears. My average is from about 90 to 100 cases pears per annum. I have had as many as seven cases off the Williams pear tree. The average is from 5s. to 6s. a case in the market for well-graded fruit. I grow cherries; they have been very low in price, 14d. to 22d. a lb. I consider I lose one-third of my cherries by birds. I am situated amongst wattle that are not attended to by my neighbours, through which I am subjected to great loss. The only way is to shoot them; I know of no other way. This year was my first attempt at potato-growing, and I took third prize at the Horticultural Show at Wandin. If a railway were made there would be a great deal of potato-growing. I could put in 4 acres at once. It is well adapted for carrots, peas, and cauliflowers. As a selector I know nothing about land till I came here. By attention to gardening I gained enough to buy my holding in six years after I selected it from the Government. The produce I grew consisted of red cabbages and silver thin-skinned onions and peas; that enabled me to buy my holding in six years instead of waiting twenty. The quality of the vegetables here is much superior to those grown in Brighton way.

24. To the Hon. D. Melville.—I agree that 10 or 12 acres will keep a family. I can show you large families existing on 3 acres by growing strawberries and raspberries. There are 30 acres by the water reserve taken up in 2-acre lots. We are all very well satisfied and all look very well on it. I would make one to guarantee a certain amount of fruit on a line. I have conserved my timber to make the most of it when the railway comes. These are samples of my fruit—[showing the same].

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(Taken at Monto Ink Forest Settlement.)

WEDNESDAY, 22nd APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

Mr. Cameron, in the Chair;

The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C. | Mr. Harris.

Dan Whitehead Hurst, sworn and examined.

25. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower at present. I have been managing stations before. I hold 20 acres, a selection under the Village Community Act. I have been here about two years, and have about three-quarters of an acre in—potatoes and a few raspberries. I have colhected statistics as to the population of the holdings. I have in over 90 schedules. I have witnessed all of these, and there are a few in addition, which have been witnessed by others—[handing in the same]. I declare that I have witnessed the signatures of all those others. I put those in as evidence. There was a meeting last Friday and on other days in the three different divisions of the settlement, when they passed resolutions adopting
the line up the Olinda Creek through the settlement, and in the meantime we would be satisfied with the first instaime of the line, as far as the settlement, about 13 miles—that would be from Croydon; but we do not lay down any land and fast rule as to the starting-point. As to the settlement, the statistics show that there are 2,857 acres in 302 holdings; population, 613; raspberries grown, 34½ acres; strawberries, 21 acres; number of fruit trees, 12,738; oats and hay, 30½ acres; vegetables and potatoes, 169½ acres; English grass, 4,262½ acres; currant bushes, 5,572; gooseberry bushes, 1,278; horses, 35; cattle, 170; pigs, 32. Some of the settlers are going in for poultry breeding. There are 304 fowls and 8 goats.

We wrote to the Government Statistic, and he sent the following agricultural statistics for the year 1895-6, relating to the east riding—Cultivated farms, 298; oats, 9 acres; peas, 36; other cereals, 4 acres; potatoes, 107; turnips, 2; mangold wurzel, 5 acres; hay, 687 acres; artificial grass and green forage, 659 acres; vines, 79 acres; market gardens, 287 acres; orchards and gardens, 1,131 acres; land in fallow, 28 acres. That is in the parish of Mooroolbark. The amount of growth is very good in the forest. I have seen a lot of it, going about collecting schedules, and if the Committee spent a day inspecting the settlement I think they would be very well satisfied with the progress the settlers have made.

The witness withdrew.

Stephen Henry Burne, sworn and examined.

26. To the Chairman.—I am a selector. I hold 20 acres, and have been here two and a half years. I reside on my allotment; it is nearly all fenced. I have cleared about 2 acres, and have planted on that raspberries and potatoes. I collected some of the statistics. I witnessed the signature of some of the schedules and the others are signed by the settlers and witnessed by someone else—[handing in the schedules]. We have to burn the timber on our land to get rid of it. There is a lot of valuable timber, and if we could get it away by rail it would be of value to us. The timber is mesmate and white gum; the latter is good for firewood only, the former for splitting and sawing for building. If we had a railway, I think the settlers would be able to make enough out of the firewood to keep them on their own blocks without going away for work. At present there is no means of getting any work here, and we have to keep running away to get some little bit to do. I agree with Mr. Hurst as to the line of railway that would suit us best. I was present at the meetings held when we came to that conclusion. I would like a railway to benefit the whole settlement. I would not mind its being distant from me 1 or 2 miles. As it is we cannot get out with a cart except Lilydale way. I am more on the Fern Tree Gully side, and there is a mountain to climb up there; there is no way of getting out. I am right on Selby's Hill. At present we have to get on the top of that hill; it is like climbing up a wall to go to Fern Tree Gully. I am about 8 miles from there, and about 14 from Lilydale.

The witness withdrew.

Arthur John Betty, sworn and examined.

27. To the Chairman.—I am a settler; I have been here two years and three months; I hold 14½ acres; I have about 2 acres cleared, and about ½ under cultivation—strawberries, raspberries, and vegetables. I think I can make a living off the 18 acres for a family. The soil and climate are splendid for fruit; it is the same soil as the South Wandin. If I had time and means I could make it as profitable as Mr. Sherwood's. My land is exactly the same soil as his; I agree with what the other witnesses said as to the line that would suit the settlement.

The witness withdrew.

Walter Robertson, sworn and examined.

28. To the Chairman.—I am a settler here, and have been here one year and five months. I have built a house, and have a little over an acre cleared and under cultivation. I am 1½ miles further on from here. I think a man can make a living off a block like mine. I see no better prospect at present. I intend to continue on it, and cultivate as far as my means allow me. My land is not very heavily timbered. It is about a fair sample of the land in the neighbourhood. I have collected some statistics as to the position of the people, which I declare to be correct—[handing in the same].

29. To Mr. Harris.—There has been prospecting done here; at present there is a claim here, a company prospecting for a reef. They had sunk a shaft 40 feet deep a fortnight ago, and they got the slice, and are giving it a trial. I heard they have very good prospects, and I myself saw a prospect they washed and thought it very good. They have been working for years at the alluvial here. There are twenty men working about the creek within a mile from here, just making a living. Mr. Stirling, the geologist, was up here two or three months ago, and I believe reported very favorably on it.

The witness withdrew.

Robert Evans, sworn and examined.

30. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower. I hold 19 acres; I selected it about two years ago, and have been residing on it ever since. I have cleared 2½ acres, and grow raspberries, strawberries, and fruit trees. I send the strawberries to Sydney; they were carted to Wandin. I sent pease to Melbourne, and got fair prices, carting them right into Melbourne through Lilydale. I am about 12 miles from Lilydale; it would not pay me better to cart it all the way if I had a railway within 3 or 4 miles. If the line came up the Olinda Creek it would be within 1½ miles of my place. I intend to continue on the land, and I believe I am sure of making a living. I have only burned the timber; it would not pay to cart it out. If there were a railway within moderate distance there is good splitting timber that could be sent—mesmate, blackbutt, gum, and stringybark. I agree with the others, that a line to suit us the best would be up the Olinda.

The witness withdrew.
Frederick James Harris, sworn and examined.

31. To the Chairman.—I am a gardener. I reside about 1½ miles from here. I have 19 acres and have had it for two years, and have been residing here all the time with my wife and family. I have fenced in 3 acres and cleared nearly all of it, and planted raspberries, strawberries, currants, and fruit trees. I have not sent any yet to Melbourne; it is a very bad land to clear, taking one year to clear and one to plant, and the third year you may get something off it. I intend to stick to the land; it is as good land as there is in Victoria, and a good climate. It suits fruit and potatoes, and corn of all descriptions; raspberries and strawberries, and would probably do for tobacco. It is a good general land for a poor man if he can only get a railway into it. There is plenty of water—running creeks—and with a little trouble a man could irrigate.

The witness withdrew.

Denis McCarty, sworn and examined.

32. To the Chairman.—I am a selector, and have been here a little over two years. I reside on the land, and have cleared about 4 acres. I have planted 3 acres of peas, potatoes, strawberries, raspberries, and fruit trees. I carried some produce in myself, through Lilydale, a general lot of vegetables, cabbages, turnips, and potatoes. It did not pay me, it is too far—for too much expense for horse-feed and wear and tear. When you are on the road going to Lilydale it is hardly worth while putting it on the train. If we had a narrow-gauge line within a reasonable distance, I would be glad to get a chance of sending down. The question of a second handling would have to be thought over. We have good timber fit for sleepers. I have only burnt my timber as yet, and used some for fencing; there is messmate and blinagum, very good wood for cart and waggon building—very tough. I have to stick to my selection now that I have a big family. I could do with another 20 acres if they would give it to me. I have a growing family, and I would like to have something for them instead of running about the streets of Melbourne. I have not sold any timber. I dare say we would get a market for posts and rails; we could afford to get rid of them cheap. The roads are fearful in the winter. I had to prop my cart up on one occasion and leave it on the road, and go for it the next morning. In parts of the road you can hardly swim. I would be satisfied with a railway within 4 miles. I am about 4 miles from South Wandin Hill.

33. To the Hon. D. Metville.—All the land around me is taken up; it is nearly all taken up as I have taken it. There are 202 others. I cannot say how many have thrown up theirs since I came here. I know of a few who shifted on to other settlements. We are increasing in number now. I do not see why any man should want to leave this land; the Government has stuck to us very well, and we are quite satisfied; they have assisted us by money, and through the clearing of the road—that employment was the best help we have had, that ceased four or five months ago. If there were a railway we would get work at it, and it would pull us through nicely. There is no employment in the district.

34. To Mr. Harris.—I got £40 from the Government. All the married village settlers got that. The single men got £30. There are not many single men. There are about ten left out of the forty still drawing money.

