THE DURABILITY OF CREOSOTE-TREATED MALAYSIAN TIMBERS

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DALJEET SINGH, K., TAM, M.K., & MOHD. DAHLAN JANTAN 1988. The durability of creosote-treated Malaysian timbers. The paper summarizes the results of exposure trials of 96 Malaysian timber species treated with Creosote. Timbers with absorptions in excess of 320 kg m^{-3} had very low failure rates. It was also seen that there was variation in service life with different absorptions which needs further investigation. Based on the results a durability classification for treated timber is proposed.

Keywords: Creosote durability - Malaysian timbers - durability classification.

Introduction

Trials on the natural durability of Malaysian timbers were initiated in 1918. They were further increased in 1930 and have continued since then. The results of these trials have been published (Foxworthy & Woolley 1930, Thomas 1937, Mohd. Dahlan Jantan & Tam 1985).

Trials on the durability of treated timber were started in 1930. The preservative used then was creosote. Creosote is the main preservative for railway sleepers. It is also recommended in the double treatment with copper-chrome-arsenic (CCA) for timbers in marine environment. Subsequent trials included timber treated with other preservatives such as CCA, copper naphthenate, *et cetera*. The tests are still in progress and additional test material is being added. This paper is a summary of more than 50 years of observations on the durability of timbers treated only with creosote.

Materials and methods

Test material

Rough sawn stakes were used for all the trials. The stakes were obtained from botanically identified trees. The test stakes were $5 \times 5 \times 60$ cm in cross section. The test stakes were air seasoned to about 14 to 18% moisture content which is the equilibrium moisture content in this country. Each stake was labelled with an

aluminium number plate. The number of test stakes for each species varied depending on the quantity of timber available. However, in every case, the tests were equally divided between the two test grounds used.

Treatment

The preservative used for the treatment was Creosote which met the specifications in British Standard 144. Most of the timbers were treated using the Hot and Cold Open Tank Method. The test stakes were weighed before being completely submerged in the tank containing 100% creosote. The creosote was then heated by steam coils to a temperature of $87^{\circ}C - 105^{\circ}C$ and the temperature was maintained for 1 *h*. After this, the creosote was allowed to cool for 16 *h*. The test stakes were then taken out and drip-dried before final weighing. For some of the trials, the timbers were treated by using the Bethell method.

Test procedure

The two sites are in the grounds of the Forest Research Institute, Kepong, Malaysia (Jackson 1957). The specimens were placed in 45 cm deep trenches which were then filled to ground level. The stakes projected 15 cm above ground level. The stakes were placed at an angle to the vertical and each stake was in contact with the stakes on either side. The rows were 30 cm apart.

The above method, used by Foxworthy (1930), differs from that used in other laboratories where specimens are set vertically and are about 30 *cm* apart. Foxworthy's method is believed to create a very hazardous situation as it allows termites and fungi to spread easily from one stake to the next. It may thus be a slightly accelerated test.

Inspection

The test stakes have been inspected at six-month intervals throughout the life of the test. The stakes are pulled out of the ground one by one (after loosening the earth with a spade if necessary) and the adhering earth is scraped off. The exterior of the specimen is examined, and the presence or absence of internal termite attack is deduced from the appearance as well as the sound made when the specimen is struck with a light hammer. If internal infestation is detected, its extent is determined by probing with a sharp instrument, and the internal cavities of termite attack are exposed. A blunt-edged knife or back of a knife blade is rubbed on the surface to determine the extent of fungal attack on the stakes. Excessive picking out of the soft wood fibre in the specimens is avoided. When the timber is very wet, especially in the wet season, softness alone is not a good criterion for grading naturally soft timber. In this case a 'clunk test' is carried out. A test stake is held at one end and the other end is knocked lightly against the ground. If the stake breaks abruptly, it indicates that there is rot in the timber core. A test stake is considered destroyed when 50% or more of its cross-sectional area at groundline is removed by termites or from rot caused by fungi.

