

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

WHANGAREI-KAMO RAILWAY TRAFFIC
(PAPERS RELATIVE TO).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson, with leave of the House.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

I have the honour, as directed, to report on the present conditions of the traffic, revenue, and expenses on the Whangarei-Kamo line, compared with 1885-86, when the coal-mines were in full work.

The chief changes have arisen from the stoppage of the coal and mineral traffic. During 1885-86 the minerals dealt with were 29,883 tons out of a total business of 33,416 tons. The mineral traffic has since fallen to 9,374 tons for the twelve months ending 21st June last, owing to the partial stoppage of the mines.

This business having become so limited the hands previously necessary have been reduced; the number of employes is reduced from twenty-five to twelve. The cost of repairs of the track and sidings, running stores and fuel, renewals of rolling-stock and crane-working, &c., have of course been largely curtailed. At the same time the fares have been increased.

The merchandise traffic from the Railway Wharf to Whangarei Town has increased during the last three months, notwithstanding a slight increase in the railway rate, because less merchandise is carried by sailing craft up the river to Whangarei Town, and more is brought to the Railway Wharf by steamers and is taken up by railway to the town. This is said to be due to the steamers having reduced the rates of freight owing to the competition between the Northern Steam Shipping Company and the Seamen's Union.

The passenger traffic unfortunately fell off with the diminished coal trade, as must have been expected.* Most of this traffic is between Whangarei and the wharf and between Whangarei and Kamo.

It has been found desirable to raise the passenger fares in some cases to increase the revenue, and to lower slightly in others where there was competition. The following figures give an example of how this has been done.

Particulars of passengers' journeys between Whangarei and the Railway Wharf, and between Whangarei and Kamo, for the year ending 31st March, 1886:—

Between		1886. Number of Journeys.	Fare, 1886.		Present Fare.	
			s.	d.	s.	d.
Wharf and Whangarei ...	...	1,437	0	9	0	9
" " ...	...	2,790	0	6	0	6
" " ...	...	910	0	7	0	9
" " ...	...	2,058	0	4½	0	6
" " ...	...	1,764	0	4½	0	9
" " ...	...	3,012	0	3	0	6
Whangarei and Kamo ...	...	171	1	0	0	9
" " ...	...	830	0	8	0	6
" " ...	...	346	0	9	0	9
" " ...	...	1,786	0	6	0	6
" " ...	...	286	0	6	0	9
" " ...	...	1,096	0	4	0	6
Total ...	...	16,486				

* The total passengers for year 31st March, 1886, were 22,275
For twelve months ending 21st June, 1888, they were 10,740
Falling off 11,535

Some controversial correspondence has been recently carried on in the Auckland press respecting the working of this line, in which it is claimed that on this line the fares are framed on what is termed "Vaile's system." This can hardly be said to be the case, as Vaile's system, as explained before a Parliamentary Committee, in 1886, claimed to go in for an enormous reduction in the passenger fares prevailing on the Government railways; on the Whangarei line, the reverse course has been followed, and the fares have been raised for the journeys mostly taken, where extra fares could be obtained.

From the recent correspondence it appears, also, that a very singular error is entertained in some quarters. It seems to be supposed that the coal traffic and handling cost nothing to perform, and that the 20,000 tons of lost mineral traffic could be resumed again without increasing the present expense—that is, without incurring any expense for engine power, track repairs, rolling-stock repairs, stores, crane working, clerical assistance, &c.

The rates usually charged for coal and mineral traffic are barely sufficient to cover the cost of conveying and handling; if the 20,000 tons of traffic were again resumed, a corresponding increase in working expenses must be anticipated. The line, at present, is making a little profit, as higher fares are obtained for the work now done than was the case in 1886.

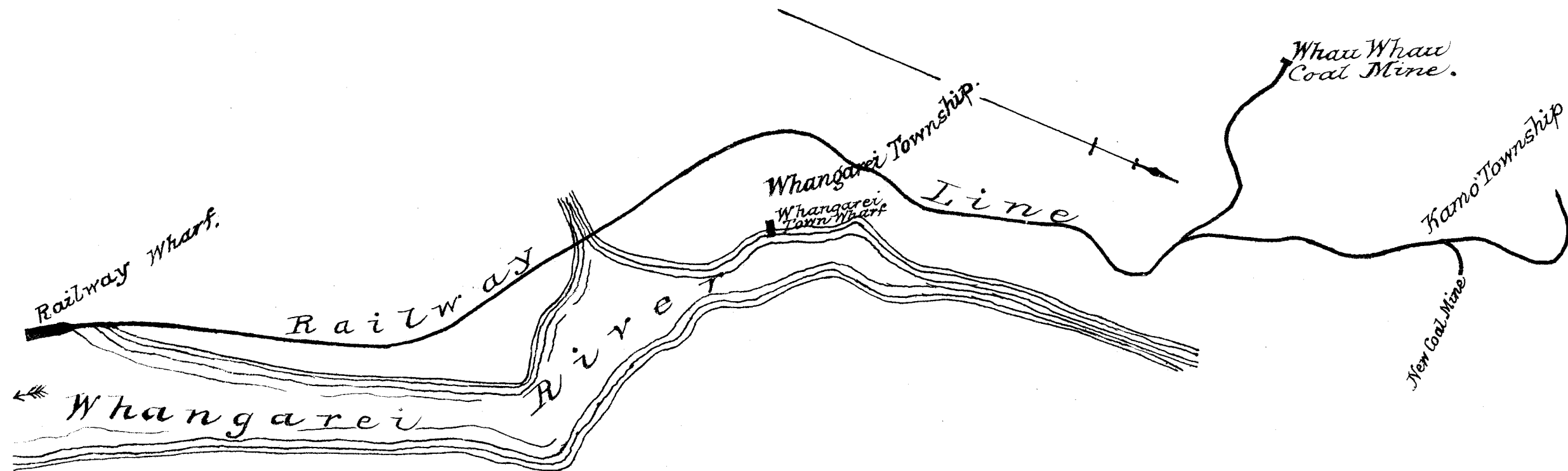
J. P. MAXWELL,
General Manager, New Zealand Railways.

Wellington, 11th August, 1888.

[*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Préparation, nil; printing (1,375 copies), £1 1s.]

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Sketch Map
Whangarei to Kamo R.^y



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