35. To the Chairman.—We have had no offer made to us to construct a narrow-gauge railway. The settlers would work very cheaply, I know, because the man wants employment. You could get a line constructed very cheaply. If they brought it up the Olinda Valley, it would not cost very much. I was on the railways myself fourteen years, and I think it could be constructed at about £200 a mile, for the main work, that is the rough with the smooth.

36. To the Hon. D. Metville.—I think it would run into 4s. or 5s. a day per man. I think the men could make wages, and it would not come to more than that a mile. The biggest expense would be taking the timber off, but we are pretty well used to that now.

37. To Mr. Harris.—There have been miners amongst us, and there has been some prospecting.

The witness withdrew.

William Montague Knight, sworn and examined.

38. To the Chairman.—I am a settler. I reside about 3 miles north from here and have 20 acres. I have been fifteen months on it and have not brought up my family yet. I have three-quarters of an acre under cultivation, cleared and fenced in and a good part cleared ready for the coming season. There is plenty of timber on the land, the timber is only good for firewood—messmate and peppermint. There is scarcely enough for splitting rails. I am putting up posts and wire fencing. I could not get the timber carted to me at the price I could get the wire from Melbourne. They charge is, a cart to cart from Lilydale to here. I had a little produce—raspberries, strawberries, and potatoes. I sent them to the family and they cost me considerably more than they could have bought them for in town. I believe my land will grow anything.

39. To the Hon. D. Metville.—The people are all fairly healthy here.

40. To the Chairman.—I mean to stick to the land, railway or no railway, as long as I live.

The witness withdrew.

Patrick Healy, sworn and examined.

41. To the Chairman.—I am a selector. I hold 20 acres. It is about a mile from here. I have been on the land two and a half years; my family reside with me. I have cleared about 5 acres, growing potatoes and maize, for green feed, barley and turnips; in fact I have put in everything that is required. I do not send any to market, but I could have done so if there had been a way to send them. It would not have paid me with the bad roads and it would take nearly twice as much of what they would be worth to deliver them in Melbourne, but if I had had a way of sending them I dare say I could have made about £10. If I cultivated the whole 20 acres I dare say I could send the produce of 7 or 8 acres out of the 10 away. I averaged about 6 tons of potatoes to the acre this season; the price per ton that would pay me would be £2 10s. per ton or £3, if I had the means of sending them to market.

The witness withdrew.
Donald McLennan, sworn and examined.

42. To the Chairman.—I am a selector; I have 120 acres; I got it eighteen years ago. From that time to this I have got no help from anybody. I cleared 20 acres of ground and did my level best, and spent hundreds of pounds on it, and I could not get a railway or a common road and I got heart-broken over it, and my cart has not been four times in the year from that mountain. If you had a narrow-gauge line it would suit the little settlers; they are small men, and small things will do for them, to make a living by—flowers, gooseberries, raspberries, and small baskets of eggs, not a cwt. altogether, and by such traffic the country would become prosperous. The best land in the colony is from here to my place, and after that comes the second best. Other men have got railways and subsidies, and there have I been up there like a stag on a rock for eighteen years, and nobody asking me what I shall do, and saying the man is cranky. Fancy me there eighteen years, giving the Government good advice. I told Duncan Gillies that it was he who was cranky, and he never thanked me. I said to John McIntyre when he was up at the head of the mountain—"You help these men in the Sassafras Gully, but whatever you do, do not let it be pettifogging. There are 15 miles of rails laid up at Spencer-street and half of that would come to Sassafras, and if you just put those on the road and set the men to work and give them £30 instead of £19 they will make a lot of tramway, instead of showing their nails and casting bread they did not earn." This light railway would be the very thing for them. The question is, how far up the Sassafras Gully you can put a station. If you give us the line you will bless these men and put away your enemies and make the whole district smile.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(Taken at the Wandin Jam Factory.)

THURSDAY, 23RD APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.,
The Hon. E. Morey, M.L.C.,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. J. S. White.

Alfred J. Mattingley, sworn and examined.

43. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, combined with salesman for the district. I reside at Wandin Yallock, about half-a-mile from here. I have been here fifteen years. I hold 38 acres, and have about 14 acres under crop, mostly fruits. I collected the statistics with the committee, and such for their accuracy—[handing in the same]. There are 185 inhabited houses, with a population of 986; that is not taking in the population of the village settlement, but the statistics for the whole district except the village settlement. They employed 350 for the fruit season, mostly from the unemployed of Melbourne. There are 1,023 acres under fruit and market gardens, that is including root crops. The imports into the district we cannot ascertain accurately, so many get their stores direct from Melbourne, and many deal with the storekeepers in this district, and others with the storekeepers at Lilydale. Of course, it takes a large amount to feed a population like this, but I like to give you some information as to the basis of the fruit industry of this district. For several years I acted as salesman and distributing agent for a great many fruit-growers of this district. During that time the actual trucks that used to reach Melbourne during the first part of the season were two to three per day till the fruit season came on, when they reached from five to as many as seven truck-loads a day at the Melbourne end. Independent of that large supply, each passenger train leaving Lilydale carried a large quantity of smaller packages of fruits—buckets and half-cases. I was also despatching for Adelaide direct from Lilydale station four trucks—the "S," or 12-ton trucks. The trade relations with this district have been wonderfully developed. For instance, it was thought as periodical gluts appeared in the market, with low prices, that if the fruit-growers here could erect a pulping plant in this district it would enable them to place their fruit in nearly every market of the world, and I have pleasure in stating that this belief has been more than verified. It was also thought that if a company could be formed which would have the object of bringing the consumer and producer closer together it would be a step in the right direction. The Wandin Freels Fruit Company was accordingly successfully launched, and financially it has proved an unqualified success; and it has also been the means of materially increasing the revenue derived from the carriage of fruit by the railway. During the first year we handled the products of 29 acres of orchard. The freights on the fruits amounted to £115. The inward freights for the empty returns, as well as the freights on the chemical manures used in the production of those fruits, amounted to £21, making about £5 an acre to the railway. With the pulping plant here and the railway facilities given by the Victorian and New South Wales railway authorities, we have been able to open a market in Sydney for strawberries and cherries. Adelaide is periodically our market for fruits of the description grown in this district. It will take years for the growers to supply the demand for the fruit of this district. Each season brings forward more orders than we have been able to complete. Each acre yields on the average from 6 to 7 tons. The net weight of the 12-ton trucks was about 6½ tons, the packages would then amount to about 2 tons, which would be available for fruit.

44. To Mr. Burton.—The statement handed in refers to the boundaries of the parish of Wandin. The boundary at South Wandin to Saville would be about 7 miles distant. A portion of the statement referred to within 3½ miles of Lilydale. The number of inhabitants given refers to people living within that distance of the railway.
45. To Mr. J. S. White.—A survey has been made between here and Lilydale. If there were a station 2 miles from here towards Lilydale with a narrow-gauge line, it is a question whether the people would take the fruit there and re-ship it there for the other train. It would depend on when the Lilydale train went.

46. To the Hon. E. Morey.—The best time to take fruit from this district is by the eight o'clock morning train. At present we have to send by the night train.

47. To Mr. J. S. White.—I have no hesitation in saying that a narrow-gauge railway through Wandin would pay, and the whole district is of that opinion. If the line should not pay, I would be prepared to bear my proportion of the deficit, either by a different rate or something like the revenue principle.

48. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I do not think the change in the gauge would knock the fruit about much. We have to put up with a break of gauge for the Sydney market in sending raspberries and strawberries, and during the whole time I have supplied those markets only two complaints have reached me as to the staff in which the fruit arrived.

To the Chairman.—If the line were constructed 2 miles from the jam factory I think it would pay the people here to take their produce right to Lilydale. I think a line can be constructed to serve all parts of the district. A flying survey was made from Coldstream. I cannot say exactly where the line came. The survey from Croydon could be juncated almost anywhere, which would bring the line within easy reach of the South Wandin district, and with a deviation into Seville it would suit the whole of this district.

The witness withdraw.

William Peacock, sworn and examined.

50. To the Chairman.—I am a jam manufacturer. I have been connected with this district about four years. I still carry on the making of jam, and do a large export trade in pulping. Our output from the factory is about 100 tons of raspberries per annum. This district is specially suited for the soft fruits. The other fruits I handle in town. The rates originally were fixed so that it was much cheaper to take the fruit to Melbourne and manufacture there rather than here. When we export we do not export jam. The Tariff in the different colonies prevents that, and the only export trade is fruit or pulp. The duties on pulp fruit in Sydney and Queensland are very low, and the duties on jam very high, so the manufacturers take the fruit fresh or in the shape of pulp. The way the question of a railway close to here appeals to me is as to the possibilities of the district as to growing those fruits which are most in demand. At present there is almost an unlimited demand at a certain figure for raspberries and strawberries, and black currants; this district is peculiarly fitted for those, and with the alteration being made in the Tariff of New South Wales it is leading to a much greater demand for those fruits. A very good crop of raspberry would be 5 tons to the acre. The average is about 3 tons to the acre. As far as I know the district that would be opened up beyond us is particularly fitted for some classes of fruit that are hard to get at present, and for which there is a great demand, for instance, black currants; they have tried those in Wandin and have not succeeded, but I have seen them in a district further on growing very well indeed; I mean anywhere towards Warburton and Beenak; that would be all opened up by a railway going in this direction. Speaking generally, in handling those soft fruits the distance at which they can profitably grow the fruit, and deliver it in the best condition is about 6 to 8 miles from a railway, where they get beyond that they do not seem to tackle it successfully.

