

Name.	Gross Tonnage.	Net Tonnage.	Length.	Moulded Depth.
			Ft.	Ft.
"Tongariro"	7,900	4,958	457	34
"Indralema"	6,700	4,344	450.5	33.10
"Tagus"	5,545	3,056	410	26.5

The gist of the statement goes to prove that the port has been frequented for many years past by the largest vessels of the New Zealand Shipping, Shire, and Tyser lines without a single casualty, and no other argument should be needed to prove that the port is perfectly safe for a vessel like the "Tagus," which is inferior in all points of size to those above mentioned.

In response to your request for any further information showing that the port and access to it, and the surrounding waters, are safe for vessels of large tonnage, I may mention—

(a.) *Depth of Water in Channel.*

There is nowhere less than 30 ft. of water in the channel at low water. The tide rises and falls from 6 ft. at neap to 8 ft. at spring tides.

(b.) *Channel and Approaches.*

The channel and entrance are fully and carefully buoyed. Leading beacons, outside and inside, are fixed to indicate the course. The wharves are lit at night by electric light, and the Board is in treaty with the Marine Department with reference to lighting the entrance even more fully than at present.

(c.) *Berthage.*

The berthage was deepened in 1896 by dredge 222 from Dunedin: No. 1 berth 500 ft. long, shows from 26 ft. forward to 28 ft. aft at low water. No. 2, also 500 ft. long, has a depth of from 24 ft. forward to 26 ft. aft. Vessels are always berthed with stem pointing up the harbour. No. 3 berth has 20 ft., and the other berths a smaller depth.

(d.) *Pilotage.*

The Board has a staff of four pilots, of whom the Harbourmaster is chief. All of them hold master's certificates. It is not too much to say that the Harbourmaster and Chief Pilot, Captain Macdonald, and the Second Pilot, Captain Lovett, are renowned on the coast of New Zealand for the care and skill they display in bringing vessels of large tonnage in and out of port. A fully equipped pilot station is at the Heads, and a signal station on Bluff Hill. The Board last year imported a powerful up-to-date steam screw tug, built to order at South Shields regardless of expense.

I may mention that it is the practice to bring in very large vessels only on the top of high water, thus obviating any risk of deviation from the course by tidal current. I may also mention that the Board pays an annual bonus to the Harbourmaster and Second Pilot provided that no accident is experienced, and it has never yet happened that the bonus has been forfeited. No accident has happened to any large vessel within the experience of the present Harbourmaster, now some fourteen years.

(e.) *Anchorage.*

There is good and safe anchorage within the harbour for vessels up to 2,000 tons, and immediately outside for vessels of any size. Anchorage and shelter from weather of extremest severity can be had under the lee of Stewart Island, less than twenty miles from the Heads.

(f.) *Admiralty Chart.*

The Harbourmaster states that the latest Admiralty chart recently received from your department is substantially correct, with the exception that the depth at wharves is slightly understated.

In conclusion, I submit that the particulars submitted herewith entirely disprove the assertion that the port was unsafe for the "Tagus," and reduce it practically to an absurdity. If the plea was urged in good faith, it indicates that the knowledge on the part of the naval authorities as to the capabilities of the Port of Bluff is very limited, and my Board trusts that the Government will take such measures as will remove any misapprehension as to the safety of Bluff Harbour, a port which is rapidly rising in importance, as is indicated by the fact that it will be visited during 1901 by vessels totalling a net tonnage of between 350,000 and 400,000 tons.

I have, &c.,

GEO. R. GEORGE, Secretary and Treasurer.