

## PROPOSED BRIDGE AT DIAMOND CREEK.

THE RELATIVE MERITS OF A WOODEN OR AN IRON BRIDGE CONSIDERED.—DECISION IN FAVOR OF IRON BRIDGE BY SMALL MAJORITY.

A public meeting of ratepayers of the Greensborough riding of the Shire of Heidelberg, convened by the President (Cr. J. Ward), was held at the Literary Institute, Diamond Creek, on Saturday evening. The hall was well filled. The President occupied the chair, and among those present were Crs. Ford, Davey, Lugton, Waddell, Matthews, Mitchell, Peers, Ryan, Ex-Crs. Wadson and Burrows, Mr. Lawson (Shire engineer), Mr. Price, (Shire secretary) Mr. Finney, (Manager of the Commercial Bank), and other leading ratepayers from the various ridings.

The President (Cr. Ward) said the object of the meeting was to discuss the question of erecting a bridge over the Diamond Creek, on the main road, and to consider the borrowing proposals of the council. The council had accepted a scheme of erecting an iron bridge. It gave him great pleasure to be there that evening, and he would like to hear the ratepayers fully and freely discuss the action of the council. The matter was one purely for the ratepayers to decide; and he wanted them to speak out plainly. He did not propose to put forward at the commencement any direct proposition, but after he had heard the views of those present he would put a resolution before them, when it would be competent for any one to move an amendment. The proposal accepted by the council was to construct an iron bridge at a cost of £975. To pay that amount back in 30 years, it meant 4 per cent interest, and 2 per cent sinking, the latter being put aside for the purpose of paying back the principal. This interest and sinking fund meant that the Greensborough riding would have to pay annually £58. The amount of rates received annually was £418, and on this valuation it would require an extra rate of 2d in the £ to pay interest and sinking fund on the amount

an extra rate of 2d in the £ to pay interest and sinking fund on the amount it was proposed to borrow. This would fully cover everything, including incidental expenses. The engineer was present and had the plans with him, and he was prepared to answer any question that might be put to him. The council had no desire to keep anything back, but was desirous of disclosing everything to the ratepayers. (Applause.)

Cr. P. Ryan, as the mover that this meeting be convened, would like to say a few words in favor of the work the council proposed to carry out. Twelve or 18 months ago the question of building a bridge was under discussion in the council, and it was then thought advisable to wait on the minister of public works. That gentleman, after listening to the representations made by the deputation, promised to get something put on the estimates. The shire secretary wrote twice since then, but received no definite reply. The minister was waited upon a second time, and he then said they were too late for that year, and that the matter would be considered when next year's estimates were being framed. The proposal now was to go to the minister again to try and get a sum put on the estimates. Their engineer's estimate of the cost of the bridge seemed to him (Cr. Ryan) too high. It was first thought that £850 would be sufficient but the sum had now been increased by £125. He (Cr. Ryan) had supported an iron bridge as against a wooden one, which would cost £550. He thought the ratepayers would be justified in spending the difference, £425, seeing that the wooden bridge would be always requiring repairing, while the iron bridge would be for all time. It would be to the permanent interest of the ratepayers to put up something substantial. They would be justified in erecting a bridge that would be a lasting asset in the district. (Applause.)

Mr. Gowdie heartily supported all that Cr. Ryan had said.

The Chairman then moved "That this meeting adopts the proposal of the council to construct an iron bridge over the Diamond Creek at Diamond Creek at an estimated cost of £975 and to borrow the money required

and to borrow the money required for that purpose."

Mr. Gowdie : I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

A Ratepayer : Will the 2d rate fall on the whole of the Shire or only on the Greensborough riding ?

The Chairman said the Greensborough riding alone would have to pay the rate.

Mr. Lawrisson wanted to know why the Greensborough people should be taxed for Diamond Creek's benefit. Was it fair ? Their roads were in a terrible state and yet they were asked to pay an extra rate for this Diamond Creek bridge. All the Greensborough ratepayers' money in the past was given to Diamond Creek and now they were asked to submit to additional taxation to erect a bridge from which they received no benefit.

The Chairman said the rate must apply to the whole of the riding.

