

*Carterton Contract* (20 miles 41 chains).—From the time this contract was let, the 6th April, 1878, up to April, 1879, the works were carried on in a very languid and unsatisfactory manner. The contractor was then served with a formal notice to employ more men and display more energy. After this better progress was made and a better system of working adopted.

Unfortunately, however, on the 14th May, the contractor, Mr. Richard Dickson, was accidentally killed at Patea Harbour Works, and the result of his death has been that the works have been taken over by the Government, and every means will be used to push them on vigorously to completion. The contract time ends the 22nd March, 1880.

*Wellington Railway Wharf Contract*.—The work on this was begun on the 16th April, and is being pushed on in a very energetic manner. The time for completion is 26th December, 1879.

*Petoni Workshops Contract*.—This includes a carpenters' shop, machine shop, fitting shop, and engine shop. Work commenced in last week in April. As yet the progress has not been very brisk, but large quantities of timber are now on the ground, and better progress may be expected. The contract time expires 14th November, 1879.

A contract for a main drain through the workshops ground has also been let.

*Greytown Branch Contract* (3 miles 7 chains).—This work has been surveyed and prepared for contract for formation only, and is now advertised for public tender.

*Working Railways*.—Several new engines have been erected, amongst them some of the single Fairlie type, adapted for sharp curves and steep grades. As far as the trials of these latter have been made they promise to be a success, and to be well adapted for the kind of traffic for which they were ordered.

Temporary workshops have been fitted up at Petoni pending the completion of the permanent buildings, and machinery and smiths' hearths erected; these enable the General Manager to keep the stock in repair.

Three new sidings have been laid down in Wellington Station-yard to meet the increased traffic; and all the bridges have been well tarred during the year.

#### WELLINGTON-FOXTON RAILWAY.

*Surveys*.—The explorations and surveys for the Wellington end of the above line have taken considerable time, owing to the number of routes which have been examined.

It was necessary to examine all the routes recommended as being the best, as well as those which were previously known to be practicable, so that the question of route might be set at rest satisfactorily. Four distinct lines were examined—viz., one starting from the Upper Hutt; one from a point between the Silver Stream and Upper Hutt; one from a point a little south of Hayward's; and one by way of Kaiwara Valley and Porirua. A report on the first three of these was appended to last year's Annual Report, which showed that they were unsuitable for a line of railway; the country being excessively rough, involving enormous cost of construction and obtaining very bad gradients.

It was therefore found necessary to revert to the fourth line (the one first examined)—the character of which was known to be favourable, and which had been reported on by the Resident Engineer at the same time as he reported on the three above-mentioned—viz., the one starting from Wellington Railway Station, and rising on the southern slope of Kaiwara Valley to a saddle near Johnsonville, crossing the main road there, and running down the northern slope of the Porirua Valley, crossing the Porirua Harbour at Paramatta Point, and thence through Pukerua Bush to the sea-coast, thence at the base of the Cliffs to Paikakariki, a short distance west of which it reaches the level country. This line was found to be quite practicable; several trial lines were therefore made over it with the view of setting out the first portions for contract, and about 6 miles have accordingly been set out. It is expected that a portion of this, including the proposed reclamation for station purposes at Pipitea, will be ready for tender in a few weeks.

The preliminary survey on this line has been extended to about 33 miles from Wellington, and at the Foxton end the following surveys are in hand, viz.:—

*Foxton to Horowhenua* (10 miles 40 chains).—Of this survey, 8 miles 30 chains is completed and partly plotted; the remainder is in progress.

*Palmerston-Horowhenua* (26 miles 40 chains).—This survey has just been commenced. From explorations already made it is expected a very fair line will be obtained.

#### ARCHITECT'S BRANCH.

The Report of the Architect on the work of this branch of the Public Works for the past year is forwarded herewith.

#### MAP.

A new map of the North Island, showing the extent of railways to date, is attached to this report.

I have, &c.,

JOHN BLACKETT,

Engineer in Charge, North Island.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.