Results

The mean average service life of each species was calculated for those species in which all the test stakes had been destroyed (Table 1). Also included are results of tests in which not all of the stakes have been destroyed; their service life was extrapolated using Maclean's (1926) chart for determining probable life of rail ties. These results give a reasonable indication of possible service life. The service life of the timbers in relation to nett absorption of creosote are also presented (Table 2). The nett absorption is divided into six categories which correspond to the treatability classes of the timber.

Discussion

From Table 1, it can be seen that the service life of the timbers is increased considerably when it is compared with that of untreated timbers. Generally, increased absorption gave a better service life. For example in damar hitam the absorption in the open-tank process was only 22.56 kg m⁻³ and in another lot 60.8 kg m⁻³ (Table 1). When using the full cell process, the absorption of 102.4 kg m⁻³ was obtained. The service life of the open-tank treated specimens were 6.5 and 9 y while it was 18.3 y for those treated by the full cell process.

In keledang (Artocarpus lanceifolius) at absorption of 1.31 kg m^{-3} of creosote the average service life was 14 y whereas at 145.6 m^3 the average service life increased to 31 years. The various Keruing (*Dipterocarpus* spp.) species when treated with creosote had a service life ranging from 20.7 to 28 years and Kempas (*Koompassia malaccensis*) had a service life of 32.3 to 39.2 years. There were annulous cases too, like giam in which slightly lower absorptions (0.27 kg m⁻³ gave marginally longer service life of 23.3 y against 21.6 y for a 0.49 kg m⁻³ absorption.

Based on the service life of the timbers (Table 1), a durability classification for treated timbers is proposed:

Durability Class	Service life (y) for (5 x 5 x 60 cm stakes)					
Class 1 Perishable	0 to 5					
Class 2 Non perishable	5 to 10					
Class 3 Moderately Durable	10 to 15.					
Class 4 Durable	15 to 20					
Class 5 Very Durable	25					

Table 1. Durability classification

As mentioned earlier this durability classification is based on 5 cm square samples exposed in ground contact at the two test sites in Kepong. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that much longer service life for timber of larger cross-sections may be expected in normal hazard situations.

The treated timbers are classified into different categories of absorption (Table 2). The timbers in each category are further classified into the various durability classes proposed above. From Table 2, it can be seen that the service life not only varies among the different categories but also within each category.

In absorption category 1, there are timbers in every durability class. Although the amount of preservative absorbed was low, nevertheless, there were six timber species which had a service life over 25 y and 21 timber species of 16 - 25 y. This trend was also seen among timbers in absorption categories 2 and 3. In category 2, there were 11 timber species that were durable and 13 that were very durable. In category 3, there were six timber species that were durable and ten that were very durable. In categories 4, 5 and 6, all the timber species (eight species, two species and seven species respectively) were very durable.

From Table 2 it can be seen that each timber inherent quality of durability which can be enhanced with the use of preservatives. This was even observed among timbers which were naturally non-durable or moderately durable like merawan, melantai, perupok and meranti tembaga which obtained service life in excess of 25 years with preservative absorption of between 96 to 160 kg m⁻³.

All in, there are 41 timbers which could be classified as very durable and these include kempas, keruing, mengkulang and kulim (Table 2).

The difference in durability with varying retentions is quite interesting and warrants further investigation. In general, higher absorptions gave longer service life. Timbers having absorptions in excess of $320 \ kg \ m^{-3}$ have low failure rates (Table 1). Jelutong after 36 y had a failure of 50% of the stakes at one site while there were no failures yet in the other site. After 50y of service geronggang (absorption 468.8 kg m^{-3}) had only 20% failure in one site and none at the other site; geronggang (absorption 481.6 kg m^{-3}) had 55% failure at one site and only 10% failure in the other site. After 33 y mempisang had no failure in either of the test sites. These examples clearly illustrate that sufficient loading service life in excess of 30 y could be easily obtained. It must be pointed out here that in the past only the average absorption was calculated. This meant that there would be stakes which had higher absorptions while others had lower absorptions. The service life obtained is thus an average for these stakes. It would be therefore be safe to assume that had all the stakes been treated to the same absorption, higher service life would have been obtained for each species.

Conclusion

It can be seen that timber treated with 100% creosote had considerably longer service life than untreated timber. Timbers with higher loadings gave a service life in excess of 30 y and there a were number which would definitely have a service life

in excess of 45 *y*. There was some variation in the service of life of timbers with different retentions and this needs to be investigated further.

