

Quay is occupied by wool and general stores and warehouses. It is from the West Quay that lighters are despatched with wool, meat, and general cargo to big steamers in the roadstead, and imports that require sorting are discharged at a shed adjacent to the Iron Pot. There is a great dearth of land in proximity of the Inner Harbour works, and such land as there is commands high prices as freehold, and high rentals as Harbour Board leaseholds. This position will be considerably relieved when the reclamation of the areas already referred to in this connection is accomplished. The arterial road to the city is in the main wider and therefore more commodious than the Marine Parade, which connects the Breakwater Harbour with the town, but, on the other hand, it carries, in parts, tramway traffic in competition with vehicular traffic. Goods and other traffic from Gisborne, Wairoa, and intervening districts, and all country north of Napier, would approach the town over the East Coast Road which shares the embankment with the railway. All vehicles using this road as an approach to Napier therefore enter at a point much nearer to the Inner Harbour and its facilities than they do to the Breakwater Harbour. The same comment is equally applicable to vehicles coming into the town on the Taradale Road.

It should perhaps be mentioned that the freezing-works shown on Plan A on the western side of the entrance channel to the Inner Harbour are now closed down, and the buildings, which are now owned by the Harbour Board, are to be demolished.

The following table shows the distances from various points to the Inner Harbour :—

To Inner Harbour—	Approximate Feet.
Per road from Napier Railway-station to West Quay ..	10,500
Per road from Napier Railway-station to south of Iron Pot ..	11,300
Per road from Napier Railway-station to north of Iron Pot ..	11,700
Per road from Napier Railway-station to shed at Iron Pot ..	12,200
Per railway from Napier station to Government Railway terminus at Iron Pot	11,000

THE ROADSTEAD HARBOUR.

The roadstead in which overseas vessels anchor to load and discharge their cargoes from a fleet of lighters may well be considered as an adjunct of the Inner Harbour as at present worked. The overseas vessels anchor in about 6 fathoms of water a little more than a mile out from the entrance to the Inner Harbour, and there they are served by a fleet of lighters, the property of Richardson and Co., Ltd., shipowners. These lighters carry cargo to and from the wharves of the Inner Harbour, and when not in use are berthed in the Inner Harbour.

One point on which practically all witnesses competent to speak on the matter were in agreement was that Hawke's Bay enjoys quite a large proportion of fine weather, and this is reflected in the comparative ease with which the working of vessels is carried out in the roadstead. Mr. McLeay, the managing director for Richardson and Co. deposed that the principal cause of delay in the roadstead was rain.

Some evidence was given which took the form of complaints against the lightering equipment and service, but we are of opinion that nothing serious in this direction can be considered proved. The work is seasonal, and it occasionally happens in the height of the wool season that there is a sudden concentration of overseas ships at Napier, and that the lightering fleet is not sufficient to give them all at one time the utmost despatch that they might require. Another complaint was against the age and alleged inefficiency of some of the lighters; but we think that not much ground for serious complaint exists. Mr. McLeay, the manager for Richardson and Co., Ltd., deposed—and we see no reason for not accepting his evidence—that the lighterage comprises not more than one-seventh of his company's business, and that it is not a lucrative portion of that business; it may be that in these circumstances the owners of the lighters are not too ready to scrap old plant and replace the units with newer and up-to-date vessels.

As was pointed out elsewhere, the chief exports from the port are wool and frozen meat, and practically the whole of this is loaded in the roadstead by means of the lighters. This service costs the exporting and importing interests the sum of about £30,000 per annum, a total which works out at an average cost of about 10s. per ton. Mr. McLeay's evidence was that his firm's fleet of lighters could work four vessels at once in the roadstead and give them reasonable despatch; under these circumstances three ships could work two hatches, while the remainder could work one hatch only. Typical vessels using the roadstead were anchored there during our sittings—viz., the s.s. "Tamaroa," 12,350 gross tons, which when deeply laden draws 33 ft., and the s.s. "Port Melbourne," 12,450 tons dead weight, drawing 30 ft. 3 in. As a general rule, however, Napier is not a final port of call, and overseas ships have to visit other New Zealand ports before departing for England, so that vessels of the class we mention above would seldom draw more than 25 ft. to 26 ft. when leaving Napier.

It was alleged by more than one witness that many vessels berth in the roadstead which could have been berthed in the Breakwater Harbour, but that they are prevented by the owners and the local agents from berthing at the Glasgow Wharf in the Breakwater Harbour. We were asked to draw the inference that this policy was adopted in some cases because the owners and agents were interested in the lightering company. We must find on the evidence tendered that this allegation is not proved. It was also alleged that shipping companies load the freight or goods consigned to Napier with an extra charge over and above freight, to cover discharge in the roadstead, and that this additional charge is levied in some cases where the ship might well and conveniently have been accommodated at the Glasgow Wharf in the Breakwater Harbour, and even in some cases where the discharging vessel has actually berthed at the Glasgow Wharf. This complaint relates chiefly to