

POLE THINNING IN JARRAH COPPICE REGROWTH.

by P. N. Hewett.

When the Mundaring weir was built, critics of the scheme and of the Engineer C. Y. O'Connor, raised doubts concerning the filling of the reservoir. They suggested that the trees on the catchment were using all the water, so large areas, about 20,000 acres in all, were ringbarked to increase the run off. The reservoir filled, but apparent silting caused considerable concern. This happened in 1903.

Some of the resulting coppice forest was crown thinned in the period 1930-1939, but large areas still exist in an unthinned state.

In an attempt to improve the quality and spacing of these pole stands, which are now between 30 feet and 50 feet in height, but which have been damaged by fire and have poor form, the following thinning procedure was adopted.

Pole stands were thinned to a spacing varying from 15 feet to 20 feet, by removing all inferior and suppressed trees, and then proceeding as a normal crown thinning.

Where stocking is poor, well formed understorey poles are retained to maintain the spacing at approximately 15-20 ft.

There were frequently five or more stems per coppice stool. These were thinned to a maximum of two poles per stool and side limbs which can be reached from the ground were removed.

Tree marking consisted of side blazing the trees to be removed and in this instance was done by an overseer and myself.

Owing to the shortage of experienced bushmen, all trees for removal had to be marked, and this made the marking cost rather high - approximately £1.10. 0 per acre, but with more experience, this can be largely eliminated.

Thinning was done by a 3 or 4 man gang with Overseer, using axes and one Tornado one-man chain saw. It was found that 3 axemen and one chain saw operator make an efficient unit, the chain saw being used for falling stems greater than 9" D.O.B. at ground level.

The fallen timber amounted to about 12 tons per acre which, when dry, will sell for 5/- per ton royalty.

Wages cost is £4. 3. 0 per acre, and potential recovery £3. 0. 0. per acre.

The operation is not self supporting but a well spaced forest of good form poles is being developed for less than £1. 5. 0 per acre. This can be subsidised from nett receipts from regeneration falling which is being carried out elsewhere in the Division for Wundowie and the two phases of improvement work can be combined into one self-supporting operation. In addition, the areas so far treated are bordering on main public roads, and have drawn favourable comment from the travelling public.

P. Hadley

C. Vellies

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