

"It has proved practically impossible to obtain any accurate figures for the period in question but a certain amount of information has been received from early settlers, the *Taumarunui Press*, and N. A. Winter's 'Taumarunui—old and new' (Taumarunui Press, Ltd., 1913). Unfortunately, all these publications giving the early history of the district are out of print and I was unable to secure a copy.

"The local bodies bordering on this area which are in existence to-day comprise Taumarunui Borough, Taumarunui County, Kaitieke County, Mananui Town Board, and Ohura County. The following extracts from local history present a fair picture of this locality from 1900 onwards:—

"1900. Main Trunk reached Ongarue and formation work had advanced as far as Taumarunui.

"1901. Early photographs show about a dozen buildings in what is now Taumarunui.

"1902. A small accommodation house set up in Taumarunui.

"1904. Extract from 'River History' by A. Hatrick. *Taumarunui Press Supplement*, 21/12/1916.)

"Twelve years ago (1904) it was decided to extend the (river) service right up to Taumarunui (from Pipiriki) and this was done. *At that time there was not one single white person living on all that long stretch of ninety miles.*"

"In this year the first sections were offered by the M.L.B. in Taumarunui.

"1906. First Town Council formed. Town still very small.

"1907. Railway there but still very few buildings according to photographs.

"1911. Taumarunui Borough came into being.

"1912. Kaitieke County formed.

"1921. Taumarunui County formed. It was not till after this that the present 'river roads' were constructed, apart from a short portion which had been roughly formed as, a fine-weather road some years previously.

"From this it is fairly obvious that the district was very much in its infancy in 1903 apart from work being carried out by the P.W.D. and N.Z.R. The only areas where any development had been carried out, or even contemplated, seems to have been in the immediate vicinity of Taumarunui itself. The river below here was merely a scenic attraction and means of transport (from 1904). Apart from the main highway few or no roads were formed and any that did come into existence were mere tracks, unmetalled.

"It is most unlikely that any shingle was taken out of the Wanganui River by local bodies in this district prior to 1910. The majority of these local bodies were not even in existence at that date. Even as recently as 1919 the main street of Taumarunui seems to have been the only metal road in the town, and that very rough. Even in comparatively recent years most road metal came from the Taringamotu and Pungapunga streams—Wanganui River shingle only being used to any extent after the introduction of tar-sealing. No royalties were paid as far as can be ascertained.

"There were apparently no private contractors operating at that time. Certainly no evidence of such was found.

"There were no local authorities in 1903. It can be considered doubtful if road developments involving much use of shingle were contemplated.

"There were no lorries. Cartage was confined to horse and dray.

"Finally, to summarize, it is my opinion that there was no demand for shingle for local bodies or private purposes from the Wanganui River for a distance of seventy miles from the junction of the Wakapapa Stream as at 23rd November, 1903, and in view of the transport and local development position at that date any anticipated demand must have been negligible."

7. The person found most able to supply worth-while information was Mr. Henry Rothery. He went to Te Kuiti in 1908 as foreman for the Roads Dept. (now P.W.D.) until 1911, when he started contracting on his own account.

His knowledge of Taumarunui dates back to 1911 when the town was very small with no properly formed or metalled roads.

He first took out metal in the Taumarunui district from the Taringamutu Stream in 1918 and later when he metalled the main road from Taumarunui to Raurimu, he took metal from the Pungapunga Stream. All cartage was done by horses and drays.

Metal from the Wanganui River was not used at that time as it was too round and coarse and no crushers were in operation in the district until he set one up about 1920.

Metal from nearby streams was preferred to the river metal as the latter was considered too "lively" and unsuitable for road construction unless crushed.

He states, "Metal in those days had no sale value—it was a case of help yourself and take as much as you liked. Never at any time did I pay any sum for royalty."

Mr. Rothery's statement that no metal was taken out until about 1920 is supported by the schedule submitted by the Lands and Survey Department, Wellington, which shows the small amount of £9 2s. 9d. paid in royalties up to that year.

8. Mr. Spencer who is a more recently established contractor and operating in the Taumarunui district at present told me when interviewed that he preferred the metal from the local streams but had been forced by the P.W.D. to use the river metal as its hardness was more suitable for crushing into chips for tar-sealing roads.

It is evident from the information set out above that there was no commercial demand for metal in the Wanganui River on the 23rd November, 1903.