

including Netherton; the Rotokohu Swamp; the Upper Waihou; the Awaiti Lagoon; the drains south of Te Aroha, near Shaftesbury; the Upper Waihou River, from Te Aroha to Paeroa; the Ohinemuri River, between Paeroa and the Junction; the site of proposed diversion cuts in the Waihou and Ohinemuri Rivers; the Komata Creek and Komata Reefs battery; and various damaged farms, and other places.

Nomenclature.

In this report that portion of the River Waihou lying above its point of junction with the River Ohinemuri will be called the "Upper Waihou." The term "Junction" will be applied to the existing confluence of the Rivers Upper Waihou and Ohinemuri, at a point about four and a half miles by the waters of the Ohinemuri River below the Paeroa—Te Aroha Traffic Bridge, in the Township of Paeroa, and being only some one and a third miles by roadway from the same bridge. The term "Lower Waihou" will be applied to the river below the Junction to its mouth, where it debouches at Opani Point into the Hauraki Gulf.

Thames sitting.

To meet the convenience of witnesses at the Thames, the Commission held a day's sitting at the Courthouse there, on Saturday, the 28th May, chiefly so as to enable the local fishermen to give evidence on the alleged injury done to the fishing industry by the presence of mining tailings and slimes in the Thames River, as the lower reach of the Lower Waihou is locally called.

Auckland sitting.

On the 3rd June the Commission concluded taking evidence at Paeroa late in the afternoon, and left by night boat for Auckland, and continued there taking evidence at the Departmental Buildings and consulting till the 10th June, when, no further evidence being offered, and counsel having given addresses, the Commission adjourned to Wellington to consider and prepare its report.

Witnesses.

Evidence was given by some ninety-two witnesses. Of these, thirty or more were settlers and Maoris interested in the lands more or less affected by the floods; and in several cases these witnesses represented and spoke on behalf of adjacent owners.

Six witnesses gave evidence at the Thames relative to the fishing industry.

Evidence was given at Paeroa and at Auckland by county and borough officials; by the managers and officers of mines now discharging tailings into the Ohinemuri River; by independent civil and mining engineers on the subject of the rivers, their watersheds, rainfalls, and floods; by analytical chemists and others on the samples of silt and other materials submitted to them; by mining experts on proposed schemes for remedying the injuries caused by the present method of disposing of the tailings; and others.

Full particulars of this evidence, and of the various exhibits, some ninety-seven in number, will be found in the copy of the evidence and list of exhibits attached to this report.

In order to receive the large amount of evidence tendered in the short time at the disposal of the Commission, it was necessary to sit for long hours during the day, on holidays, and on several occasions in the evening, and to make the visits of inspection in the early morning before the usual time for sitting.

Public evidence.

The evidence of witnesses was taken in public by examination by counsel generally, and by such further examination by the Commissioners as they desired.

The Commission also had informal conferences with counsel, with mining experts, and others, for the purpose of both shortening the proceedings and of determining conclusions which would be of an acceptable character to all the varied interests concerned, as well as to the Commissioners themselves.