

TARANAKI.

As there is a special report on improved-farm settlements, the roadwork only in connection with them is referred to here, though the inspection of felling, grassing, and building has been done by Road Inspectors.

Tawai Improved-farm Settlement.—But little roadwork has been done on this settlement since last annual report. Sixteen chains of road-formation has been completed, besides which Mr. C. W. Hursthouse had about 30 chains of draining done with “thirds” from lands at the back of this settlement. The most of the settlers have been working on Awakino-Te Kuiti Road, under Mr. Hursthouse.

Tongaporutu Improved-farm Settlement.—The roadwork through this settlement will be accounted for under head of “Mimi Road, Pukearuhe Inland to Mohakatino.” The difficulty of access referred to in last annual report still obtains, as the Mimi Road, which runs through the settlement, is not yet sufficiently advanced to permit of wheel traffic from the Urenui side. This difficulty will be removed, I hope, before next summer, by which time the works will be sufficiently advanced to permit of vehicular traffic from New Plymouth and Waitara to and through Tongaporutu Settlement, and to the proposed ferry-site. A large amount of damage was done to the road last winter within the settlement by heavy slips from the hills covering the formation, filling up deep cuttings, and leaving masses of logs, stumps, and trees where before was a finished road. The removal of these involved heavy expenditure, and took the available men from formation-work.

Greenlands Improved-farm Settlement.—The roadwork in connection with this settlement will be found under the head of “Putiki.”

Uruti Improved-farm Settlement.—No roadwork has been done on this settlement during the past year.

Okau Improved-farm Settlement.—A short length only of bridle-road formation, and repairs to existing bridle-road, comprises the roadwork done within the settlement during the year.

Derwent Improved-farm Settlement.—About 140 chains of bridle-road giving access to the sections has been completed during the year, and the older roads have been maintained and improved.

Burfoot (Mangapoua) Improved-farm Settlement.—This settlement is situated inland of Urenui, about sixteen miles distant from Waitara. 61 chains of road leading to these lands has been felled, stumped, and cleared, and the work is still proceeding. A drawback to this settlement and other Crown lands the survey of which has just been completed is a very steep hill on part of the Kaipikiri Road, about a mile out from Urenui. A deviation of fully 60 chains long should be made here, as on the present line the road will never be a really serviceable one.

Ratatomokia (Nihohiho) Improved-farm Settlement.—No roadwork has been done within the block during the year.

Mangatawa.—No expenditure.

Bridge over Waitara at Purangi.—A contract has been let to Mr. G. Sangster for the erection of this bridge, at £2,143, the time allowed being to end of January, 1899. The bridge will be built on heavy piers of driven piles, the main span being 121 ft. in length, the total length of bridge being 244 ft. The bridge will be a great boon to the Tanner and Milsom settlers, and will open through communication from New Plymouth to Ohura Road, a distance of 48½ miles, about thirty-three of which is metalled.

Mohakatino Bridge.—Heavy floods in Mohakatino River and the counter action of spring tides damaged the northern bank below and above the bridge, and at one time endangered its safety. The willows planted last year for the protection of the bank were nearly all destroyed or carried away with the bank. A series of double groins has been constructed of manuka fascines bound with wire, and secured by heavy stakes driven deeply into the mud, these having the effect of deflecting both flood and tidal waters, of preserving the bank from further damage, and securing the safety of the bridge.

Junction Road—Purangi (£1 for £1).—About 45 chains of metalling has been done on this road, in extension of that completed last year. There still remains about four miles and three-quarters of metalling to be done to reach Purangi (38½ miles from New Plymouth), which it is hoped and expected will be proceeded with next summer. The work is under charge of the Clifton County Council.

Mimi-Mangaroa Road (Metalling, £1 for £1).—Since last report a further length of 81 chains of this road has been metalled. This work has been done on the worst parts of the road, the material being of the best, and the contracts well carried out; but, as a large part of the road (fully ten miles) is low-lying and very wet in winter, it is absolutely necessary that more metalling should be done if the road is to be of any value as a coach-road. The metalling so far has been done under control of the Clifton County Council.

Moanatairi Special Settlement.—This grant was for the purpose of improving the pack-track from Tongaporutu River at Putiki towards Moanatairi Special Settlement. As the latter has practically been abandoned, a portion of the money was used to improve the same track to Greenlands Improved-farm Settlement (about halfway to Moanatairi Improved-farm Settlement), to enable those settlers to occupy their lands. About seven miles of the track has been so improved.

Tongaporutu Ferry.—Tenders were invited for the construction of a punt, but, owing to the difficulty of conveying timber and material to the site, the tenders were too high to be accepted. The matter has therefore been delayed for the present. When Mimi Road is available for dray traffic this difficulty of carriage of material will be got over, and a ferry could be established at a much lower cost. A ferryman's house will be an absolute necessity, as there is no house at present nearer to the ferry-site than about a mile.