

INTERIM REPORT No. 68.

27th February, 1911.

I have to report on a visit made over the river recently, from Wanganui to Taumarunui.

I left Wanganui on the 19th instant, by the s.s. "Wakapai," at 7 a.m., arriving at Pipiriki at 5.45 p.m. Was delayed a quarter of an hour at the rapid below Pipiriki, consequent on the propeller fouling a wire rope laid in the rapid there; otherwise should have arrived at 5.30 p.m. On arrival at Pipiriki the water-gauge showed 41½ in. below the mark on Hatrick's gauge, and at date is the lowest recorded since the commencement of the river service.

On the following morning I resumed the journey in the "Otunui" (oil-launch, 35 h.p., Captain J. Tarry), leaving Pipiriki at 4.45 a.m. and arriving at the Houseboat at the Ohura tributary at 10.30 p.m. I am not sure of the draught of the "Otunui," but think it was 14 in.; but this, of course, varied slightly with the passengers and cargo embarked and taken in at the various stopping-places. The usefulness of the service was amply demonstrated by the passengers and light cargo picked up and set down at numerous places to the Houseboat, as well as up-stream from thence to Taumarunui.

21st.—Left Houseboat by the "Otunui" at 6.45 a.m., and stopped at rapid No. 69 at 9.45 a.m., awaiting the arrival of the down-stream boat from Taumarunui, which arrived ("Waireka," steel canoe-shaped oil-launch, 50 h.p.) at 10.30, and transferred her passengers to the "Otunui," both boats leaving rapid No. 69 at 10.50 a.m., the "Otunui" for the Houseboat and the "Waireka" for Taumarunui. The passengers transferred were twenty-five through passengers to Wanganui and several wayside passengers, and up-stream three through passengers and several wayside passengers, which were subsequently increased by seven passengers and various cargo from Okupae (No. 53), arriving at Taumarunui at 7 p.m.

As previously indicated, the gauge at Pipiriki registered a record low level, and it was noticeable that above the Manganui-a-te-Ao the water was appreciably correspondingly lower.

Manganui-a-te-Ao (No. 187), 62 miles above Wanganui, on left bank, was discharging a fair quantity of snow-water from Ruapehu. Whangamomona (right bank), (between Nos. 164 and 165, 82 miles from Wanganui), was scarcely running, and at Tangarakau (right bank), (between Nos. 158 and 159), there was little or no movement at the mouth of the stream. Retaruke (left bank), (No. 104), was discharging a moderate quantity, presumably snow-water, while the Ohura (right bank), (between 90 and 91), was running through a narrow gutter over the falls, and was discharging a considerably lesser quantity of water than I have ever seen previously. (NOTE.—The Houseboat is moored below the junction of the Ohura, 114 miles from Wanganui.) Otouiti (76), Paparoa (61), Otonui (45) were practically dry, showing only a dribble over the papa face.

The Wanganui at its junction with the Ongarue, just below Taumarunui (144 miles from Wanganui), was divided into three channels and running over steep shingle-beds. The Ongarue was appreciably lower, and Mr. Harris, manager for Hatrick and Co. at Taumarunui, showed me marks he had made on boulders at the landing, giving the present level as 5½ in. below anything previously recorded. At Kuatapiko (No. 29) I had previously noted on the large boulders in mid-stream there that the green moss or weed which is always found on submerged stones in the river-bed was dry and withered for 6 in. above water-level, thus showing a 6 in. drop there; and this was the general condition from Tangarakau upwards. The River Trust parties (three) were met at Kauaeroa (205), Otahua (108), and Kokirae (11). These parties were all engaged in removing boulders and obstructions from the channel, and were doing excellent work, materially assisting the navigation under the exceptional circumstances of river-conditions. The steamer-crews have also done good work in removing obstructions in places where the Trust's parties have been too distant to give them full attention.

Captain Marshall, the Trust's foreman, and the several parties under his charge are undoubtedly doing excellent and valuable work. Their efforts, however, are not visible, as in the case of construction of walls and groins, but the channel is being improved by every stone or boulder that is removed from the fairway.

I was much impressed with the latest launch put into commission by the steamer-proprietors, the "Waireka." This boat has 50 h.p. oil-engines, and is narrower, with a more rounded floor, than the other boats, and was drawing 10½ in. only, but on the occasion I travelled in her she was running light; probably with a full load of passengers her draught would be about 12 in. On the journey up-stream several rapids were negotiated, with the engine and the crew poling, where there was on occasions a drop of 4 ft. in 2 chains. I am convinced that with boats similarly designed to the "Waireka" there would be much less difficulty in navigating the reaches from Pipiriki up-stream.

I append herewith extracts from notes made on the visit up-stream:—

- No.
238. Kanihinihi (17 miles).—Ran line, hauled over; water, 21 in.
226. Upokopoito.—Difficult to enter at foot of rapid. Hauled over with line.
222. Umutapu.—Hauled over; 24 in.
221. Ngapurua.—Hauled over; good water. There are some boulders to remove below.
213. Ruapirau.—Ran line, hauled over; 21 in.
212. Matahiwi.—Hauled over with lines from port and starboard. There are stones to remove from mid-channel, otherwise good water.
211. Parangarohu.—Some large boulders to come out, otherwise good water. A shallow turn above this, but no large boulders. Poled over. At Ramana, or just below, a large boulder requires removing.
207. Moutoa.—Hauled over; good water.