

In the Rotorua District, under Mr. Reaney's supervision, a great length of main roads has been maintained, largely in the interest of the tourist traffic, the most important being the Rotorua-Napier Road, as far as Runanga, from which place to Pohue is under the control of the Chief Surveyor, Napier. The Rotorua-Te Teko Road is now open for wheeled traffic as far as the Tarawera River, where a bridge has yet to be built. A continuation of this road from Te Teko to Opotiki—part of which is constructed—is very necessary to allow of direct communication between the railway-station at Rotorua and the settlements in the eastern part of the Bay of Plenty. The new road from Wai-o-tapu to Wairakei, which will take the place of the present main road from Rotorua to Taupo, has been constructed throughout, and tenders have been accepted for a bridge over the Waikato River. On completion of this, the road will be available for coaches, and will form a far more attractive route than the present road *via* Ate-a-muri.

Another very important road starting from Rotorua is that which leads through the Urewera country, past Lake Waikare-moana, and thence onwards to Gisborne. It is sure to become a stock-driving and tourist route when opened. At the western end two miles and a quarter only have been actually completed this year, but beyond this the forest has been cleared, and contracts are in hand to within a few miles of Mataatua, thirty-five miles from Galatea. It is still being pushed on by co-operative labour, both Pakeha and Maori. At the eastern end the road is now open from Gisborne for about ten miles and a half beyond the Hangaroa River, and at the same time three miles and three-quarters have been finished from Waikare-moana eastward, whilst from the same point (Aniwaniwa) westward contracts are in hand to the Mokau River, five miles from Aniwaniwa.

In the Auckland central district, under Mr. Hursthouse's supervision, the principal work in hand has been the main road leading from Awakino to Te Kuiti Railway-station. The road is now open for carts from Awakino Heads for nineteen miles and a half, or to the upper crossing of the Awakino; and four miles and three-quarters are also open through the Pae-mako Settlement further on. This road opens up a large extent of country of good quality, which would be settled were the road opened through and the Native titles all extinguished.

Another important road in this district is the Ohura (Stratford-Ongaruhe) Road. At its northern end it is now open for drays for twenty-four miles, to the Ohura River, which still remains to be bridged, though the timber for that purpose is nearly all cut. During the year two miles and a half have been formed beyond the Ohura, and about four miles and a half cleared. The southern end of this road is under the supervision of Mr. G. F. Robinson, who reports that the road is open for coach traffic from Stratford to Whangamomona Village—forty-two miles—whilst a further distance of five miles has been constructed, but is not available till further bridges are erected. The length remaining to be completed on this main road is about thirty-one miles, of which part is already cleared, and about five miles of which is also available as a bridle-road. The total distance through from Stratford to the railway-line at Kawakawa, Ongaruhe Valley, is 111 miles. Its completion will be a great opening up of the country and allow of coach traffic between the railway systems of Auckland and Taranaki, on the extension of the railway to Kawakawa. On the Stratford end of this road nine miles and a half are metalled, and contracts are in progress for a further two miles.

A branch from the Ohura Road, in the Taranaki District, is in course of formation to connect with the navigable part of the Tangarakau River at Putikituna. This river is now being improved so as to afford access by water by way of that river and the Wanganui to the interior country.

The damages caused to the roads in Hawke's Bay by the floods of April, 1897, have necessitated large expenditure, but they have not yet been fully repaired. The road from Napier to Wairoa has been opened for carriage traffic as far as the Mohaka River on the northern end, and to eight miles and three-quarters beyond the Tongio Pa, near the Arapawanui River, on the Napier end.

Plans for a new bridge over the Mohaka River on the Napier-Taupo Road, to replace that destroyed by the flood, have been made by the Public Works Department, and tenders will be invited as soon as possible. In the meantime the Titikura Hill will be improved by some deviation to give a better grade, and the rock-excavation at the approach to the bridge will be done.

The new road from Gisborne to Nuhaka has been advanced about six miles, and some improvements made at the hot springs there.

In the Wellington West District Mr. G. T. Murray has extended the metalling of the Pipiriki-Wai-o-uru Road, but more is required to cover the worst parts of the road. This line has become a great tourist route in connection with the Wanganui River and the Lake District of the North Island. Another important main road is the Ohingaiti-Tokaanu Road, which was much damaged by the floods of 1897. Metalling has been extended between Taihape and Mangaonoho in the worst places, and where the heaviest traffic exists; but in view of the large amount of land recently taken up in this district, to which this road is the main access, much more will have to be done to make the road effective. On a branch road from the main line, near Mangaweka, a low-level bridge over the Rangitikei River has been designed and built by Mr. Murray. The idea is to allow the floods to pass over the bridge. So far it has proved successful, and no damage has been done by the timber coming down the river. The total cost was £369. A similar bridge has been built over the Ohau River. The results in both cases will be looked forward to with interest.

In the rest of the Wellington District, which is under Captain Turner's supervision, a large amount of work has been performed on a great number of roads, intended to give access to lands taken up during the last few years. This part of the country suffered very much from the Easter flood of 1897, and it has taken a large amount of money to repair the damages to roads and bridges which then occurred. The Alfredton-Weber Road is perhaps the most important work that has suffered through the floods. The removal of the heavy slips has been such a continued source of expense that the completion to Weber as a coach-road has been much delayed. Contracts are now on hand, which, on completion, will open this line through to a junction with the Weber Road.