51. To the Hon. D. Melville.—Gooseberries would do well here; black currants seem to prefer the country further on. Red and white currants are generally about the same. Owing to the alterations to the Tariff in New South Wales, in three years' time there will be about twelve or fifteen jam manufacturers who will have to elect to come to Victoria, or go to Tasmania, and it is the districts that grow the soft fruits better, that the people will not go to, and if you induce two to come here it will make a great difference; each would clear out more fruit than is grown here now.

52. To Mr. Harris.—They cannot compete with the imported jam there without protection; they must shift, and they are looking out for premises in the other colonies.

53. To Mr. J. S. White.—If there were protection they would still draw their supplies of soft fruit from here or Tasmania; they have not the soil or the climate. I would prefer going straight into Lilydale than unloading at a distance of 2 miles from here.

54. To Mr. Craven.—Before the Tariff was altered in New South Wales they used to come to us for the soft fruits. I was in business there for many years, and had a connexion when I opened here. There is a growing demand there and in Queensland; we are practically taking away what was the Australian trade. The particular point they must study is where they can get their supply of soft fruits from; the other fruits will carry better.

55. To Mr. Harris.—In Great Britain there is a great demand for raspberry pulp. None has left the colony for this there year. Last year large quantities went; it is likely there will be shipments there; you can only look on it as an outlet for the surplus fruit, there are technical difficulties in the way that have proved a bar against shipping to England; they do not use, in England, any pulp excepting in stone jars, and they will not buy it put up in tins, and we cannot export stone jars from here. There, one manufacturer keeps 50,000 or 40,000 jars, and they would cost more than the fruit here.

56. To Mr. Craven.—If a line were constructed to here, I think if it came up to Warburton through Seville, it would fairly serve the district; that would open the country for 6 or 7 miles on either side. I speak from a manufacturer's point of view. It would have to come pretty close to here, and that would tap the locality that is likely to produce black currants. When we came here first we thought a railway would come through, and the factory would be near the fruit district. I think the best route is South Wandin, and at the foot of the mountain.

The witness withdraw.

John Blanksey, sworn and examined.

57. To the Chairman.—I am a blacksmith, residing within three-quarters of a mile of the factory; I have 10 acres of land; I cultivate a portion for my own use mainly, and have nearly an acre of raspberries. I can speak of the attendance at the various schools, showing where the population is located; I
am the Chairman of the Board of Advice. At the South Wandin school the attendance is 32; you then come to a school less than a mile from the factory—the Wandin school, the attendance there is 73; at the Seville school, about 3 miles away, the attendance is 76; at the South Gruyere school the attendance is 19, that would be benefited by this railway. The South Wandin school covers an area of population extending 5 miles. The other two schools will educate an area of 5 or 6 miles, and then the Gruyere covers an area that accommodates all the people for about 9 miles, and the deduction from that is that a line of railway on that side would not serve very many people.

58. To Mr. Harris,—I have not the actual number of children on the rolls; and what I have given is the average attendance for the last quarter, which comes to about three-fourths the number on the roll.

59. To the Hon. D. Metcalfe.—There is no school at the village settlement. The correspondent and myself were instructed by the Board of Education to visit the settlement and set up a school there. We did so, but we found the residents were divided as to where the school should be put. We reported to the Board and urged the erection of a school, but we have heard nothing further. That district would be benefited by a railway if it came through this district and touched South Wandin at all. The nearest house on that village settlement would be 2 miles distant from the present South Wandin school, but the settlement extends 3 miles. I cannot speak as to the practicability of a narrow-gauge railway. I think that the fact of the present railway to Lilydale proves that railways can be made almost anywhere and that hills are not a barrier to a railway.

60. To the Chairman.—I think grades could be got by following round the hills not greater than some of those on the Camberwell and Lilydale line. I think a bullock driver would find the most suitable grades with his dray. I have an opportunity of seeing more than any other man in Wandin—some portion of the district that Mr. Peacock referred to as suitable for black currants—up the Little Yarra and towards Beaconsfield. There are two lines that could be put to attempts to grow them for market; they average from 17 to 30 miles away, but a number of them have a few just growing and wasting. I have seen as good black currants there as any I have seen in the market—that is up the valleys from the Little Yarra.

61. To the Hon. E. Morey.—The bushes grow very luxuriously there.

62. To Mr. Craven.—The line from Lilydale to Warburton through Seville would be of use if it came within a reasonable distance of the centre—any diversion from the centre would diverge rather to the south than to the north line of the population.[Showing on the plan] The line would have to go up to Warburton to generally serve the district or Warburton. A line to Launching Place would suit; that would give reasonable railway communication to the surrounding district.

The witness withdrew.

George Edmund Overton, sworn and examined.

63. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, about a mile from here. I have been twenty years in the district and have 105 acres, with about 15 acres under fruit cultivation and an acre or two of roots and hay. The oldest trees are about fourteen years old; they are in full bearing. I grow principally cherries, raspberries, strawberries, and apples. I send my fruit by train to Lilydale. I sell between 30 and 40 tons a year by railway—that is a rough guess. I send it down to agents in town who sell it there. Any line that would come through the centre of this district would suit me—I call this the centre. A line touching South Wandin would be the best. Speaking generally, I think the one from Croydon would suit a greater number than the one from Lilydale; it would open up a lot of new country that has no railway facilities.

64. To Mr. Craven.—Making Lilydale the starting point we could provide for this district and then go on to Warburton. It would come within half-a-mile of this place, touching South Wandin, and then come on to Seville and Warburton.

65. To Mr. J. S. White.—I keep stock on the balance of the land. Grazing does not pay better than fruit-growing. I have a few pigs and cattle. If there were a railway within a reasonable distance I would put more under fruit. It is too laborious to take the fruit to Lilydale—a few acres there would time lost on the way back, and forwards. If there were a station within a reasonable distance I would go in for clearing the land largely for fruit-growing. I employ on the average one man through the year and several in the picking season for the small fruits, and two of my boys are able to assist me in the garden. If there were a railway here, people would turn to clearing their land and employ labour, and more people would settle in the district.

66. To Mr. Harris.—I do not know any of my neighbours who go in for grazing. I am about 7 miles from Lilydale. I pay from 7s. to 9s. for cartage. If a line were constructed I would guarantee produce for it 70 to 80 tons in the year; the same would apply to the majority of my neighbours. The land around me is freehold; it is worth £3 to £10 an acre. The construction of a railway would add £3 or £6 to the value of the land. If a railway did not pay I would be willing to pay my share of a rate. I have spoken to a few of my neighbours on the subject and they have been unanimous on it. The people hold from 40 to 50 or 60 acres on the average. It is splendid land—red soil. I want the bush sufficient for a family to live on. I think all the land is taken up. The land is very heavily timbered with messmate and stringybark. If a line were constructed some good could be done by exporting firewood and sawn timber. I have heard people making inquiries about that point.

67. To the Hon. E. Morey.—It costs from £10 to £20 an acre to clear the land, and £10 more to put it under fruit trees. The majority of residents here grow their own fruit trees. I include the buying of the nursery stuff in the £30. With raspberries we get a return the second year, and they come into full bearing the third year.

68. To Mr. Burton.—Nearly every one in the district is engaged in growing fruit except the storekeeper and the blacksmith; they average about the same as mine, 10 to 12 acres of cultivation. I find a ready market in Melbourne. We have to put up with the fluctuations in price; but there is an unlimited demand for all the produce we grow. I find no difficulty at any time in disposing of the fruit. The land at Croydon is better for apples and pears, but it is not suitable for small fruits; there is no land suitable for that on the way from Lilydale to Melbourne. At Healesville I believe they grow some of those fruits. If the railway cost double or treble the amount of our produce, I think there would still be a market for it without materially reducing the price, as the other colonies take such a large amount from the manufacturers, and Queensland and New South Wales cannot grow those soft fruits.

The witness withdrew.
69. To the Chairman.—I am secretary to the Lilydale Shire Council, and have been since 1874. I have resided in the shire since 1860, and know the country well. I collect the statistics. I am the valuator of the shire sometimes. The annual rateable value of the parish of Wandin and the eastern riding, the parishes of Wandin and Gruyere, is £10,122. That is, the parish of Wandin £5,768, and Gruyere £4,354. The population, including the north of Wandin, is 1,100. Those that adjourn Wandin on the north would be benefited by a railway if it went to Seville, so I have indicated them. There are 350 acres under tillage in Wandin is about 1,800 acres. When the statistics are collected the owners of land do not always include all their cultivation land, for the reason that some that has been sown down in grass has run out. But the cultivation as I take it would be 1,630 acres, and the remainder would be land cultivated one time or another, but not the last year. As to fruit, I was struck with the fact when I took the statistics that nearly every one had an orchard. I should say there would be 1,000 acres of orchard land, including raspberries and such like. From my knowledge of the district I think a railway from Lilydale towards Warburton would pay. I never went into the matter of tonnage. There are a great many people who travel by coaches; there is a constant stream of vehicles on the road. There is a large traffic comes down from Warburton and Wandin. In fact, that is the only way fruit-growers can find an exit, and they all centre at Lilydale, consequently there is a large traffic on the Wandin-road.

70. To Mr. J. S. White.—The nearest point of the parish of Wandin is 4 miles from Lilydale.

71. To Mr. Burton.—Nearly every allotment has a house on it; quite 90 per cent. of the holdings are occupied. There are two large blocks in Wandin which are in the hands of the banks. I think there are only four of those larger areas in the parish; about 150 acres each; they have a long frontage to the road, which makes them look larger than they are. There are about 20 square miles in the parish of Wandin, and all occupied but 1 to ½ square miles.

72. To the Chairman.—There are two blocks in Gruyere of 400 acres each. The blocks of land in the whole of the district would not average more than 100 acres, and every 100 acres has a dwelling on. 73. To Mr. Harris.—The population of Wandin and South Wandin has increased during the past three years, but not very much. I think the cause of the population not increasing is the want of railway facilities. If there were more facilities the land could be divided; in South Wandin the people have divided it; one man with 100 acres sold ten blocks, and there is a house on each block. I think if a settler is within 4 miles of a railway he need not grumble. The rateable property of the shire 20 years ago was very small; we had only about 400 rate-payers on the books, and now we have 1,500. The last three years there have been a good many blocks of land subdivided into small allotments, and that has made the increase in the number of the assessments.

