

*Extract from the Greymouth Committee's Report, December, 1881.*

"2. *Durable Timber.*—Though there are eight different classes of durable timber within the country, each having its own peculiar advantages for different works, &c., we only propose to treat on black birch, it being the most plentiful, and existing in more defined belts, therefore its area can be more correctly arrived at than the other classes, which are generally very much scattered throughout the average bush. The most extensive black-birch forests are situated between the southern and eastern slopes of the Paparoa Range and the Grey River on the one side and between the Greymouth and Reefton Road and the head waters of the creeks and rivers intersecting same, on the other. In the locality first named there is an almost continuous belt of black-birch forest extending about twenty miles—viz., from the head of Coal Creek (a tributary of the Grey River near Cobden) to a point near the River Otututu, a tributary of the Grey River on the boundary of the Grey and Inangahua Counties. The average width is about one mile, equal to 12,800 acres. The black-birch forest on the east side of the main road before alluded to, may be said to commence at a point about two miles south of Brunnerton, and extend in sundry devious belts to the northern boundary of the country, distance about twenty-five miles. It is rather difficult to arrive at anything like a correct average width for the following reasons: The country between the points last named consists of three classes: (1.) Creek and river beds with adjoining low flats best suited and most generally taken up for agricultural purposes. This class of country is generally clothed with light scrub, and, where deep soil, with heavy white-pine forests. It is in this class of country that black pine (mata), kawaka (cedar), and totara, are most plentiful. (2.) That terraces and hill-sides lying from 20 to 250 feet above the first-named are generally clothed with black birch—i.e., where heavy gravel deposits exist. (3.) The intervening ridges, hills, and spurs from 250 feet upwards are generally clothed with red pine, a class of stunted red birch, rata, and, where swampy ground occurs, with silver pine, the latter a most durable timber.

"After making all due allowance we conclude that within an area of twenty-five miles—i.e., from the main road to a parallel line ten miles to the east—there are at least fifty square miles, or 32,000 acres, of durable timber, which would produce an average of 1,500 superficial feet of good timber to the acre; of course there are some acres which would produce fifteen or twenty thousand feet, but then allowance must be made for inaccessible places, &c. At 1s. 6d. per 100 feet, which is about the lowest price that landowners charge those who hew or saw it on their land, the two areas above described would be worth £1 2s. 6d. per acre, or a total of £50,400.

"The heart of red pine, though not classed among the durable timbers, is a very good lasting timber, especially if obtained from aged trees. It is well suited for house building and furniture. There is almost an inexhaustible quantity of this timber available, the class and quantity to be found in the regions situated immediately to the north and west of Lake Brunner is exceptionally good.

"3. *Building Stone.*—We direct your attention to the stone slabs now being quarried in the vicinity of Brunnerton, and which are being exported to Christchurch and other places. Good authorities have made the most favourable mention of it, but the most practical proof of its value is that the demand far exceeds the supply which the present promoters of the industry are able to bring into the market. The opening up of this class of industry has only very recently been started. We understand that it is contemplated to form a large company to systematically work the quarry on a large scale. There are other valuable classes of building stone in the district, which you will have an opportunity of inspecting. In the Black Ball Creek, hereinbefore mentioned, some very fair samples of blue slate are to be found, and an inexhaustible quantity of good granite is available in the Lake Brunner District. To answer your question by giving you the extent of building stone is a thing we could not do; we merely name some localities in which we know it lies, though yet dormant as to extent."

*Mr. Richardson:* I wish to supplement that statement by stating the reason why we take the 176 miles. That is the exact distance, according to the route at present laid down between Christchurch and Reefton; and supposing a line in that direction were recommended, all the West Coast traffic would avail itself of that portion of the line.

*The Chairman:* I consider that the statement just read affords us very valuable information.

*Mr. Thomson:* The information embodied in the statement will be exceedingly valuable to us. Of course we cannot consider anything but a trunk line towards Cook Strait, but we can lay before the Government information as to the desirability of branch lines to the West Coast.

The deputation then withdrew.

*Mr. FREDERICK BACK, Traffic Manager, Christchurch Railways, examined.*

169. *The Chairman.* Can you give us any idea of the quantity and value of the traffic which now goes over the constructed line from Christchurch to Waikari?—I am not prepared with full information at the present time, but I have a few notes here which may possibly be of service to the Commission. I find that during the past six months the daily bookings of passengers from Christchurch to Waikari have averaged  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ; Amberley to Waikari,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ; Rangiora to Waikari, 1; Kaiapoi to Waikari, 1 passenger in two days; and from Waikari to Christchurch,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  passengers per diem.

170. What is the quantity of merchandise passing over the line from Christchurch to Waikari?—During the past six months 525 tons of merchandise, 43 tons of minerals, 2 tons of grain, and 61,500 feet of timber.

171. What proportion do the receipts bear to the expenditure—that is to say, does the line pay?—I can only furnish a portion of the information. The accountant in Wellington can supply the information.

172. Can you say whether the traffic is increasing on that line?—There is a general tendency to increase of tonnage all over the line.

173. Has the recent extension from Waipara to Waikari had the effect of increasing the traffic?—We have been very busy there, principally because we have been carrying up contractors' plant and material for the extension of the line. There is always a tendency to a rush of traffic when a new line