

153. *Mr. Herries.*] These are all on the Ohinemuri River?—Yes; I will come to those on the Waihou presently. There was Snodgrass's wharf at Paeroa; then there was Fraser's wharf about a quarter of a mile below that; then the Railway Wharf, which is, I suppose, another quarter of a mile lower down, below the railway-bridge; and the Junction wharf and the Puke wharf. Steamers, as I said before, drawing more water than the steamers now trading to the Puke, used to go right up to Snodgrass's wharf. The "Lalla Rookh" was one. In course of time the railway-bridge was put up. The erection of the railway-bridge was the real cause, I think, in the first case, of Fraser's wharf being given up for the wharf below, because the steamers could not get up; but the smaller steamers with punts used even then to go up to the railway-bridge and right up to the Paeroa traffic-bridge, above the wharf that I have mentioned as Snodgrass's; in fact, the new iron bridge was taken up in a punt by a steamer, and landed actually at the place close by the rock that has been referred to here. The explanations, perhaps, become a little complicated without understanding the rise and fall of the tide in the Ohinemuri River. I cannot speak with any certainty about it at the Paeroa Bridge, but I live just at the Junction, and I know that the rise and fall of the tide there is from 3 ft. to 3 ft. 6 in., and I am informed by persons residing at Netherton that there the rise is 3 ft. 6 in. I may also state that the Ohinemuri River as far as the Paeroa traffic-bridge above Snodgrass's wharf, and the Waihou River up as far, I believe, as Te Aroha—I am certain as far as Manga-iti—is treated by the Government as a navigable river, because, when the Council put the bridge up at Manga-iti, and when the new bridge was erected at Paeroa, the permission of the Marine Department had to be obtained.

154. Is that as far as Matamata?—I could not say from my own knowledge. With regard to the silting-up of the river, I will only just pick up one or two points that I think have not been mentioned by previous witnesses. The Railway Wharf is connected by rail with the Paeroa Station, and any goods that can be delivered at that wharf can at once be put into trucks without any transshipment. Until quite lately large scows used to be towed up there at high tide and discharged at the Railway Wharf into the trucks, and the trucks were taken away. They gave notice to the Waihi Company that they could not do this any longer, and the Waihi Company went there and sounded the river and found that it was a fact that at one place there below the Railway Wharf there was not more than 2 ft. of water at low water. I myself afterwards went there and took soundings. It was deeper than that with me, but this was because the tide was a little higher. I do not think any mention has been made of these boats that, to my knowledge, have actually come to the Junction wharf—the "Kia Ora," which was subsequently wrecked, the "Chelmsford," and the "Waiotahi."

155. How long ago was this?—It would be before 1904. It was before the Northern Steamship Company left the Junction wharf for the Puke. I think there is a misunderstanding as regards the convenience of the two wharves—that the Puke wharf is a more convenient wharf for transshipping goods than the Junction wharf. As a matter of fact, the Junction wharf is 60 chains from the railway-station; the Puke wharf is a mile and a half. So that, as far as cartage and transshipment are concerned, the distance is much greater from the Puke to Paeroa than from the Junction to Paeroa. And I may add that of the two the Junction road is undoubtedly the better as far as metalling and good order are concerned. There is another ominous notice that was given to the Council. The letter, I believe, has been put in that we got from the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, in which he informed us, when we asked whether we could get a railway siding to the Puke—I think it was—that the thing was not worth considering, because the Puke was only a temporary place; that before long the state of the river would prevent vessels going up to the Puke, and that they would then have to discharge at Te Kopu. The letter is in evidence. Until a very short time ago—that is, even since the January fresh—the explosives for Ohinemuri were brought up in cutters. There was considerable difficulty in the cutters getting up, but they generally managed to get up to some little distance below the old Junction wharf. They gave notice that they could not come there, and they had then to go to the Puke wharf. The wharfinger objected to the discharge of the explosives at the Puke wharf, and the man said he had no place to discharge at. He was ordered to proceed to the Junction. He went up there and sounded the river, and this is what he said: "I find from the soundings taken that there is not sufficient water for the 'Spitfire' to take her cargo of explosives up to the Junction landing. Mr. Forrest has had soundings taken, with the result that there is only 6 ft. 6 in. of depth at the top of high water, and the 'Spitfire' is drawing 6 ft. 9 in., so that some arrangement will have to be made for discharging the explosives at the Puke." I should also like to put in a declaration by Mr. E. J. Adlam, master of the "Rotokohu," trading on the river. I may say that this was given of his own free will; he was not pressed in any way to give it. "In the matter of the silting-up of the Ohinemuri and Waihou Rivers by mining tailings, I, Edward Joseph Adlam, of Paeroa, in the Provincial District of Auckland, master mariner, do solemnly and sincerely declare—(1.) I am the master of the s.s. 'Rotokohu,' and have been navigating her and other vessels up the Waihou or Thames River and Ohinemuri River for the past fourteen years, and am thoroughly conversant with the whole of the said rivers. (2.) That during the flood of the Ohinemuri River in July last I distinctly saw the waters of the Ohinemuri, charged thickly with the mining tailings, backing up the Waihou River for a distance of about two miles to a place called Ngarararahi, where it overflowed the bank of the Waihou and ran down over Netherton. During the whole of my experience of the rivers in this district, I have never before seen the waters from the Ohinemuri back up stream from the Junction in this way. Deposits of silt may now be seen on the banks of the Waihou as far up as this backwash extended. Owing to the fact of the Waihou being a swiftly flowing stream, this stands to prove that the junction of the two rivers must be blocked, and in my opinion it is caused by a large bank of mining tailings formed just below the junction of the two rivers. This bank has raised the river-bed at that point about 3 ft. or 4 ft. And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and under and by virtue of an Act of the General Assembly of New Zealand intitled 'The Justices of the Peace