

The total number of sawmills in active work in the Nelson District is forty.

The total output for the year for the Nelson District was 5,000,000 superficial feet of rimu, 1,000,000 of birch, 10,000 of silver-pine, 2,000 of totara, and 50,000 of kahikatea.

There were no royalties received from State forests, but from timber cut on Crown lands £642 12s. 4d. was received as royalties.

The net wholesale prices charged by timber-merchants in March were—for matai, 20s.; kahikatea, 16s.; totara, 28s. to 32s.; brown-birch (beech), 10s. to 24s.; silver-birch (beech), 9s. to 10s. per 100 superficial feet.

Timbers formerly rejected but now being used are brown and silver birch (beeches).

Fires have done no appreciable damage to the milling forests.

MARLBOROUGH.

(H. D. McKellar, Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The demand for timber throughout the year has been good, but owing to the scarcity of efficient labour the output has been considerably less than in recent years.

Eight sawmills are operating in this district, with an output of 7,000,000 ft., comprising 4,500,000 ft. of rimu, 2,000,000 ft. of kahikatea, 300,000 ft. of matai, 200,000 ft. of birch, and 10,000 ft. of totara.

Royalties from timber on Crown land, £195 17s. 9d.; royalties from timber on State forest, £759 5s. 1d.: total, £955 2s. 10d.

The wholesale prices charged for timbers are—Rimu, 11s. per 100 superficial feet; kahikatea, 10s.; matai (R.H.), 14s. 6d.; matai (C.H.), 16s. 6d.; birch, 21s.; totara, 38s.; with 2s. to 2s. 6d. extra for dressed timber.

The probable duration of present supplies of different milling-timbers is ten years.

Birch is being more largely cut than hitherto.

Only a small area of forest in the Opouri Valley has been destroyed by fire.

WESTLAND.

(Thomas Brook, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the past year the sawmilling industry has been carried on under many difficulties, the most serious one being the lack of suitable labour. While this trouble has not been so serious as to necessitate the closing of mills, it has added considerably to the cost of production, and is no doubt responsible to a great extent for the increase in the price of timber. The uncertainty with regard to securing shipping-space was the cause of a good deal of anxiety, but although occasional delays have occurred the output has been got away without any serious congestion at the mills. The total quantity of sawn timber produced during the year was 50,211,000 ft., or about 2,000,000 ft. in excess of the previous year, and as practically the whole of this has been shipped the result must be regarded as very gratifying considering the present extraordinary demand for shipping.

All classes of timber are now in good demand, white-pine in particular being eagerly sought after. Australia is a very good market, this no doubt being the result of the cutting-off of supplies from Europe and America.

There are now thirty-eight mills in operation in the Westland Land District. One small mill closed down during the year, and a large one is in course of erection on Lake Haupiri. Of the total output, 36,091,000 ft. was obtained from Crown and 14,120,000 ft. from private lands. Rimu and white-pine constitute nearly the whole of this, and, although the exact figures for these two classes cannot be given, 40,800,000 ft. of the former and 9,300,000 ft. of the latter may be accepted as approximately correct.

The amount received in royalties from Crown land is £8,186 2s. 11d., but this does not include royalties, which are deemed to be goldfields revenue as provided for in section 148 (a) of the Mining Act. A further sum of £1,412 19s. 1d. was received as rent from areas held under timber-cutting licenses.

The quantity of timber used locally is so small as to be almost negligible, and price-lists are not issued. Practically the whole output is sold under contract in the large centres. When comparing the prices obtained in the various markets the peculiarities of each must be considered. Christchurch pays a high price for first-class timber, but it demands a very high quality, and is a poor market for inferior grades. The sale of the latter being one of the difficulties which the miller has to overcome, it can readily be understood that the market which furnishes the highest price is not necessarily the most profitable one, either for the miller or the State. The inability or neglect to find a market for inferior timber has been the cause of much loss in the past, and it is pleasing to be able to record an earnest endeavour by some sawmillers to remedy this.

The milling-timber in Westland is widely scattered throughout the district, and a large proportion is too difficult of access to be worked under present conditions. At the present rate of cutting the accessible supplies should last for twenty years.

About 100,000 ft. of brown-birch was converted during the year, and there is a tendency towards its more extended use. Silver-pine sleepers are in good demand, but the best of this valuable timber has already been worked out.

Westland is exceptionally free from destructive forest fires. Last summer was very dry, and log-fires destroyed tram-lines in various localities, but there was no loss of standing timber.