

KENYA
20170

20170
25 APR 21

1899

1921

18/2/21

next previous Paper
E/24802/15
E/4304/20

Cedar wood

for manufacture of pencils

Seeds report by Conservator of Forests, and requires
a series of applications received locally for timber. Consequently
there is likely to be some demand for Kenya cedar
for manufacture of pencils in U.K.

A copy of this sent DOT 3 May 1921
copy with ends & copy above to Gov. T. T. 605-17
And. copy x above, 12/11/18 Aug 21

Copy of despatch & notes, including also
a copy of Report to Gov. T. T. 605-17
after we have at C.I.F. on 24/8/21
for any claims that they may have
to office, Surprising that they will
so much concern the imperial relations
as to the future of the wood if
they think it desirable to do so.

W.S.

next subsequent Paper

58221

Ask DOT 3pm if they
can now reply

16. 11. 21

W.S. 27.7.21

No. 399

20170 / 18 March, 1921.

RE
25 APR 21

Sir,

Cl 2430/15

Mr. Battiscombe.
December, 1918.

I have the honour to refer to Mr. Bonar Law's despatch No. 437 of 14th June, 1915, forwarding papers concerning the output from this Colony of Cedar wood suitable for the manufacture of pencils, and to inform you that enquiries have recently been received by this Government as to the granting of timber concessions in the forests of Mount Kenya, where Cedar is found in great quantities.

Nov/25084/20

2. The extent of this Colony's resources of Cedar is fully explained in the memorandum on East African forests compiled by Mr. E. Battiscombe, forwarded to your predecessor under cover of Sir Charles Bowring's despatch No. 412 of 24th April, 1920. I attach a copy of a further communication on the subject from Mr. Battiscombe for your information.

3.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WINSTON CHURCHILL, P.O., M.P.,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,
DOWNING STREET,
LONDON, S. W.

3. In order that this Government may be in a position to deal with enquiries relating to Cedar concessions, I should be grateful if I might be informed whether there is likely to be any demand for Cedar from this country for the manufacture of pencils in the United Kingdom. It has been pointed out that this Colony is the only source of supply of pencil Cedar in the Empire, and it would therefore appear that every effort should be made to interest British pencil manufacturers in exploiting the local resources.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your humble, obedient servant,

Edward Northey

GOVERNOR.

COPY.

FOREST DEPARTMENT,

NAIROBI.

December, 24th, 1913.

No. 127/13.

The Hon'ble,

The Acting Chief Secretary,

Nairobi.

West African Cedar.

Ref: your No. 1247/14 of the 16th inst.

Samples of Cedar were sent to England in 1908 for submission to Pencil Manufacturers; three firms, Messrs. Cohen, Wolff & Banks reported generally favourably; the two latter asked for further samples which were sent.

2. The timber of the second consignment sent to Messrs. Wolff & Son conclusively established the fact that old dead dark-coloured Cedar was not suitable for pencil making, that the light coloured wood only was suitable and that great care would have to be exercised in the selection and grading of the timber for export.

3. As regards the second lot of wood sent to Messrs. Banks, no definite report was received; this firm was anxious to secure supplies of timber on condition that the Crown Agents should undertake to procure their supplies of pencils from the firm; this proposition was not entertained.

4. Samples of pencils made from E. A. Cedar were received from Messrs. Cohen & Wolff; also specimen slabs cut from Virginian Pencil Cedar.

5. In 1906 a communication was received from the Imperial Institute stating that E. A. Cedar was exciting much attention among pencil makers owing to the difficulty of obtaining suitable material from America and that one of the largest pencil manufacturers in the United Kingdom was willing to give orders for a number of slabs if these could be suitably cut in East Africa.

As a result of this communication correspondence passed between the Protectorate Government and the Imperial Institute as to the nature of the dark and light coloured timbers; Mr. Grogan was also referred to, and he promised to send some logs to the Institute; I have no record as to whether the logs were ever sent.

6. A consignment of 40 logs were sent to Messrs. Wolff in October, 1907. Unfortunately no care seems to have been taken to ensure good timber being sent, and the result was as may have been expected, the cessation of interest by this firm in the wood.

7. In the same year hand samples of Cedar were sent to Messrs. Herdmuth and Faber in Germany. The former firm was not interested; the latter evinced considerable interest and asked for a consignment of 1000 lbs. weight for further trials. Mr. Atkinson who had a saw-mill at that time, undertook the supply, but unfortunately nothing further was heard from Messrs. Faber.

8. In 1908 hand samples of Cedar were sent to Messrs. Leary & Co., London, the well-known timber importers. The next communication from them was in the form of a enquiry to the Crown Agents and which was forwarded under cover of a private letter to Sir Henry Belfield from Sir Maurice Cameron. Mr. Williams of

Messrs. Leary & Co. states in his letter "The Juniperus Process is in my opinion excellent for pencils but the supply must be organised under expert advice so that the American slats can be ousted".