The witness withdraw.

Adjourned.

(Taken at Seville.)

THURSDAY, 23RD APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

Mr. Cameron, in the Chair;

Mr. Burton,
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. J. S. White.

William Henry Smith, sworn and examined.

74. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, residing at Seville. I have resided here about five years, but have had no interest in the district for fifteen years. I hold 100 acres and have 15 acres under cultivation, principally fruit, and some land for the cattle; 9 or 10 acres under fruit, mostly raspberries. I am a member of the Wandin Fruit-Growers' Association. We sell our raspberries to that association for Swallow and Ariell, Melbourne; we send by rail from Lilydale. I may mention that this society, of which, I am the chairman, deals with about 120 to 150 tons of raspberries a year, all of which is sent to Melbourne by train. It is all produced in the Wandin district. On my 10 acres I grow about 5 tons altogether. I have apples and other fruit on it; it is only a small orchard just coming into bearing. I am 9 miles from Lilydale. If a railway went through here on the line surveyed, and if there were a station at Seville, I would then be 6½ miles from the station. If we had a narrow-gauge railway to there and had to transpose from the narrow-gauge tracks to the broad at Lilydale I cannot say what the association would do. We do not at present know what appliances would be available for the transfer from the narrow to the broad gauge and a great deal would depend on that. Raspberries are one of the most out too much handling. Some of the growers send the raspberries in baskets and it would not be very convenient to shift large quantities of those to another train. This is a great fruit-growing district. As to the raspberry, industry, that is increasing every year. Since the export trade has been opened up by Swallow and Ariell most of the growers have been putting in extra patches. Although the quantity has increased to meet the increased demand the price has not gone up. We got £15 per ton last year; it just pays, but does not leave a very large profit; if the price go lower we will have to go in for other fruits. A large quantity of peaches is grown here.

75. To the Hon. E. Morey.—Some parts of my land will produce potatoes, but I have not paid much attention to that.
76. To the Hon. D. Mettville.—There is also the Croydon line, which would accommodate the village settlers. We are not much interested in them on this line. I do not think the Coldstream line would accommodate the settlers at all. If the line from Croydon went through the centre of the Wandin district, and through Seville, I would prefer that line, because I believe it would accommodate the largest number, in fact, the entire district. I think the line would pay, taking the population, and the fruits, and the class of settlers, and knowing as I do that these crops are increasing every year.

77. To Mr. Harris.—The land is held in small blocks about Seville. Some land has been cut up within the last few years into 10 and 20 acre blocks. I think a man can do well at fruit-growing on from 20 to 40 acres, and I think he is better off than a man with 100 acres. Raspberries are grown in other districts, Gippsland and Healesville. For a long time Wandin had the entire market. We do not think the competition is serious; we show that by going in for an increased area under raspberries.

78. To Mr. J. S. White.—I have 40 acres that I do not use except to turn the cattle on; that is the poorest part of my land.

79. To Mr. Harris.—At present I am only a small grower, and would guarantee 5 or 6 tons to a railway. If there were a railway I might grow more, and the land would become more valuable.

The witness withdrew.

John Hand, sworn and examined.

80. To the Chairman.—I am a storekeeper. I have about 400 acres of land; I do not cultivate any. I have been 35 years at Seville. Last year I brought 120 tons of general merchandise from Melbourne, and 21 trucks of live stock. I pay £6 a ton to cart from Lilydale to here. The rates vary from Melbourne to Lilydale. There has been a steady increase of late in the demand for stores, more population, and there has been mining developed lately. Some of the people are better off than they were ten years ago. If a narrow-gauge line were brought here, I suppose the cost would be less than carting with drays. It would be altogether a question of the expense. I cannot say as to cattle being transferred.

81. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I have some land I consider worth £15 an acre, and some not worth £1 to 30s. The whole district is patchy.

82. To the Chairman.—As to the average size of the farms round me, there are a great many 80-acre selections.

The witness withdrew.

James Wallase, sworn and examined.

83. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, living a mile from here. I hold 73 acres—80 under cultivation of fruit, and 2 acres peas, cabbages, and oats. The fruit trees are of various ages. I have been twenty years in the district. I started with merely an axe to clear the land. My market is Melbourne for the fruit, by rail from Lilydale. I send about 15 tons a year, and it is increasing every year. It costs me about 5s. a ton from Lilydale to Melbourne. I cart it myself to Lilydale. It would be about 10s. a ton if I had to pay for carting. It is difficult to say how much a railway would enhance the value of my land. If there were a railway I would not sell my land at all. I have made it my home, and I am satisfied I can make a living. I started with nothing, and have a home now. I think the railway would be a benefit. I think a line from Lilydale would bring 80 acres of land to the centre of Wandin and down through Seville, would suit the majority of the people, and would be cheaper to construct. The one from Croydon would be very difficult owing to the mountainous country. I think there has been a line surveyed up the Olinda Creek to the jam factory; that would serve the majority of the South Wandin people. I think the population is thicker about there and down this way than it is further on.

The witness withdrew.

James Pomeroy, sworn and examined.

84. To the Chairman.—I am a blacksmith, living at Seville, and have been here a little over nine years. I have 5 acres of land which I am just starting to plant a little to be in fashion. I have about an acre planted. Business in my line when I came here first was slack, but it has increased. I have had as many as four men working for me—three constantly—but since the depression it has not been so good, and I have had only one man constantly and myself. I would like a railway very well. I am satisfied with my position here as a tradesman, and I have no doubt I shall be able to pay my way in the future. I believe a railway would do a great deal of good to the country. I would object to a narrow-gauge line, but I would rather have the broad. There is a great deal of traffic on the road, and a regular carrier goes three times a week, and several others go constantly. There are four, five, and sometimes six horses on the road. The carrier loads very heavily—sometimes 4 and 5 tons. He generally goes twice a week from Lilydale to Warburton. I cannot say how many tons he takes a week.

85. To the Hon. D. Mettville.—To clear my land is worth about £25 to £10 an acre as an average over the whole. I am the inventor of the self-acting forest devil. It cheapens the work, and it would cost what I have said to clear the land; without that it would cost more; some land would cost £20 some £5 to clear. The machine is very much in use; they generally borrow if they cannot buy one; the cost is from £10 to £14.

The witness withdrew.

William Smith Aitkin, sworn and examined.

86. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, living about 2½ miles from here; I come through Seville to go to Lilydale; it is the easier road. I have a little over 200 acres. I have been 28 years here and have cultivated 60 acres. I have 75 acres cleared, and have 25 acres under fruit—apples, plums, cherries, peaches, raspberries, and strawberries. Melbourne is my market except what goes to the factory. This
year I have had 41 tons of fruit, and 3 of peasce. I wish to point out that with 41 tons of fruit I have to pay on 10 tons of cases. A case weighs about 10 lbs., so for 4 tons of fruit we have to pay freight for 5, I have had 3 tons of fruit and 6 tons of manure up, and 2 tons of stores altogether a tonnage this year up and down of 72 tons. If there were a narrow-gauge railway to this village I would give it a trial; if they canship it, without injuring it very much it would do, but I do not know how much they would knock it about.

87. To the Hon. D. Melville.—A man can live on from 4 to 20 acres at fruit-growing, if he has means to start his family. I started with very little capital. Perhaps the prices are not so good now, but we have other advantages. A new man coming into the district can see what others have done. If you had a railway here, in five years you would have, I should think, the population of Wandin nearly doubling, with just as good a living as the others. I think a railway will develop the whole place, I have not gone into statistics.

88. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I have grown potatoes. They are out of the running without a railway; the average is 4 tons to the acre; the cartage is the difficulty.

89. To Mr. J. S. White.—I do not know what my land is worth an acre; I am not inclined to sell. If I had a railway at Seville I cannot say how much more its value would be increased. The chances are that if I get the freight cheaper I will increase my produce. If there is a loss on the line I am prepared to guarantee my fair share, but I think it is hardly fair to ask a man who contributes a great deal to the railway to pay something, and to let off the man who does not reside on his land. I would be prepared to pay a fair share with the others—that is after getting credit for the amount of fruit sent.

The witness withdrew.

Edmund Burgi, sworn and examined.

90. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower, living 1½ miles from here. I was very young when I came here; my father and brother and myself hold about 170 acres, and have about 40 acres under cultivation, 16 under fruit. We send 25 to 30 tons a year to market, but we grow more than that. I would send to Seville rather than Lilydale if it were nearer; unless we found that the narrow gauge damaged the fruit by rough handling, we should certainly try it. We generally load the trucks ourselves, and do not find it damages the fruit. The narrow gauge would suit well for general merchandize; for fruit it might be a different thing. We would prefer a narrow gauge to no railway at all, but we rather have the broad, even if they cheapen the rate on to the narrow gauge.

91. To the Hon. E. Morey.—I do not think carting about 8 miles would knock it about as much as loading and unloading to a railway. We grow potatoes—not for sale; they average about 4 tons to the acre. They grow market produce in the district. Every year we plant some new young fruit trees. With a railway we could go in for market gardening as well.

The witness withdrew.

John Gardner, sworn and examined.

92. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower and gardener, at East Wandin, along the Beenak-road, about 4 miles from here. We hold about 215 acres between myself and brother; about 40 acres under cultivation, 20 under fruit—apples, pears, and including 6 acres of raspberries. We send all that produce to Melbourne by rail from Lilydale, about 15 tons. Our orchard is young yet, from two years to seven. If we had a railway at Seville we would put more under crop; in fact, we are putting more under crop every year. It is only ten years since we started a farm.

