

FOXTON TO MANAWATU—(Foxton Tramway, 24 Miles).

The substitution of iron for wooden rails, which in my last yearly report I mentioned as being proceeded with, was continued without intermission. The traffic was carried on under great disadvantages, and the high rates for carriage had to be maintained, but these will be reduced when the line is completed and in good order.

During the second and third week in December, there were some heavy floods in the Oroua River. In places between 14 and 16 miles, the line was $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet under water. Considerable damage was also done to the banks between 2 and 4 miles. The formation was washed away and the rails and sleepers were left hanging. On the 27th April, trains commenced to run regularly between Foxton and Palmerston.

WAITARA TO NEW PLYMOUTH ($11\frac{1}{2}$ Miles).

This railway was opened for passenger traffic on the 15th October, and for goods traffic on 25th October, 1875. The maintenance was taken over from the contractor on the 17th January, 1876. The traffic on this line is not encouraging: there are no exports, except a small number of stock.

In order to induce traffic to go over the line the wharf rates at Waitara were reduced, although before such reduction the total charge for wharfage and railway carriage was less than by surf boat, in addition to the certainty of delivery with despatch and in good order. This reduction has not however been taken advantage of. This railway is working at a loss, although no expense that can possibly be avoided is incurred.

PICTON TO BLENHEIM (18 Miles).

This line was opened on the 18th November, 1875.

At the beginning of December, a heavy flood in the Opawa washed away some of the piles of the road bridge, which prevented traffic from coming to the railway for several days.

This line is subject to heavy floods, and there has been consequently considerable outlay in maintenance throughout the year.

During the past twelve months an additional siding has been put in at Para.

On 25th January, the wharf at Picton was taken over by my department.

NELSON TO FOXHILL (20 Miles).

This railway was opened on the 31st January, 1876.

On the 17th to the 24th April, there were some very heavy rains, and the district round Wairoa was flooded.

The traffic on the line is tolerably satisfactory, but I have no doubt the business of the line would be considerably increased if the railway went to the port. At present we lose a great deal of traffic, owing to the high rate of carriage between the town and port, as it is found cheaper, when once on the dray, to take it direct to its destination.

BRUNNER TO GREYMOUTH ($7\frac{1}{2}$ Miles.)

This railway was opened for traffic on the 8th April, 1876.

On the 9th April, there was a very heavy flood in the river. It rose to within 5 inches of the highest flood of 1872 at the town, but at the Gorge it was some 6 feet lower than it was in 1872.

The maintenance was taken over on the 22nd May.

In this locality the rates of wages are very high, and the working expenses will consequently show an increase over a line of similar length elsewhere; but it is hoped that when the coal traffic gets into regular swing, we shall be able to show a considerable margin of profit.

The number of miles run by the engine on the different railways varies considerably, according to the requirements of the traffic. On some of the longer lines, engines have run between 15,000 and 19,000 miles each.

In my last year's report I mentioned that arrangements had been made for the establishment of a Railway Audit Office, which has been carried out successfully during this year. In this office the whole of the accounts of the railways, both revenue and disbursements, as well as statistical information, is examined and recorded.

In concluding my report, I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the cordial co-operation generally shown by the Managers of the various lines, who had no small difficulties to contend with, especially on newly opened lines, where a large portion of their time has necessarily been occupied in the detailed arrangements for the public convenience.

The conduct of the railway servants during the year has on the whole been very satisfactory, and complaints on the part of the public have been very few.

I have, &c.,

FRANK B. PASSMORE,

The Engineer-in-Chief.

Superintending Engineer for Constructed Railways.