

On leaving Stratford the line follows the valley of the Patea, which, to the Makuri Stream, is good agricultural bush land, about eight miles in length and ten miles wide, with a clay subsoil and a thick black soil on top. The timber in parts is plentiful, and suitable for mills, consisting of rimu, matai, white pine, and patches of totara.

A road-line would connect at Makuri that would open up the country to the Mangaehu and down the Patea River, some ten miles further. Following up Makuri as far as the saddle to Mangaotuku, it meets a practicable road-line that would come down that valley, tapping the country between the Tariki Road and central Waitara, some forty thousand acres good forest land, timber principally rimu, matai, rata, and white pine; soil rich.

Crossing the saddle to the Mangaotuku another road would come in, opening up the country down the Mangaehu Valley eastward to Wanganui and head of the Whenuakura and Waitotara Rivers; country varied, valleys good, but the steep slopes of the Matamateonga Ranges (which rise, in places 2,000ft. above the surrounding country) would be useless for agricultural or pastoral purposes, and should be retained as a forest reserve. The line does not run through this country, but some miles distant, abreast of it.

The line follows the Valley of Mangaotuku for about twelve miles, in undulating country five miles wide: upper end swampy; in parts fern, light bush on hill slopes, easily cleared; soil good. About half way, about twenty-five miles from Stratford, a road would come over a low saddle from Makahu and Upper Mangaehu, where some ten thousand acres of fern and light bush country could be brought into use for settlement.

On some of the branch streams there are large patches of white pine, and on the main ridge, above Waitara, rimu, matai, pukatea, and totara are plentiful.

From Mangaotuku it crosses a saddle to the Makahu, and then on to the Whangauromona, getting into the country drained by the Wanganui and its tributaries. Here roads would open up country down the Whangauromona, Lower Tangarakau, part of the Wanganui near the bend at Puketapu, some 4,600 acres. In parts the hill-tops are covered with black birch, but it does not continue for long distances, and not generally on the flat ground near the streams. From Whangauromona it goes through about ten miles of rather broken and abrupt country to the Tahoraparaoa, where roads would come in from different directions, opening up the Lower Tangarakau, another part of the Wanganui Valley, and the upper part of the Waitara. A break of good country is about here, not very wide, but of about twelve miles in length: soil is good; timber large and plentiful.

From Tangarakau, sixty miles from Stratford, until near the Eao Stream, about six miles, the country is rugged and unfit for settlement. Timber is black birch, high and straight.

Southwards towards the Lower Eao timber is more rimu and rata, with patches of birch. Coal crops out in different parts, indicating an extensive field. The country at this particular place near the coal-beds is by far the worst on the route. The stream meanders through ridges 1,100ft. to 1,400ft. above its level, which are abrupt and rough.

Tangarakau at its source is much better, the Valley of Waitaanga opening out near a stream that flows to Mokau, giving a considerable amount of available land.

Near the Tangarakau-Eao Saddle there are about two thousand acres of good land, hardly expected; it is caused by the meeting of several ridges. Similar spots are frequently met with in Taranaki.

Once into the Eao the country changes to open fern valleys and forest-topped hills.

Roads would come over from the Lower Ohura and Wanganui, where the country is a mixture of fern, scrub, and bush, the land near the streams and on banks of river being good agricultural, with rich soil, the European grasses that are there growing luxuriantly, the clover especially so.

Following the Eao to its source, and over to Mangaroa, the country is good. A road coming down Mangaroa would open country towards a large branch of Mokau called Punirau.

Some of the streams that come into Ohura have valleys that run considerable distances back, mostly fern and scrub. A little above Nihoniho Ohura breaks into two, the northerly branch, Waikaka, taking its rise near the tributary of Mokau-iti. This stream has several branches that have good fern valleys, and in the bends of the river the land is of good quality. Ohura proper continues towards Ongarue, still through fern, toi, scrub, and light bush, its branches also running well back two to three miles, with open valleys.

From Waikaka the line goes over into the valley of the Mokau-iti, where a change in the character of country and soil is much more noticeable. The hills are flatter topped, valleys wider, and soil better, the outcrops of limestone, which is very plentiful, giving an abrupt appearance to the surroundings. It continues good for a mile or two below Totoro on the Mokau, some twelve miles in length and seven miles wide.

The Mokau Valley (north-east), stretching for miles inland towards the Waikato district, looks good.

From Totoro the horse-track turns to the Awakino, to avoid the rough country down the Mokau River.

From a mile or two below Totoro the Mokau flows between high hills, the spurs in places coming to the water's edge, and very steep. There are breaks where the country is good, though not many, this end of the valley being more suitable for coal industries than for farming purposes.

As regards available country opened up fit for settlement, from Stratford to where the line leaves Mangaotuku—some thirty miles—about 170,000 acres would be contiguous to the line, though the branch roads that have been mentioned would bring in an extra amount of 65,000 acres.

From Mangaotuku to Eao is twenty-four miles in length, twelve miles on each side embracing 360,000 acres, about half of which would be suitable for settlement purposes. To counteract this, there is in the most rugged portion the Tangarakau coal field, through which the line runs.

From Eao to the Mokau-iti, some thirty-five miles by about fourteen miles wide, gives 300,000 acres. This part is a mixture of open valleys, low hills, and high ridges. Near the dividing range,