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Table 2. Service life of creosote-treated timber

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Hopea sangal Hopea sangal Open tank 5.12.35 20 52.8 11.80 17.20 14.50 7	33
Jangkang Blumeoderatron toklorai Open tank 23.8.55 40 500.8 31.00 31.00 31.00 24 on-	going
Jelutong Dyera costulata Open tank 4.1.50 40 515.2 33.00 39.00 36.00 29 on-	going
Jongkong Dactyloclados stenostachys Open tank 22.7.62 24 556.8 24.00 24.00 24.00 on-going ong	going
Kapur Dryobalanops aromatica Full cell 23.7.31 12 84.8 20.70 N.A. 20.70 17	34
Kapur Dryobalanops aromatica Open tank 5.7.58 40 N.A. 12.50 11.10 12.20 7	18
Kasai Pometia pinnata Open tank 23.12.48 40 57.6 15.70 12.00 14.00 8	20
Kedondong Canarium rufus Open tank 21.12.40 16 64.0 9.90 10.20 10.10 5	33
Kedondong kerantai Santiria lawigata Open tank 3.8.71 20 72.0 7.30 6.90 7.00 6	9
Keladan Dryobalanops oblongifolia Open tank 2.8.38 20 36.8 16.20 13.70 16.10 7	18
Keladan Dryobalanops oblomgifolia Full cell 8.12.38 39 96.0 24.80 21.90 23.40 11	28
Kelat jambu Eugenia griffithii Open tank 23.12.48 40 216.0 32.00 28.50 30.00 7 on-	