93. To the Hon. E. Morey.—We grow potatoes. The year before last they paid very well. We grew scion potatoes; they average about 4 tons to the acre, but this year they would not pay the freight. We burn the timber. If there were a railway we might find a market for that. It would depend on how much the narrow gauge could take; it is a big item with us; the timber is fit for posts and rails, not for saw-milling. There are six of us in family.

The witness withdrew.

Henry B. Aitken, sworn and examined.

94. To the Chairman.—I am a fruit-grower and dairy farmer, residing 2 miles from here. I hold 82 acres, 25 under forage, fruit and vegetables, green crops and grass. I have been in the district twenty years. I send away 10 to 12 tons, and get up 2 tons of manure. I keep eight or nine cows, and make butter. There is not much dairying carried on in the district.

95. To the Hon. E. Morey.—English grass and clover do very well here.

The witness withdrew.

Charles Read, sworn and examined.

96. To the Chairman.—I am a bootmaker, living in Seville the last eight years. I was in Melbourne a good many years. I hold 4 acres leased from Government under miner's right. I have some raspberries and fruit trees on it, and vegetables. I have here some samples of my potatoes—showing the same. I have a quarter of an acre under potatoes, and reckon to take 30 cwt. off that. Out of the garden and fruit I make a good living. I am just on the creek. I have only 2 acres cleared. I consider that when I get the 4 acres cleared I will be able to make a living on that alone. I think a railway would decidedly benefit the district if the railway station is at Seville. I consider in five years from now I could get 10 tons of produce off my 4 acres.

97. To the Hon. D. Melville.—I pay 2s. a year for the land under miner's right. I suppose there are 100 acres in the township can be got in the same way. I hold under right, and my wife has 1 acre and two sons 2.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.
98. To the Chairman.—I am a farmer, residing at Yarra View close to this place. I hold about 100 acres, 40 acres here and 50 elsewhere; I cultivate 10 acres and have 80 acres under English grass. I grow potatoes, oats, peas, and mangolds. I could not have made the money of it on the place, and turning it into butter. I sell my butter locally and also send to town. This time last year on my place I was making from 90 to 95 lbs. of butter a week with eleven cows. We can grow anything in the district, but have not had means to get it away. Thousands of acres in this valley will grow anything, but last year it would not pay to send to Melbourne. I would go in for growing stuff and producing milk and sending it to market. I could keep from 20 to 25 cows, and they would average 2 gallons a day each cow. The market would be Wood Point or Melbourne if the road were opened; that would help the railway, for hundreds of tons of stuff would go through to Wood's Point. Those potatoes were grown right up on the hill between here and Lilydale. I pay £1 a ton for things coming up. I have paid 30s. when I came here first, three years ago.

99. To the Hon. D. Melville.—My father had a large garden; you cannot beat it on the ranges for fruit-growing. If we had means to get the timber off, a man would be satisfied if he could get enough money to go on with by sending the timber to Melbourne. The people can get in there if the roads are made; the land is poor at present, but it would grow good fruit, and if the railway came the value of land would be increased, and the rates would be increased, and the roads would be made; all about the ranges people can settle if you make a railway, and there are any amount of tourists who would come there and live for the good of their health. There is splendid land there as far up as I have been. I have never been to the top.

The witness withdrew.

John Buchanan, sworn and examined.

100. To the Chairman.—I am a farmer, living about a mile from here. I have been here two years. My sons have been four years. I hold 200 acres, and have about 40 acres under cultivation this year. I grow hay, potatoes, peas, and pumpkins, and have 2 acres under fruit. I did send butter to Melbourne, but mostly to Lilydale. I was milking 30 cows last year, but I found the price was so low at Lilydale that I sold half of them milk in the land with rye grass. If I had a railway to carry away the milk it would pay better than fruit, but we only got 3s. last year in Lilydale. If it were a narrow gauge, and we had to re-ship, I would risk it. Half a loaf is better than no bread any time. I can keep 30 or 40 milking cows on my place. Last year I had 5 acres under potatoes; there would be about 4 tons to the acre. I grow them on the flat and on the hill beside the house; we had no bonedust but just the new land turned up. They are all a good quality of potatoes. I grew some grain for seed. I would grow more if I had a way to get it away, but the roads are so bad, and it is a poor market in Lilydale. It takes two days going to Lilydale and back. With a railway we would put it on at once, and a lot of passengers would come up by it. I was a railway man for seven years in the old country and in Queensland, and I think this is as likely a track as any I have seen. I have had 1,000 men under my care. I am sure a railway would pay here because it would gather the traffic, and the passengers would be as much as the produce. I think the line can be made very reasonably. There are some gullies there almost flat on the way from here above Woori Yallock—gullies miles in length. It think it ought to cross the Woori Yallock above the present road below Parslow's. Of course you could come in close to Seville from Parslow's—you must go round about a bit to the little townships for traffic.

101. To Mr. J. S. White.—Mine is selected land. I have paid eight or nine rents. If the railway did not pay I would not be willing to be reasonably taxed to make it up. I do not say it would pay immediately, but in the near future. Of course it depends on the expenses of making the railway and the cost of management whether I would be willing to pay.

The witness withdrew.

James Kirk Jennings, sworn and examined.

102. To the Chairman.—I am a stock and station agent and manager for the Blackwood Park Estate, belonging to Mr. Edward Miller, and I am here to-night to represent him. I have been connected with the district about four years. I know it well, and know Mr. Miller's estate thoroughly; we have between 800 and 900 acres. We cultivate about 80 acres—maize, peas, potatoes, hay, and carrots; we do not send hay to market. We would grow more stuff if we could get it to market, but the expense is too great. It takes a man from daylight till dark to go to Healesville and back. It is 10 miles, and the hills are pretty steep. If there were a railway station nearer we would go in for a great increase of cultivation. We would always have a good bit to send to Melbourne whatever the price, because we could grow a lot of stuff to send to Mr. Miller's other properties. We do that now to a certain extent. We grow potatoes, and the man sells me they will run 8 to 10 tons an acre. You cannot form any idea of this country by going along the roads. The road running along very poor country, but if you go to the back of that you will find land as good as any in the world. There are miles of country in the Blackwood district equal to the Bacchus Marsh flats. We have had 400 bullocks on these flats this season, and have been making from £8 to £8 15s. in Melbourne from them, and we have had 2,057 sheep and 31 horses on the same property all the summer. The whole of last winter we had over 1,000 sheep and over 300 bullocks on it, and over 40 cows. Some people run away with the idea that some of this hill country is not good, but if you take the scrub off it is as good a winter country as you could put sheep on and keep them in good, condition; and up the ranges there is as fine chocolate soil as ever you put your feet on. I have seen from 8 to 9 tons of potatoes on another property, and a finer potato soil I never saw. All these ranges are not as you see the land here. When you get along the Don-road you see that fine soil I speak of. Sometimes we truck the cattle from Yarra Glen, and at other times travel them through. If we send down to Yarra Glen we are 20 miles on the road, and then it is not
much advantage to truck from there. But if we had any facilities to truck from here we would do all our trucking from here. We could send a truck of cattle and sheep down all the year round. We mostly travel the sheep down.

104. To Mr. J. S. White.—Our place is about a mile from here. It would improve the value if there were a station here; I would not like to say how much. I should think it would be quite worth £4 or £5 an acre having a station near.

105. To the Hon. D. Melville.—As to guaranteeing a certain quantity of freight for five years, we would guarantee that we would send all the stuff that we had to town. I would not guarantee anything further. If you give us a railway there will put on 60 cows to milk, and there is any amount of timber for town, besides the produce that could be grown; and I know lots of people who would come and purchase if there were a railway. We will guarantee a reasonable amount of freight from the 300 acres. I suppose we could send down a couple of trucks a week, very likely four. In fact, I believe we should send a good deal more than that. There are farms equally productive and quite as good land as ours, but people have not gone into working their property the way we have, for the simple reason that if they go into cultivating they have the means of getting their produce away to market, and having no means of utilizing it on the ground; if they had a railway they would do it. Without going far into the ranges, I should think there is within a small radius of here from 2,000 to 3,000 acres of good cultivation land which would be available to a station here. I have been up beyond Mr. Malleson's. I should think there are thousands of acres of good land there. There is plenty of room for the unemployed there; it would do more good for a man to be sent out there instead of sending him to some of the places that do.

106. To the Hon. E. Morley.—There is blackwood and blue gum in the ranges, also hazel and musk scrub—a big forest of it. If you will come to our place I will be able to point out where I know personally the land is good.

107. To Mr. J. S. White.—The land is heavily timbered. To prepare it for cultivation would cost from £2.5 to £7.10 an acre. I do not know whether I would be prepared to be taxed more to put the unemployed on work; I think I am taxed enough as it is. After they have cleared the timber they could cut it and send it to Melbourne. I am not agreeable to be taxed any higher than I am now.

108. To the Hon. E. Morley.—There is work for people if they come here. We do not like to pay more wages than we can help. We pay various wages; we let the work at so much an acre for clearing. There would be plenty of chance for men to get contracts from other people. There are people who would do clearing if they could get men at a reasonable wage.

109. To Mr. Harris.—I should have 5 or 6 miles a reasonable distance from a railway. The land I suggest for the unemployed would not be more than 4 miles away, it is easy of access. On our place there are seven men employed. The sole reason we have not cultivated more is because we have not had facilities for getting the stuff away. I would cultivate about 100 acres altogether if there were a railway. It would require 50s. a ton in Melbourne for potatoes to make them pay for growing in these flats. They are mostly small properties around us. Mr. Syme has a big strip of country. Most of the people have from 200 to 300 acres.

110. To the Chairman.—When I speak of the holdings of 200 and 300 acres I refer to between here and Horsham, and in the ranges up towards the Douro.