Mr. Lawrisson : If Diamond Creek gets this bridge we must have the hill cut down from St Helena, (Laughter and applause.) Where and how was the money from Greensborough spent. They had bad roads and no metal put down !

Mr. Gowdie, in reply to Mr. Lawrisson, said it was a hungry starved way of talking that he (the latter) had adopted. (Laughter.) Diamond Creek might as well ask why should they erect a bridge that would be used largely for the Eltham Shire traffic. They had a splendid bridge across the Plenty at Greensborough.

Mr. D. Ryan moved as an amendment in favor of erecting a wooden bridge over the creek at a cost of £550.

Mr. J. McLaughlin seconded the amendment.

Mr. Gilding asked what state of repair the present bridge was in, and what it would cost to repair it. If it could be repaired to meet the requirements of the district for 15 or 20 years, it would be foolish to spend

money ; but if they had to have a new bridge, let it be a good substantial one.

one.

Mr. Lawson (engineer) said the bridge was in a very bad state of repair. The ratepayers might as well throw their money into the Creek as try to patch it up.

Mr. Gilding, as one of the largest ratepayers in the riding, said he spoke feelingly. They were assured that evening that the rate would be 2d in the £ ; but subsequently they might find another 2d clapped on. (Laughter) He would, however, support an iron bridge.

Ex. Cr. Burrows : would it not be possible to have stone abutments and wooden girders. What would that cost ?

Mr. Lawson : £550 as against £975

Ex. Cr. Wadson said at one time he had thought a wooden bridge would answer, but seeing that an iron bridge would be permanent, and that the rising generation would be called upon to pay for it, he thought it would be preferable. He did not think they would grudge the 2d in the £ when they saw the good they would receive in return.

Cr. Peers said the Heidelberg Shire councillors were not men to jump at conclusions without carefully considering and weighing matters. When the engineer unequivocally condemned the bridge, he (Cr. Peers) had asked whether it could not be repaired, and the answer was that it would be only pitching money away, and that the thing would soon fall to pieces. In repairing it props and supports would have to be put in, and these would impede the water way. They all knew the water way was not sufficient now. The bridge had been a noble bridge, but its day was done. A new wooden bridge would of course do for the present, but it would be wiser to have a better one, and one they could afford. He was the oldest resident of Diamond Creek in that room, and he could assure them that when the present bridge was built the ratepayers thought it a grand affair. They had not roads and bridges in those days like the present generation enjoyed. He remembered when the township had to turn out to clear the roads of scrub. It would take a bullock dray a week to go to Melbourne and back. Creeks had to be forded in those days.

a week to go to Melbourne and back. Creeks had to be forded in those days. With reference to the speeches made against the iron bridge by Greensborough ratepayers, he might mention that they all helped to pay for the bridge at Greensborough over the Plenty. They could not ascertain the cost of that bridge because it was built in the old road board days. Every one had to pay for it.

Ex-Cr. Burrows : The Government built that bridge.

Cr. Peers : It is a good bridge, and we, as ratepayers and taxpayers of the colony, contributed towards its cost.

Mr. J. Laidlay : We had tolls then.

Cr. Peers : While we live we might as well have a good, substantial, and slight bridge over the Diamond Creek, and, in dying, leave behind us a heirloom for the next generation. (Loud applause.)

Cr. Mitchell said he was one of those who supported the plans as adopted by the council. This iron bridge was not passed by the council in a hurry. They had been in favor of a wooden bridge until it was fully explained to them, and they were convinced, that an iron bridge would be the cheapest in the long run. As the ratepayers had seemed to be in the dark about the matter he had advised that a public meeting be called and this had been done. He had given them every information in his power, and he came there that evening to hear what the ratepayers had to say. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

Cr. Ryan remarked that the extra rate of 2d in the £ was estimated on the present rates of £418. The rates had decreased since 1892 by about £175. In future years the valuation would probably increase instead of decrease, and consequently the extra rate would be less instead of more.

Mr. Gilding : Are we to get the same amount of government subsidy ?

Cr. Ryan : This bridge is nothing to do with the subsidy.

Mr. Gilding : But if we lose the subsidy we may have to pay a higher rate.

Cr. Ryan : That is quite possible.