Keledang	Artocarpus lanceafolia	Full cell	29.5.48	40	144.0	35.00	27.00	31.00	16	on-going
Keledang	Artocarpus lanceafolia	Open tank	14.7.65	40	46.4	16.50	12.00	14.00	12	on-going
Kempas	Koompassia malaccensis	Full cell	23.7.31	38	291.2	42.20	36.20	39.20	16	51
Kempas	Koompassia malaccensis	Open tank	5.12/35	20	227.2	38,30	26.20	32.30	7	45
Kempas	Koompassia malaccensis	Full cell	1.12.32	50	164.8	46.00	25.20	35.60	15	on-going
Kerantai	Santiria laevigata	Open cell	24.6.40	12	76.8	11.10	13.40	12.30	7	35
Keruing	Dipterocarpus baudii	Full cell	1.12.32	48	240.0	25.90	25.30	25.60	16	36
Kerning	Dipterocarpus cornutus	Full cell	1.6.32	13	185.6	20.70	N.A.	20.70	11	25
Keruing	Dipterocarpus crinitus	Open tank	24.3.38	20	57.6	29.00	26.30	27.70	17	37
Kerning	Dipterocarpus crinitus	Full cell	24.3.38	40	85.3	32.00	28.10	30.10	17	41
Keruing	Dipterocarpus lowii	Full cell	28.3.38	35	161.6	28.10	27.90	28.00	17	36
Kerning	Dipterocarpus lowii	Open tank	24.3.38	19	203.3	23.60	25.70	24.70	17	32
Kulim	Scorodocarpus borneensis	Full cell	1.6.32	40	198.4	36.90	33.50	32.70	21	48
Kungkur	Pithecellabium confertua	Full cell	23.7.56	40	81.6	20.00	12.60	16.00	10	on-going
Machang	Mangifera foetida	Open tank	25.8.53	40	313.6	31.00	28.00	30.00	12	on-going
Mango	Mangifera foetida	Open tank	25.8.53	16	182.4	20.20	18.80	19.50	15	- 26
Medang	Litsea firma	Open tank	25.8.53	16	134.4	10.60	8.70	9.70	7	15
Medang gatal	Schima wallichi	Open tank	15.2.56	20	54.4	12.60	5.60	9.10	5	19
Medang padang	Litsea pulutris	Open tank	18.7.62	30	81.6	13.90	8.50	11.20	3	18
Medang tandok	Dehaasia nigrescens	Open tank	21.12.40	20	51.2	27.30	14.30	20.80	10	34
Melantai	Shorea mecropiera	Open tank	7.11.34	20	67.2	18.70	19.80	19.30	8	on-going
Melantai	Shorea macroptera	Full cell	7.11.34	40	129.6	30.90	24.20	27.60	12	5
Melawis	Gonstylus bancanus	Open tank	8.12.38	19	N.A.	22.00	35.00	27.90	17	43
Melunak	Pentare triptera	Open tank	6.8.49	40	89.6	11.00	14.20	12.60	7	21
Membatu	Shorea guiso	Open tank	5.3.52	40	19.2	7.60	6.70	7.00	4	12
Membatu jantan	Shorea ochrophloia	Open tank	14.12.64	40	12.8	8.60	10.20	9.40	2	13
mempening	Quercus lamponga	Full cell	2.2.66	40	89.6	17.00	11.50	14.00	8	on-going
Mempisang	Cyathocalyx maingayi	Open tank	28.5.53	32	542.4	33.00	33.00	33.00	on-going	on-going
Mendong	Elaeocarpus sphaericus	Open tank	8.3.68	40	123.2	7.70	5.80	7.00	6	7
Mengkulang	Terrietia simplicifolia	Open tank	5.12.35	20	153.6	34.00	29.80	31.90	12	on-going
Mengkulang	Terrietia simplicifolia	Full cell	5.12.35	40	118.4	25.90	22.10	24.00	14	36
Meranti bakau	Shorea rugosa	Open tank	15.8.36	20	72.0	15.50	14.80	15.20	7	44
Meranti bakau	Shorea rugosa	Full cell	15.8.36	40	113.6	17.50	11.70	14.60	5	44
Meranti bukit	Shorea platyclados	Open tank	15.7.58	40	N.A.	9.50	10.50	10.00	6	18
Meranti daun besar	Shorea hamsleyana	Open tank	22.7.62	28	144.0	15.00	21.00	18.00	9	on-going
Meranti paang	Shorea bracteolata	Open tank	12.10.33	20	153.6	25.70	30.00	27.90	14	49
Meranti paang	Shorea bracteolata	Full cell	1.12.33	40	145.6	25.10	25.40	25.30	14	on-going
Meranti sarang punai	Shorea parvifolia	Full cell	1.12.31	- 39	312.0	32.80	36.60	32.40	16	51
Meranti temak	Shorea hypochra	Full cell	1.12.33	38	120.0	34.70	28.60	31.70	14	48
Meranti temak	Shorea hypochra	Open tank	15.7.58	40	N.A.	15.50	17.00	16.10	6	20
Meranti temak	Shorea hypochra	Open tank	1.12.33	20	150.4	34.50	31.80	33.20	14	49
Meranti temak nipis	Shorea talura	Open tank	25.1.60	40	27.2	21.00	18.00	19.00	10	on-going
Meranti tembaga	Shorea leprosula	Open tank	5.12.35	20	88.0	13.50	10.70	12.20	5	19
Meranti tembaga	Shorea leprosula	Full cell	23.7.31	33	233.6	35.60	32.30	34.00	16	51
Meranti tembaga	Shorea leprosula	Full cell	1.6.32	20	164.8	29.20	N.A.	-	16	on-going
Merawan	Hopea sulcata	Full cell	21.12.40	19	67.2	31.00	27.00	29.00	20	41
Merawan	Hopea sulcata	Open tank	21.12.40	38	82.24	38.20	27.40	32.80	22	41
Merawan	Hopea sulcata	Open tank	6.12.41	18	128.0	26.10	23.40	24.80	18	40
Merbau	Intsia palembanica	Full cell	1.6.32	40	148.8	N.A.	22.30	22.30	10	on-going