The witness withdrew.

David Ewart, sworn and examined.

111. To the Chairman.—I am a farmer, residing in the Don Valley, 8 miles from here. I hold 316 acres. I have cultivated 30 acres, growing potatoes, hay, carrots, peas, and other vegetables. My principal market has been in the district; I have never sent any to Melbourne. I would do so if I had a railway within 3 miles of me. I have not sent any to Lilydale. About 160 acres of my land is under grass. I sold my dairy cattle and tried sheep. The timber on my block is only good for firewood; there is splendid timber on some of the properties in the district. At the back of Malleson's there is very good timber. I do not know whether it is in the State forest. There is blackbutt there, and messmate. If there were a railway I would send away wood for firewood, and cultivate more land. One hundred acres of my land now is forest. I had 3 acres of potatoes in last season, and averaged 10 tons to the acre. I grew seven potatoes which weighed 28 lbs.; they were as sound as a bell. I do not think there was a bag of rotten potatoes in the 3 acres. I could milk 50 cows on my property the greater part of the season by growing feed.

112. To Mr. J. S. White.—I have been fourteen years on my land. It is private property. I should think it is worth £20 an acre. If we had a railway within 3 miles I should think it would enhance the value £2 an acre, if not more. If the Government bring the railway I am not prepared to give anything in return for that increase of value; I am prepared to send fruit to help to pay for it. I think a railway would pay if brought here. If the line did not pay I would not be prepared to be taxed to make up the deficiency. I would be agreeable to be taxed a reasonable sum to make the line pay along with my neighbours within a reasonable distance of the railway.

113. To Mr. Harris.—I consider the areas of land held are too large in most cases. If it were held in smaller areas there would be more population. If I had 100 acres only I would be better than I am now with 316; the whole of my efforts would have been concentrated on that 100 acres.

114. To Mr. J. S. White.—I could not sell the balance of the land now unless there is a railway. I believe it would be saleable then.

115. To the Hon. E. Morley.—I have sheep on at present; there is no foot-rot; it is healthy country.

The witness withdrew.
118. To the Chairman.—I reside at Hoddle’s Creek, 5 miles from here by the present road. I hold 296 acres and have had it seven years. It is selected but not yet freehold. I have been residing on it ever since. I have cleared very little; 20 acres partially cleared and 6 acres thoroughly cleared. I grow a little of everything. I put a case of grapes this season to try. The coach and train cost £4. 4d. delivered and they sent word back they could buy the grapes for 5s. in Melbourne, so I did not send any more; I fed the pigs on them, and I made 18 gallons of wine. I have sixteen head of cattle and a few milking cows. There are 30 acres of first-class land that could be irrigated; the other is first-class fruit land. I have tried all kinds of fruits and they do well. The land is all fenced in. I have made a living off it but have not paid my way. I now make what we eat and drink; before that we ate and drank more. There are a lot of things wasted that we could get away if we had a railway; now it is too expensive. I am determined to stick to the land whether we have a railway or not, unless they put me off it for not paying the rent; they talk about that, but I do not think they see in earnest.

117. To Mr. Craen.—Any line near the Launching Place would suit me; it would simply be a living to me, whereas I can scarcely live now.

118. To the Chairman.—There is a lot of good land where I am, and a lot of timber that would pay for clearing the land by sending it away. It would just about do that. The best of the land is heavily timbered and the trees large. The land without trees is not so rich. It would grow grapes. I have grown some good grapes on that class of land.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

(Taken at Warburton.)

FRIDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

Mr. Cameron, in the Chair;

The Hon. D. Malville, M.L.C., Mr. Burton,
The Hon. E. Morey, M.L.C., Mr. Harris,
Mr. J. S. White.

James Houlehan, sworn and examined.

119. To the Chairman.—I am a farmer, residing in Warburton, 30 chains from here. I have been residing here for nearly twenty years. My land is leasehold, 296 acres. I cultivated 60 acres last year. I sent about 2 tons of potatoes to Melbourne, it cost me about £1 5s. a ton, including railway freights. I got it down by back loading and therefore very cheap; they usually pay from 25s. to 30s. a ton from this place to Lilydale. My place is mostly under grass; I fatten cattle and occasionally sheep. I would cultivate double the quantity if I could get it carried from here to Lilydale for 5s. If there were a railway within a reasonable distance from here I could supply a couple of hundred tons of freight at least. If potatoes do not bring more than £1 a ton, it would be better to sell them at that than to leave them to rot, as we have to do now with those we cannot sell locally. The farms vary in size in the district. I dare say they are from 100 to 300 acres, not including the village settlers. I think 300 acres is too much land to have; if a man has 100 acres only he is better off. This country is very good for grass or growing root crops or hay. There is plenty of rainfall, and the soil is good. The whole of my acreage is good for grass. There are some settlers above, on the face of the hill, I believe the land there is as good as mine if not better. There would be several hundred acres more under cultivation if we had a railway. As it is, it is no good to grow it to consume it in the district, and it does not pay to cart away. In consequence, they limit themselves to what they think they can sell in the district. We would be satisfied with any sort of a line. As long as we had something to carry away our produce we would not care how narrow it was as long as it did not capsize; the Government would be responsible for that. I have no live timber on my selection. I rung it all and sowed the land down. At the time Mr. Gillies was Premier he promised a railway, and I went into it heavily and laid out thousands on the land; I might as well have kept it in my pocket, and for want of a railway we have let things go adrift; if the railway were only ten or fifteen miles off it would be a great benefit; of course I would like it nearer, but we would be satisfied with anything we would be satisfied if it came as far as Launching Place, and do not care where it starts from so long as we get it.

120. To Mr. J. S. White.—I think a railway would pay if constructed, perhaps not for the first year, but I am sure the people would grow more extensively if they could take away the produce at a cheap rate. If it did not pay, I would be quite satisfied for the freight to be made 10s. or 15s. instead of the ordinary rate. I would be willing for my land to be taxed in proportion if there were any deficiency there might be.

121. To the Hon. E. Morey.—The cattle have plenty to eat without the potatoes, plenty of grass and hay even in the winter time. It might pay to buy pigs and feed them. There are several men in the room who let tons of potatoes rot on their land last year.

The witness withdrew.

William Thomas Kett, sworn and examined.

122. To the Chairman.—I am a storekeeper and land agent, and have been here eight years. I own 600 acres of land, 300 on the main road and 300 at Big Pat’s Creek. Last year was the first year I tried to cultivate; I cleared about 15 acres and cultivated 4. There are about 25 acres on the one and 75 on the other range and improved. One block I have had about four and a half years, and the other I purchased
about eighteen months ago. If I had a railway within half-a-dozen miles—I am making preparations now this year on one block. There will be 30 acres under cultivation. The 4 acres cultivated last year paid very well, and I see no reason why it should not pay to clear the whole block. What I produced on 30 acres would be locally consumed. I had in potatoes and hay last year. At the average price the last three years in Melbourne it would not pay to cultivate potatoes at the present rate of caring, but I believe with the addition of the gold pool in the Valley of the Yarra, you can make it pay at the price ruling now the last two years in Melbourne. I produce 3 to 3½ tons to the year. This year my output was 4 tons to the acre, the first crop. On the average I should say there would be general produce carted to storekeepers and others, 180 to 200 tons per year, taking the district from Wood's Yallock to McMahon's Creek. The Reefton people also get their stores from Warburton. I should say there are 100 miners in addition, about the different creeks and up the gullies mining. There is abundance of timber in the district.

123. To the Hon. E. Morony.—There are at least 300 miners in the district working alluvial mining; they make a living; and they all look healthy and strong. We produce hay and potatoes and no oats.

124. To Mr. J. S. White.—One of my farms is very good, the other is indifferent. I think there should be about ten families on my 600 acres. If I had only 100 acres of the farm I am cultivating now I would have been hundreds of pounds better off than I am on the other. I would take £8 an acre for one and 30s. for the other. I should think it would be worth £15 an acre with a railway within 6 miles of it. I am prepared to pay my fair proportion of the same as any others might be taxed to make up the deficiency if there should be one.

125. To the Hon. E. Morony.—The land worth 80s. is on the road. The mine shown here is grown for fodder. The other land is 4 miles from here, but across the road, up Big Pat's Creek. If a railway comes there is available land for new people. There is a valley there where, by giving 50 to 75 acres, you can settle, and there is a gentleman representing one of the English branches here to see it and ask the opinion of the people in the district.

I gave mine, that it would be a good plan to cut it up and put little cottages on it, and let it to gentlemen. Since he has returned to Melbourne he has represented this to his brother liquidators, but he has to get the opinion of the people at home before he can do anything. I have one farm myself that is being cultivated now as soon as I put a fence round about half of it, and a cottage and barn; I had no difficulty in selling the remainder, and putting a house and barn on land that would now bring £140 a year. I have been on the land about three months, and I have a tenant to take that. If the majority of the properties in this district were cut into small holdings, they would be readily let to tenants. In one block the surveyors are on the land cutting into four blocks, a farm that has been lying idle. These things should be a good guide as to what can be done in the district. We have no difficulty in getting people to settle on the land as long as they have not to pay too much rent, but if you try to let a block of 300 acres it is more than they can manage. As the man who would be the good plan for a railway, I have heard that the coach proprietor and carrier take about £200 a month. During the summer months the lodging-houses are generally filled, and during a portion of the winter no doubt there would be ten times the people travelling if they could get to it.

126. To Mr. Burton.—I have lived in the district eight years. I know the localities where gold has been got. The alluvial has been got in almost every gully in the district. An old reef abandoned for some years has just been taken up, and I believe they have struck very rich gold in it.