This is most important and if an export trade in pencil slats is to be established it is absolutely necessary to ensure that only first class material shall be allowed to leave this country, at all events until a regular demand for the wood has been created at home.

I am unaware if the Crown Agents or Messrs. Leary & Co. ever replied to this Government or even if my memorandum was forwarded to them.

9. Numerous enquiries have been received from persons and firms interested in the Pencil Cedar trade both in America and in England from time to time and in each case as much information as possible has been given and every endeavour made to put them into touch with the saw-millers handling cedar in this country.

10. The only "Swage" saws for cutting slats in the country at present are those owned by the Equator Saw Mills. This firm has endeavoured to get their slats on the market and has met with a certain amount of success. A little trade has been done in them owing to the prohibition of importing Cedar wood into Great Britain. I beg to refer you to this firm's letter to you dated 4th March, 1916, a copy of which was forwarded to me under cover of your memo. No. 18695/9 of 9.8.16. The last consignment to England made by this firm was of 188 cases of slats in May or June last; no advices have yet been received from their agents as to the sales and prices realised. I should mention that a "case" contains slats

for making 100,000 pencils.

In a conversation with the Manager the other day he informed me that to maintain a regular output of 100 cases a month it would be necessary to employ three Europeans and 180 native labourers for all the work from felling the trees in the forest to turn out the finished pencils. Very great care and skill are required in sawing and finishing the slats and also in selecting the wood.

24802
15

11. In 1915 a despatch was received from the Colonial Office (your file No. 12896/2 of 11. E. 1915) containing copies of correspondence between the Secretary of State and Mr. F. G. Clark on the subject of a report on East African Pencil Cedar by the Forest Products Laboratory of the United States Forest Service.

This report which was brought to the notice of the Commercial Intelligence Branch of the Board of Trade by the Secretary of State, leaves very little doubt as to the complete suitability of the wood for the manufacture of pencils and is the most definite one ever received as the findings are based on actual experiment.

The samples with which the pencils were made were supplied by the Equator Saw Mills.

12. The position at present may be said to be that while E. A. Cedar is suitable for the manufacture of pencils and a few cases of slats have been put on the market, yet it still remains to organise the trade in the slats and to create a market in Europe. On the other hand saw-millers are content with the local trade for building material, roofing shingles, &c., and do not take much interest in the pencil slats business.

moreover

moreover as already stated only one firm possesses a "Swage" saw bench. But from the information contained in Sir M. Cameron's letter to Sir Henry Belfield it would appear that the building up of an export trade in pencil slats is less of a local matter than an Imperial one seeing that British East Africa is the only source of supply of this material in the whole Empire.

To create a market and to command good prices it is absolutely essential that only first class, accurately cut slats should be exported and I am of opinion that the trade should be organised under expert advice such advice to include both first hand knowledge of the class of timber required and the sawing and finishing of the slats and an intimate acquaintance with the pencil slat trade.

The presence in this country of such an expert whether he were appointed by Government or he came in the interests of a private firm or group of firms interested in the trade, could not fail to have a stimulating effect to the timber trade of this country.

13. There is another question in connection with E. A. Cedar which I consider should receive careful consideration and that is the feasibility of establishing Pencil factories in this country. Graphite has recently been discovered in a certain locality and if it can be shown as a result of further prospecting that the mineral is present in sufficient quantities and is suitable for pencils it appears to me that the manufacture of pencils would be an economical proposition.

14. Another proposition which I am of opinion is worthy of consideration would be an invitation being



issued to reputable firms interested in the trade and of known financial standing for the taking up of a cedar forest concession on Mt. Kenya such a concession to carry the obligation of the construction of a railway from the Uganda Railway main line at Gilgil or Nakuru.

In the light of past experience timber concession should not be lightly given away, but there is no reason why the interests of the forests should not be safe guarded which at the same time benefitting the country very materially.

If an export trade in pencil slats or finished pencils could be established and at the same time such a railway as indicated above which would tap the Laikipia, West Kenya and Nyeri Farming districts, could be constructed the advantage to the country would be far from inconsiderable.

15. On the 15th January, 1918, a question was asked in the House of Commons about E. A. Cedar and as to its being used as firewood for the Uganda Railway (see your file No. 5188 of 25.2.18). I am unaware if a reply was ever sent to the Secretary of State.

SD/- E. HATTISCOMBE,

Conservator of Forests.

third

(2) You will no doubt consider the proposal

justified, if you consider it desirable to do

as to the nature of the good.

(Signed) H. J. READ.