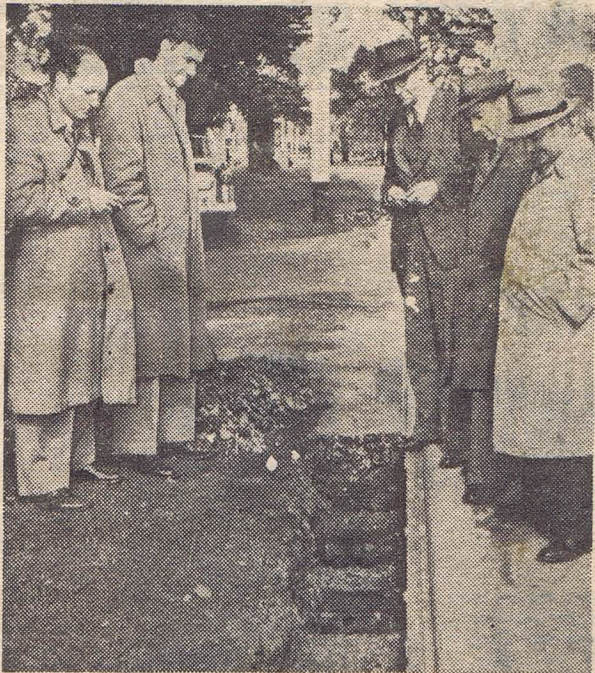


New Avenues For Treated Pine Timbers

New and important uses for pinus radiata trees growing in plantations in the Ballarat district, seem assured, following a visit to Ballarat yesterday of experts of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and technical officers of the State Electricity Commission.



The visiting officials, with local officers, inspecting a section of the Wendouree parade tramline where treated pine sleepers have been laid. The men are, Messrs N. Tamblin (left), F. Dale, C. B. Kay, H. McLaren, and A. K. McBain.

While the SEC may be the only body directly involved, the data gathered by the CS and IRO officers will help in interesting other bodies in the possibilities of treated pine timber.

The visitors were amazed to find that pinus radiata tramway sleepers, milled and treated with creosote, at the Ballarat Water Commission's Gong Gong case factory, and laid down in 1936, were still solid.

In 1936 two experimental sections of pine sleepers were laid—one lot being put down in Wendouree parade, and the other near the Sebastopol Town Hall.

When uncovered yesterday, the sleepers showed no sign of rot or other deterioration, whereas some red gum and grey box hardwood sleepers, put down at the same time, had started to rot away.

The visiting officials were, Mr N. Tamblin, officer-in-charge of the preservation section of the CS and IRO's Division of Forest Products; Mr F. Dale, an associate officer to Mr Tamblin, and Mr C. B. Kay, chief of the Forests' Office, SEC.

They were met by the Ballarat SEC's works superintendent, Mr H. McLaren, and the superintendent of the Water Commission's reserves, Mr A. K. McBain.

It was Mr McBain, who, under the direction of the CS and IRO, prepared and treated the pine sleepers in 1936, before they were laid.

The CS and IRO officers said that the treatment of pinus radiata with creosote paved the way for further avenues of use for the timber.

Many Uses

The treated timber could be used for both tramway and railway sleepers, as well as poles and piles, house blocks, and fencing posts and droppers.

They said that one important avenue was that young trees, three inches in diameter, and which had been felled during thinning operations and left to waste, could now be treated and utilised as posts and rails.

These small pines, as with the larger treated products, were anticipated to have a useful life span of up to 40 years.

By example, the officers said they did not consider the life of red gum house blocks to extend beyond 25 years, whereas it was expected that treated pine timber stumps would last 34-50 years.

Regarding the experimental sleepers put down by the tramways, the officers said they saw no reason why the sleepers, already 17 years old, would not last another 30 years, provided they remained covered.

Untreated hardwood sleep-

ers, put down at the same time, were approaching the end of their life, and would need to be replaced within 10 years.

"We say that treated pinus radiata sleepers on open railway tracks are better than a lot of the hardwood sleepers," the officers added. The pine sleepers would be on an equal with jarrah sleepers, which had a life of 25 years in the open, they said.

The officers emphasised that the pine timber would be useless for any of the above-mentioned purposes if not treated with creosote. The treatment consisted of hot and cold creosote baths for the heavier timber, and a tepid bath for the smaller sized wood.

The elimination of sources of more durable timber, such as hardwoods, had caused the CS and IRO, and other bodies to investigate less durable timbers, like the pine, for the needs mentioned, they said.

Also, the annual cost of a treated pine sleeper was considerably less than a hardwood sleeper.

Mr McLaren said that the SEC was highly pleased with the results given by the experimental sleepers. He considered there was a big future for them in tramway lines.

"They seem to be the sleepers of the future," Mr McLaren added.

Mr McBain said that if these new avenues were opened, not only the Water Commission, but the Sewerage Authority, Forests Commission and numerous State schools in and about Ballarat would benefit financially.