To-morrow you will see the teams taking the quartz to Postsorey. 1-bay gold. Pretty nearly every one in the district buys gold. £23 Izs., is the average we pay for it. That does not represent the quality of the gold, otherwise we would not buy it at that. The gold is worth £4 1s. an ounce; for some of it we give only £2 15s. an ounce. I keep a record of my gold purchases, and can give you the exact figures. I buy from £130 to £140 a week. Five or six persons besides myself are purchasing gold; I cannot say they purchase as much as I do. The gold sifts its way through a number of us. A man at McMahon's Creek may buy a hundred tons a week, and sell it back to me at this place; he has a team that can fill a cart in 15 minutes, and would get his returns from here. I should think in the district we purchase only two-thirds of the gold got. A man came in with a piece of gold weighing 3 ozs.; he did not sell the gold here; he sold only a small piece and took the other to Healesville. When men are going to Melbourne they take some there. The exact returns of the gold can be got from the mining surveyor at Eilatam.

127. To Mr. Harris.—None of the Wood's Flat gold comes this way; we expect it later on as soon as the road is open. The difference would be 98 miles to come here as against 197.

128. To Mr. Harris.—Within the last eighteen months the number of miners has increased two-thirds. They are making a living; I cannot say whether it is a fair average living; I should say they make about £1 a week on the average. It is not digging, it is only scratching the surface. If they go down there are very good leads. I do not think they go to the bottom in many cases. At Reefton the question of deep reef has been tested; they have just driven a tunnel 850 feet, and have struck a very good reef that was abandoned some ten or twelve years ago, and got very good gold. I do not think there has been any deep sinking for alluvial. I will send in writing particulars in reply to your questions as follow:—

As to the quantity of tonnage the residents of the district would be able to send away yearly; the area of land available for grazing purposes; the area of land available for agricultural purposes; the distance that each selector is from a railway station at present; the area that each person holds; what is being done on the land by the number of residents who reside on the farm.

129. To the Hon. D. Melville.—The Government has accepted a tender for clearing a road to Wood's Point. It will save from 95 to 97 miles. If there were a railway here it would benefit Wood's Point also. The number of people around Wood's Point alone that would benefit from it and that would come this way would be about 1,500, living at the Point alone. They reckon that the tonnage going into there yearly for the consumption of these people would be about 1,500 tons; that is the tonnage going into Wood's Point at present, and this is the whole of one of the tags that must go to the tin. I would say that this road could not be very heavy, as shown by the fact that the Government has accepted a tender at 1s. 11d. a chain to clear that saddle track. It cannot be very heavily timbered. The coach proprietor and the carrier have been over the road, and they assure me that there should be no difficulty in constructing a good road to drive a coach for from £700 to £800 from Reefton to Wood's Point; that would be 30 miles. It will save from 95 to 97 miles.

130. To Mr. Harris.—The distance to Melbourne now is 197 miles from Wood's Point; Wood's Point to Warburton, 150 miles; Warburton to Lilydale, 24; Lilydale to Melbourne, 24. I believe they
pay up to £6 and £8 a ton freight there. If there were a road between Warburton and Wood’s Point, £3 a ton would be saved by the residents there, and the passengers would save a lot. There is a lot of land that would be occupied between Warburton and Wood’s Point by miners and settlers, as soon as they could get a track through.

The witness withdraws.

John Wallace Ross, sworn and examined.

131. To the Chairman.—I am a dairy farmer, residing about a mile from here, farther up the river. I have been here about eighteen months, and eighteen months some time before. I am purchasing 470 acres. I cultivate only very small portions, nothing for sale; I am dairying. I have eighteen cows present; also a small crieffand, and am purchasing milk from my neighbours, and intend to extend it next season on a larger scale. I have a steam-engine and separator, and all the necessary gear on the ground. I think timber out of our own mill; I prefer the carriage was too high. It used to cost £4, £5, and £6 a ton. Also asbiall creamery, and am purchasing milk from the same. I have bought 470 acres. I think white stringybark, not blackbutt. The witness withdrew.

To the Hon. D. Melville.—I have great faith in the place. I have laid out £2,000 in the last eighteen months.

The witness withdraws.

John C. Wildman, sworn and examined.

133. To the Chairman.—I am a hotelkeeper. I have been in the district about 23 years on and off. In holiday times my house and most of the other houses of accommodation are pretty well filled. Tourists go on as far as M’Caw’s Creek and come back here; a portion of the road is so rough that they cannot get on further. The road is made up to Reefton for vehicles. It is about 15 miles from Reefton to the Woods’ Point road; there is an easy grade for a vehicle road, not much different to that from here to Reefton. I am a member of the shire council. I went over that route very carefully, and through to Wood’s Point. To construct the two roads from Reefton it would be 17 miles. I consider it could be done for £700 or £800 at the outside; that would shorten it half the distance to Melbourne, that is to bring the Wood’s Point, Matlock, and Jericho traffic this way.

134. To the Hon. E. Morey.—We have alluvial and a little quartz mining here. There is a battery here for crushing. Prospectors can get trial crushings at a charge of from 15s. to £1 a ton for a few tons. The battery is worked by water-power; there is any quantity of water-power to drive batteries. The alluvial sinking ranges from 2 and 3 feet to 70. The gullies run from 2 to 3 feet to 5 or 6 feet. They bring the water in and sluice; they have granite bottoms mostly here. From here to Reefton the miners in the district altogether, taking in Hoddle’s Creek, would number from 400 to 500 men. They all make a fair living, and some do very well. The country between here and Wood’s Point is arid, with outliers of quartz, and plenty of room for people to prospect.

135. To the Chairman.—At Hoddle’s Creek the leads run from 30 to 70 feet deep.

136. To the Hon. D. Melville.—The population has been increasing here the last twelve months. I think a railway would pay if we get it within 8 or 10 miles; we would be satisfied with that. There is no difficulty to bring it right on. This is the easiest part of it. I have no doubt a narrow-gauge line would pay. I would expect a big influx of tourists, and think I should have to put up twenty more rooms if the railway started.

The witness withdraws.

Edward John Buller, sworn and examined.

137. To the Chairman.—I am a hotelkeeper at Lilydale and land-owner at Warburton. I have known Warburton 33 years. I resided permanently about Warburton 25 years—I am well acquainted with the district. I have some land at Woori Yallock, 450 acres, and 400 acres at Warburton, close to the hotel here. We have cultivated about 150 acres of it altogether; we cultivate every year about 40 acres, this last year 30 acres of hay and potatoes; it was a very poor crop, 25 cwt. of hay to the acre. We have got as high as 3 tons to the acre off the same flat. The population has increased the last ten years; the families are growing larger and the population increasing steadily. I know the road to Wood’s Point. The small portion they have opened a pack track to I have not been over, but I know it for I surveyed the track in 1865, Panton’s track, near the same line but two miles farther down the stream. That was a very easy steady grade, 5 to 6 miles from the Yarrar, and a steady grade all the way with the exception of a few little patches or nooks, which could be avoided by going round. I have had a saw-mill in the district. We are working it now occasionally, but the local demand has fallen off greatly the last three years. It is nine years since we first started that as a saw-mill at the Warburton Hotel. There is any amount of timber, white stringybark and the blackbutt; the first is the one we mostly saw, because the other is hard to get out; it is like bluegum. We have been getting it from our own paddocks on the Yarrar. We get all the timber out of our own paddocks, except in the winter months, and sometimes from the range at the back of Old Warburton; there is plenty of splendid timber there. None of it has been destroyed in the way of ringing, or there was not four or five years ago, but a good deal was used at one time for paling. There is plenty of timber to keep a big saw-mill going for some years. There is not enough water to drive a watermill; I prefer steam, it is less expensive and requires less looking after. I have sent a large quantity of timber to Lilydale, but they competed from Gippsland so cheaply that we could not send any more, the road carriage was too high. It used to cost 5s. 100 feet at first, and then they brought it down to 3s. 6d. a NARROW-GAUGE.
100. There are about 300 feet to a ton weight. If we had a railway I think it would be a payable transaction to erect a larger mill than mine. Mine is only 12 horse-power. I have put through 2,000 feet of timber a day. There is enough timber for mill purposes for ten or fifteen years within a reasonable distance.

138. To the Hon. D. Metcalfe.—I feel quite confident that a railway made at a reasonable price would pay; I do not believe in the narrow gauge; I think we would be better off with 12 miles of broad gauge than with 20 miles of narrow gauge and that it would be better for the district—that is my own private opinion. I think there would be very little difference in the cost. It is only by taking out the estimates from the experts who have been here—private people. They said they could make the line for £1,000 a mile for the narrow gauge. I think it could be laid down for £3,500 a mile here to Lilydale without stations. I do not see why it could not be done for £1,000 a mile narrow gauge. I took an expert over the line and showed him the pegs. I think he said £1,500 a mile, including rolling-stock. I have no doubt it would pay if it can be done for the money. I know the tonnage that goes out and the passenger traffic from being in the office and knowing the number of passengers that come up. During the holidays there were 200 visitors the Easter week from Thursday to Wednesday. Taking Lilydale, two coaches used to do the road comfortably and now it takes three trains, and they are crowded on Sundays. I do not think a railway would pay for visitors; I think the settlers and the produce would make it pay. The average tonnage leaving Lilydale for this district is about 100 tons a month by one carrier, McGee. There is only one other regular carrier. He brings up from about 10 to 12 tons a month. A good deal comes in buggies and spring carts. The coach takes up a large quantity of luggage too every day.

139. To the Hon. E. Morey.—We charge 8s. for sawn timber at the mill. I should think it costs about £1 a hundred for posts and rails on the road side, or 15s. at the stump. My potatoes went about 4 tons to the acre.

140. To the Hon. D. Metcalfe.—It generally pays the people to cultivate here because we got the carriage added to the Melbourne price. I have not heard of any one getting rich on grazing; I do not know of any one who makes £1,000 a year.