Mr. H. G. Price, (shire secretary) : We receive from the government by way of municipal endowment 6s for

we receive from the government by way of municipal endowment 6s for every £ of our rateable revenue. If this subsidy were withdrawn it would be equal to 4d in the £, or another 4d rate.

Or Lugton : Unless values go up. (A voice : "Not much fear of that.")

Mr. Gilding asked the dimensions of the old and the proposed new bridge

The Engineer : The new bridge would be 10ft longer than the present one, namely 110ft., 2ft. wider—18ft., and 1ft. 10in. higher.

The Chairman said the rates received from the Diamond Creek and Greensborough portions, respectively, of the riding were as follows, taking the Plenty as the Dividing line.—Diamond Creek, £262 ; Greensborough, £156.

Ex. Cr. Burrows : That is not a fair division at all.

The Chairman : The Plenty is the dividing line.

Ex.-Cr. Burrows : Where's Nillumbik ?

Mr. Starling thought the boundary should be taken from where the roadmen work. (Hear, hear.) That would be about Brown's corner. With a proper division they would find Greensborough had the larger amount of rates by £70. This bridge was for the benefit of a number of people who had no interest in this shire. Could they not get Eltham to assist them in any way ? If this bridge could be repaired it would be wiser to postpone the erection of a new bridge pending a question of re-division which would probably be heard of before long. He would like to have some definite assurance as to whether the Government would grant anything towards building the proposed bridge. If they could get pound for pound from the Government, it would, of course, be wise to build a good iron

bridge. If they lost the Government subsidy they might have to pay a general rate of 1s 6d, and when the railway rate came on goodness knows what it would run them into. He thought they were going in too extensively for their little riding, unless

sively for their little riding, unless they had a Government grant. If they had no grant he would go for a wooden bridge.

Mr. D. Ryan said he had been told that the Minister gave them to understand pretty definitely that they would not get a grant.

Cr. Ford said the proposed bridge was regarded as a national work. They had received most favorable replies from the Minister who said the Heidelberg Shire had just claims, and gave them to understand he would put an amount on the estimates, but when they had pressed him, said they would have to come to him again before the next year's estimates were framed. The Metropolitan Board of Works, of which he was a member, proposed to strike a 3d rate over the whole district included in its jurisdiction. He and others were trying to defeat that proposition. With regard to the extra rate for this bridge, he would advise the people of the Greensborough riding to follow the example of the Heidelberg riding who wished to annex the best part of Ivanhoe. (Interruption) The Greensborough riding should make an effort to annex about 1,500 acres from Heidelberg which would relieve them of any rate. (Laughter and interruption.)

Cr. Waddell said if the Amending Board of Works Bill passed Parliament places like Greensborough, and Diamond Creek would be excised and exempt from rating for all time.

Mr. D. Ryan asked Cr. Ford what reply the Minister gave the second time.

Cr. Ford: He encouraged us by asking us to come again when he was framing next year's estimates.

The chairman then put the motion and the amendment, the latter being submitted first. A division was taken and resulted as follows: For wooden bridge, 18; for iron bridge, 25; majority, 7. Only ratepayers were allowed to vote.

Mr. Gowdie thought the matter would be more equitably decided by a poll.

The chairman said any 20 ratepayers, by depositing £20, could demand a poll. The council could not take the initiative. If a certain number

of votes were not polled the £20 or a portion of it would be forfeited; but if the poll was a legitimate one the deposit would be returned.

The proceedings terminated with the usual vote of thanks.

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Our reporter interviewed Mr. Lawson, the shire engineer, as to the description of the proposed bridge, and learned that it is to be a lattice-girder bridge, with two openings of 55ft. The girders are to be of iron, and the cross girders of steel, with double timber decking. The abutments, wings, and centre pier are to be made of brick and cement on pile foundation. The reason of this is that the depth of the rock is so great, that it would be too expensive to carry brick-work down. The bridge, including everything, will be 130ft. long, 18ft. wide, and 2ft. higher than at present. A temporary bridge will have to be erected during the progress of the work. The entire cost is estimated at £975.

Precisely the same bridge, except that the girders be wood instead of iron, would cost £550. Red gum girders would last longer than the present generation.

A bridge all constructed of timber, would cost £450.

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