

The amount of engineering surveys done during the year was 657 miles, the cost of which is included in the above. There were 143 bridges of a total length of 9,910 ft. built, besides 3,316 culverts. Nearly the whole of the work has been done on the co-operative system.

The reports of the Chief and other Surveyors on the road, bridge, and other work completed during the year will be found in the appendix, but the items of greatest interest in the way of main roads may be noted here.

To the north of Auckland additions and improvements have been made to a great number of roads. The road from the railway terminus at Opanake is now open for wheeled traffic to Hokianga, and is a good deal used; but until the worst places are metalled it cannot be much used in winter. The bridge over the Mangakahia River, on the road leading from Whangarei to a large area of Crown lands lying to the west of that river, has been completed, and it is hoped that this will induce a good deal of settlement in that part. It is a long bridge, consisting of six 40 ft. and one 200 ft. bow-truss spans.

South of Auckland, the road from Tuakau to Raglan has been extended, but is not yet open for wheeled traffic right through. Since the 31st March tenders have been accepted for building the bridge over the Waikato River near Tuakau, a very important work, for it opens a large and improving district, and allows of communication with markets. Further south, the Kuiti-Awakino Road has been extended and improved, so that vehicles can, in summer-time, be taken from the railway-station at Te Kuiti right through to New Plymouth. But there are two large bridges, besides some smaller ones, to build before the road is finished; and to make it available in winter some metalling should be done in the worst places. This is a very important line in the interests of settlement, and should be completed as soon as possible. It is equalled in importance by the Ohura Road, which when completed will also open large areas to settlement, the more so as it runs further from the coast than the above road and has good land along most of its length. At the northern end some progress has been made in extending the road, and a bridge is now building over the Mangaroa Stream, whilst at the southern end, in Taranaki District, about five miles and three-quarters have been formed in continuation of former works, or to a point fifty-five miles from Stratford. The works are now in advance of the above point, as far as the bridle-track is concerned, but to complete the whole road through about twenty-three miles have to be formed, and then the whole will be available for wheeled traffic from Stratford to Waikato. This is a work that should be pushed on.

In the Rotorua district, the Rotorua-Te Teko Road, a very important line of communication, has been opened from the former place to the Tarawera River, and tenders for the bridge over the latter river have been called for. This road, when finished, and bridges built over the Rangitaiki and Whakatane Rivers, will form the main line of communication between the large settled districts in the eastern part of the Bay of Plenty and the Rotorua Railway, and will be the main mail and passenger route from Opotiki to Auckland. Vehicles may even now, with some difficulty, be driven from Opotiki; but the two bridges alluded to, the completion of part of the road near Ohiwa, and thorough repairs to the portion between Te Teko and Whakatane, are required before it can be considered a coach-road. The main road, Rotorua to Gisborne, has advanced but slowly during the year, a length of three miles and a half having been added to the Rotorua end, and five miles and three-quarters at the Waikare-moana end. This is also an important road, and should be so completed as to allow of tourist traffic through to Waikare-moana Lake, and the fine scenery the road traverses. A bridge over the Rangitaiki River on this road is now building.

In the Hawke's Bay District, the Gisborne-Nuhaka Road has been extended some nine miles and a half, and will be completed this next season. This road will probably supersede the Wairoa-Gisborne road to a large extent, whilst at the same time opening up a good deal of Crown land. On the Napier-Wairoa Road, another of the principal arteries of the country, twenty-one miles and a half of dray-road have been constructed, the terminal point being now forty-two miles from Tangoio, leaving five miles and a half of gap to complete the communication through to the Wairoa. This work should be pushed on to completion, so as to secure some return for the large sum the road has cost. On the main road, Napier to Taupo, the bridge over the Mohaka River is progressing, the cylinders being down and the superstructure in course of framing.

In the Taranaki District, besides works already referred to under the Ohura Road, the Mimi-Mokau Road, which is, in fact, a part of the main road from New Plymouth to Te Kuiti Railway-station, has been opened so that wheeled traffic is possible right through, but until the Tongaporutu River is bridged it can never be considered a safe road. It is to be hoped that this necessary work will be put in hand during the coming year, and that the Ohura Road be pushed on to form a connection with the completed portion at the northern end. The other works in Taranaki are numerous, but call for no special mention, except perhaps to note the fact that the Purangi Bridge over the Upper Waitara River was completed during the year.

The next road-district to Taranaki is Whanganui, and here the season's work has largely been maintenance and improvement of existing roads, with the extension of other lines into country recently selected, besides the general oversight of some large bridge contracts in the hands of the local bodies, such as those over the Rangitikei River at Otara, Vinegar Hill, and Bulls. A separate report on the work carried on for the improvement of the Whanganui River, by the Secretary to the Board, will be found in the Appendix.

Much the same operations have been carried out in the Wellington District, where a large amount of work has been done in the extending and improvement of existing roads, and the formation of new ones to lands in process of settlement. A good deal of maintenance work has also been done in this district, which in parts present great difficulties, owing to the nature of the soil and its liability to heavy slips. The number of separate works in Wellington District is very great, rendering a large staff necessary in the road branch if every item on the appropriations is to be carried out at once.