141. To the Hon. E. Morey.—Our ground is late.

142. To Mr. Burton.—The traffic from here would be goods mostly—there would be passengers. The market for our produce, if the road is opened, will certainly be Wood's Point—that would help the railway because the people who grow the produce will have to have provisions—you would have more people here. I consider the timber one of the principal items that will be sent down and the extra produce. Butter would be sent in large quantities—the produce would go to Melbourne—that is where to expect to sell it. I know the various routes that propose to tap this country. It would not be an advantage to have the shortest route to Melbourne. If you go the shortest way to Croydon you run alongside the Lilydale railway for 3 miles, so if you give us 12 miles of railway we are 3 miles short of our destination. The distance from Launching Place by Croydon is only a mile further than by way of Lilydale. I think the making of the line from Croydon would leave us 3 miles further back in the bush. The cost would be greater from Croydon. I have the route plan of Croydon to Launching Place and I think, it is one of the most expensive lines you could construct the way they have got it done. The Hon. Mr. E. H. McGee. One of the Croydon routes comes to McKillop's selection, and the line from Lilydale would come to that point by an easy grade. I know the district, and I believe the line from Lilydale to Launching Place would be the best for the district, not the line by Coldstream; it is too far north. If they take the line in between there and Panton they will get an easier grade, and the people will be supplied better than by any other way. If you try to serve the South Wandin people direct you leave out the North Wandin people. The Lilydale people have not taken any interest in the routes at all of late.

143. To the Chairman.—The distance between Croydon and the Collins's is 6½ miles. From Lilydale to Collins's is about 3 miles. The line would be much shorter in construction, but not shorter from here to Melbourne. It would be a mile further round; taking the scale of the map, there is only a mile difference between the two. From Croydon to McKillop's we make it 7½ miles. From Lilydale to that is 3½ miles to the same point, consequently, the line if made in that direction would be 8½ miles. That would leave the jam factory a mile to the south and get into the valley of the Wandin by Quail's. Where it crosses the South Wandin road from Lilydale would be 3 miles from the hall.

144. To Mr. Harris.—If there were a railway from Launching Place, I think we could compete with those sending hardware to Melbourne.

145. To Mr. J. S. White.—I think Mr. Kett made a mistake in saying 300 tons coming to the district—that is wrong altogether. I know by my own trade; we got up 150 tons in the one year. The survey I referred to was in 1865; it was a track from Berwick; Mrs. Bowman's track, across the Yarra to Wood's Point. It was partly re-opening the old track. It could be done for £50 or £60 a mile, enough to open the road. The reason it has not been done is that for the first 10 or 15 miles we have only a pack track to Warburton. At the time we opened the road to McMahon's Creek, Wood's Point was practically insolvent; now it is looking up, and we look to it for an outlet for our produce.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.
(Taken at McMahon’s Creek, Upper Yarra.)

SATURDAY, 25TH APRIL, 1896.

Members present:

Mr. Cameron, in the Chair;
The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.,
The Hon. E. Morey, M.L.C., Mr. Burton,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. J. S. White.

Thomas Talbot, sworn and examined.

146. To the Chairman.—I am a miner, residing at Reefton, 3 miles from here. I have been here since 1873. Taking the whole of the watershed of the Yarra above Big Pat’s Creek, there are 160 miners. Six or seven are working for tin at Big Pat’s, and the rest are working in alluvial, except those in the quartz reef at Reefton; they are still working at the tunnel. The miners are making a fair living; some are doing very well. During the last three years at Reefton there have been from 25 to 30 miners, a good few doing very well, and the rest making a living. There is a good deal of country higher up that will stand prospecting. There is the Golden Bower mine, and one portion of that belt runs into the Big River, and extends across again to the Yarra, and lately they have discovered a reef on the face to the Big River, which is spoken very well of. They have not crushed anything out of that yet. The Bower is in work again. There is a crushing machine at Burr’s Creek. One company has expended during the last couple of years a good deal of money there; that is 14 miles higher up than here. We had just sent a ton of stone down to Lilydale, costing to deliver there £2 10s. a ton; stores would cost fully that to bring up.

147. To Mr. Burton.—I am a large shareholder in the reef at Reefton; it was discovered in 1874; there has been nothing done on it for a good many years. There is no machinery on it; we have to find that immediately. We have just completed a tunnel of 800 feet. The reef is 3 or 4 inches thick. It has gone to the foot, and 150 feet have been worked from the surface. We have not much backs between our tunnel and the old shaft. The reef has given £400 in alluvial, except those in the creeks run of quartz, and 15 tons of mullock put through; that would make it 3 or 4 ozs. to the ton.

148. To the Hon. E. Morey.—The width of the mullock and quartz altogether is about 20 inches, that is between two very smooth walls. The tin is lower down at Big Pat’s, where they have been working it for a couple of years.

149. To Mr. Burton.—Most of the creeks in the district have payable gold in them; the tributaries of the Yarra generally contain gold. The creeks this way are all shallow, but higher up some of the workings in the creeks run as deep as 30 feet. They have been sluicing all that ground. Most of the land is held by miner’s right. We have expended between £400 and £500 the last twelve months, putting in a tunnel, and the Christmas Reef Company have put up machinery and done a lot of work. The Barr’s Creek Company have expended, I should say, close on £3,000. All those companies are on leases; there are five or six leases at Barr’s Creek, and the face to the Big River. I think there is a good future here for the mining industry, in the direction of quartz reefs. I believe that in every creek where payable gold has been got eventually a reef will be found.

150. To Mr. Harris.—I do not know of any parties out prospecting now. The population has been about the same the last two or three years. The gold is sold at £3 17s. 6d. in its rough state. Miners who have been working here are remarkable for coming back after they go away. Lilydale is our nearest station; there have been about; I think a railway going through that part of the country would do more good than going from Coldstream. ‘There are a couple of agricultural selections higher up. We have expended, I should say, close on £2,150. To the Hon. E. Morey.—We have a claim that pays better in the winter with water. It is hard to say where the gold is; one man found gold in a creek that was always thought to be a duffer, and the creek where I am working was supposed to be a duffer, and we find gold and can make wages. It has been well prospected and the gold always missed. It requires more money to prospect these mountains. I think there is plenty of room 10 miles round here to prospect with capital. I have been up Donovan’s
Creek and all along the spur on the Wood's Point track; all that country is auriferous more or less; it has to be proved whether it is payable or not. The Christmas Reef Company has suspended for a time; they put up a water-wheel and four head of battery; they have been cleaning out the old shafts and driving levels. About the tin, I know the principal man who has a lease there, who tells me he can make from £10 to £12 a week at it; that is a gully miles wide. I have not seen the wash since they have been working it.

The witness withdrew.

Robert Hetherington, sworn and examined.

154. To the Chairman.—I have been mining for the last three years. I used to be a carpenter. I have been mining just about here and along the head of the Yarra. I am working now on the Ligar, lower down, prospecting; in fact, I have done nothing but prospect for some time. I opened the Clear Creek, 9 or 10 miles above Reefeton; it is on the other side of the river, and comes into Welsh's Creek, about 3 miles above its junction with the Yarra. There are only about three parties working there now. When I was working there, there were sometimes 20 and 20 and up to 40. I suppose we got between 600 and 700 oz. out of our claim alone. There were four of us in the party, and it took about two years. It is still paying. There is one party half a mile further up doing pretty well since Christmas; they are working old ground over again; that gully is 15 or 16 miles long. Sometimes we work in the bed of the creek, and sometimes away from it; sometimes it is nearly a chain wide, and 6 or 7 feet the deepest. The same strata run right through the country. I have been prospecting other gullies. I did not succeed in finding anything to satisfy me; but others have gone after me and found something. Three of us are at the present time we are trying; it takes a lot of looking for. It would be good thing to have a railway.

155. To the Hon. E. Morry.—The gully runs S.E. that we got the gold from. We see plenty of quartz. There never has been a hole sunk to try the reefs. Some of the gold is water-worn, and some rough. I know the country between here and Wood's Point pretty well. I do not think very much of that part. There is a part where there is a bed of sandstone formation jumbled up, with no indication of gold. Most of these other gullies are slate.

156. To the Chairman.—In the Ligar we find a good bottom of rotted, sandstone or granite; we are trying it between 4 and 5 miles from the Yarra. I have not been further up.

157. To Mr. Harris.—I have been through the country between here and Noojee.

158. To the Chairman.—I am aware there is a track up to Noojee; up the river it would be 20 miles or more.

The witness withdrew.

John Redgell, sworn and examined.

159. To the Chairman.—I am a storekeeper and postmaster, with no pay. I have been here 31 years. I have been able to make a living here during that time, and if I lived for 100 years I could make it. I have been up Noojee. I consider it is about 23 miles to Bennett's Creek, which is the centre of Noojee; to get to the first settlement there it is about 14 miles. You must mount a certain height, and when you get there it is as level as a bowling green into Walhalla.

The witness withdrew.

Robert Don, sworn and examined.

160. To the Chairman.—I am a selector and miner, residing near here. I have been here four years, and hold 150 acres. I run a few cattle on it, and grow a bit of hay for my own use. I am principally mining. I have been at the one place for three years, and have been getting a living. I have a boy between fourteen and sixteen, and he and I can keep a wife and six children. I have bought for cash ever since I have been here. Lowe's Gully is 7 miles from here.

161. To Mr. J. S. White.—When I came here three years ago you would see one or two in a month passing, and now you see more than that in a day. There are not many families. There is no State school here; there used to be one; the man that owned the building took it from the Department, and there was another party offered to build a school. I have also offered to do so at the same rental, but I can get no satisfaction. There are twelve or thirteen of the school age, and four or five over age, but they have no education, and I think they are entitled to get a year of schooling, and there are four families that have children coming on.

The witness withdrew.

Adjoined.