Mersawa	Anisoptera marginata	Open tank	24.6.40	20	33.6	8.40	6.30	7.40	8	11
Mersawa	Anisoptera marginata	Full cell	24.6.40	39	41.6	11.40	8.60	10.00	8	17
Mersawa	Anisoptera laevis	Open tank	21.12.40	19	33.6	10.70	10.70	9.80	7	14
Mersawa	Anisoptera laevis	Full cell	21.12.40	40	49.6	12.20	10.70	11.50	7	21
Minyak berok	Xanthophyllum varrucusuna	Open tank	15.5.51	34	195.2	28.00	28.50	28.00	11	on-going
Nemesu	Shorea pauciflora	Open tank	7.11.34	20	54.4	16.00	14.00	15.10	5	20
Nipis kulit	Memecylon pubescens	Open tank	29.5.48	24	201.6	38.00	21.30	30.00	12	on-going
Nyalas	Parastemon urophyllum	Open tank	8.12.38	18	80.0	16:50	19.40	18.00	7	30
Nyalas	Parastemon urophyllum	Full cell	8.12.38	40	75.2	19.00	16.10	17.60	7	30
Nyatoh	Palaquim spp.	Open tank	21.7.49	49	284.8	29.00	30.00	30.00	7	30
Nyatoh	Diplokema sebifera	Open tank	3.8.71	40	68.8	7.00	5.00	6.00	5	on-going
Para rubber	Hevea braziliensis	Open tank	25.8.53	40	187.2	21.00	18.90	19.90	12	27
Pauh kijang	Irvingia malayana	Open tank	21.7.49	40	128.0	15.30	17.60	16.50	13	26
Pelong	Pentaspadon velutinum	Open tank	24.6.40	21	46.4	16.50	10.9	11.60	6	30
Penaga	Mesua ferrea	Open tank	21.1.58	20	N.A.	20.00	24.00	22.00	10	on-going
Penaga laut	Calophyllum ionphylla	Open tank	14.1.54	8	78.4	5.00	9.00	7.00	9	17
Penarahan	Myristica gigantea	Open tank	30.5.48	22	454.4	50.00	50.00	50.00	33	on-going
Perupok	Lophopethlum sp.	Open tank	21.12.40	47	156.8	29.60	23.60	26.60	10	42
Petaling	Ochanostachys amentacea	Open tank	30.5.48	40	206.4	41.00	40.00	40.50	15	on-going
Punah	Tetramerista glabra	Open tank	8.12.38	20	89.6	24.80	22.70	23.80	19	27
Punah	Tetramerista glabra	Full cell	8.12.38	40	83.20	22.40	21.80	22.00	12	23
Rengas	Melanorrhoea iorquata	Open tank	5.3.52	40	270.4	47.00	39.00	43.00	17	on-going
Resak	Vatica cuspidata	Open tank	6.12.41	19	4.80	20.20	22.20	21.20	12	23
Resak	Vatica cuspidata	Full cell	6.12.41	40	N.A.	24.10	22.60	23.40	10	32
Sepam	Mangifera spp.	Open tank	21.2.40	28	238.4	37.40	33.50	35.50	13	42
Sepetir	Sindora coriacea	Open tank	9.7.50	40	140.8	26.00	26.00	26.00	6	on-going
Seraya	Shorea curtisii	Open tank	1.1.33	20	100.8	34.00	19.40	26.70	15	49
Seraya	Shorea curtisii	Full cell	1.12.33	40	132.8	30.70	30.30	30.50	14	48
Sesendok	Endospermum malaccense	Open tank	8.12.38	18	N.A.	16.60	17.80	17.20	6	25
Tempenis	Sloetia clargata	Open tank	3.5.48	30	59.2	17.00	17.60	17.30	16	28
Temponek	Artocarpus rigidus	Open tank	25.8.53	34	140.8	14.00	11.00	13.00	4	on-going
Terap	Artocarpus scortechinii	Open tank	25.8.53	24	182.4	14.00	14.50	14.00	1	on-going
Terentang	Campnosperma auriculata	Open tank	24.6.40	21	176.0	10.40	10.40	10.20	1	15
Tualang	Koompassia excelsa	Open tank	5.7.58	40	N.A.	15.20	13.30	14.30	8	20
Upun batu	Upuna borneensis	Open tank	15.1.51	38	11.2	21.50	21.50	21.00	15	28
West Indian Locust		Open tank	9.7.50	16	152.0	15.60	18.60	17.00	8	24
Yemane	Gmelina arborea	Open tank	26.7.61	40	57.6	9.5	12.90	11.20	9	19

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