

NELSON-FOXHILL RAILWAY.

Port Line.—The contract for the formation of the extension of this line, from its present terminus to the Port, was completed in April, and another contract, for the platelaying, has just been let. The whole of the works are expected to be finished and the line ready for opening about the end of September.

Harbour Works.—These works are now so intimately connected with the railway that they may be considered part of it. They are all completed, except the connection with the railway, which is included in the platelaying contract.

Extension of Railway to Bellgrove.—A contract for the extension of the Nelson-Foxhill Railway from its present inland terminus at Foxhill, to Bellgrove, has just been let to Mr. Peter Dey for £8,159. The length of the section is three miles. The works include a large bridge over the Wai-iti River.

PICTON-BLENHEIM RAILWAY.

A contract was let in January for the extension of this line from its present inland terminus at Opawa, to Blenheim, a distance of $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles. The works, which are somewhat heavy, include 580 feet of bridging over the Opawa River. The contract time expires in April next, but the works will probably be finished before then.

WESTPORT-NGAKAWAU RAILWAY.

General.—With the exception of the finishing of the Westport Station there have been no construction works in progress during the past year. The railway is now complete, except half a mile at the Ngakawau end, which has been postponed from year to year pending the commencement of mining operations by the Albion Coal Company.

Buller Stop-Bank.—Instead of constructing a heavy and expensive bank to stop the encroachment of the Buller, as was originally intended, an experiment has been tried during the year of cutting a relief channel on the south side of the river. So far as can be judged at present, it is likely to be a success. If the anticipations regarding it are realized the whole work will be done for £8,000, instead of the £30,000 originally estimated. Under any circumstance, the relief channel is well worth what it will cost.

GREYMOUTH-BRUNNERTON RAILWAY.

Stations.—The only works done on the main line during the past year are the erection of various station buildings and the improvement of the stations generally.

Harbour Works.—The principal works done during the year just ended consist of the placing of 22,600 tons of rock and 47,900 tons of shingle in the training-wall and reclamation. Until June, 1878, this work was done by contract, at 4s. 2d. per ton for rock, and 1s. 8d. per ton for shingle; but since that date it has been done by day labour and piecework, at a cost of 3s. 8d. per ton for rock, and $11\frac{1}{4}$ d. per ton for shingle. In the case of the shingle, this result is due entirely to the employment of a small dredge, which serves the double purpose of keeping deep-water berths at the wharf, and reducing the cost of the filling. The dredge, which was built by Messrs. Kincaid, McQueen, and Co., of Dunedin, at a cost of £2,500, is working most satisfactorily. It does considerably more work than what was stipulated for in the contract with the builders.

Hitherto the annual vote for the Greymouth harbour works has been too small to admit of the works being carried out to the greatest advantage and in the most economical manner. There is necessarily a constant scour at the end of the training-wall; consequently it must be pushed on rapidly, otherwise a great quantity of rock-filling will be absorbed uselessly; and, again, under the present arrangement the locomotive and other plant are not fully employed. For these reasons, I think the amount appropriated yearly should be £30,000 or £40,000, instead of, as hitherto, half those amounts.

So far as can be judged from their present condition, the Greymouth harbour works are going to fulfil the purposes for which they are intended.

AMBERLEY-WAITAKI RAILWAY, WITH BRANCHES.

Main Line.—With the exception of the erection of workshops, and alterations and extensions of stations, there have been no new construction works in progress on the main line during the past year.

Malvern Branch Extension.—A contract for the extension of the Malvern branch line to the Springfield Coal Mine, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles, was let in April, to be finished in four months. The work is somewhat behind time, but not to a serious extent. With the exception of the last half-mile, where there is some little cutting, the works are particularly light. The gradients and curves on the line are easy. The only steep gradient is leaving the mine, where there is a short piece of 1 in 50: it is, however, in favour of the heavy traffic, so can scarcely be considered an objection.

WAITAKI-INVERCARGILL RAILWAY, AND BRANCHES.

General.—At the end of the last financial year two sections of this line remained unfinished—9 miles between Waikouaiti and Palmerston, and $20\frac{1}{2}$ between Balclutha and Clinton. The former was opened on the 6th September, and the latter on the 22nd January last; railway communication was thus completed between Amberley and the Bluff and Kingston.

Main Line.—In addition to the completion of the sections above referred to, and numerous minor works at stations, contracts are in progress for large works at Dunedin and Port Chalmers. At Dunedin they consist chiefly of the reclamation of 42 acres for a new station, and the extension of present siding and shed accommodation. The works at Port Chalmers, which were much needed, comprise a new station and wharf. The station is being entirely remodelled; and the wharf is an instalment of a general scheme intended to meet the requirements of the port for many years to come. The contract now let includes a double wharf 66 feet wide, in line with George Street, and a single cross-piece at the inner end connecting it with the Bowen Pier. Altogether provision is made for 1,650 feet berthage for vessels. The main portion is 700 feet long, but it can be extended to almost any length, as required. The wharf contract was only let in May, but the works have made a satisfactory commencement.