

1911.
NEW ZEALAND.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST.

MEMBERS.—T. D. Cummins (Government nominee), Chairman; T. B. Williams, J. T. Stewart, W. G. Bassett, elected by the ratepayers of the Borough of Wanganui; W. Ritchie, Chairman, Waitotara County Council; D. Mason, Chairman, Wanganui County Council; C. E. Mackay, Mayor of Wanganui; J. T. Hogan, M.P., Wanganui; and G. V. Pearce, M.P., Patea.

REPORT.

SIR.—

Wanganui, 1st July, 1911.

I have pleasure in furnishing you with a report of the operations of the Wanganui River Trust for the year ended 31st March, 1911.

The working season just closed has been a most noteworthy one, owing to the extreme low river-level, consequent on a protracted drought over the whole of the watershed of the river. It is safe to say that within the memory of the oldest Native in the district the water was lower than it had previously been known, many of the streams feeding the river being absolutely dry. The greatest volume of water came from the snow-clad mountains, Ruapehu and Tongariro, while the Ongarue tributary contributed, although to a lesser degree than is usual. Despite these conditions, it is most satisfactory to be able to report that the traffic by steamers and launches from Taumarunui to Wanganui, a distance of 144 miles, was fully maintained. Passenger traffic from Taumarunui down-stream is on an increasing ratio, and a considerable quantity of cargo is being carried from Taumarunui to the settlements down-stream and from Wanganui up-stream, and there is no doubt but this highway has been an important factor in the settlement of lands adjacent to the river.

The main efforts of the Trust during the year have been in the direction of clearing the steamer-channel of large boulders and papa reefs. The exceptionally low river made this very important work less difficult and expensive, and I venture to say that most valuable work was accomplished.

As foreshadowed in my last report, the work of improving the river-channel is drawing to an end. An expenditure of £1,000 per annum for two years should about suffice, after which time the revenue derivable from river dues, rents from the River Trust endowment block now leased, as well as from lands proposed to be leased by the River Trust Domain Board in the near future, should produce a sufficient income to meet expenditure for maintenance.

The necessity for providing a suitable motor-launch for maintenance work has been considered, and estimates have been prepared showing the cost of such to be about £1,000, and I would urge that that sum be placed on the estimates for the purpose indicated. A model of the proposed launch, with copies of specifications and estimate of cost, will be forwarded to you for inspection and approval. By getting this launch much saving would be effected in the work of maintenance, as it would undertake much of the work now being done by the punts, which are costly to move about the river, and require separate crews. If the launch is procured, two of the punts could be laid up and the expenses of their crews saved. The launch would be provided with a winch and derrick sufficient to lift snags and boulders, and much time would be saved in getting to places requiring attention. These considerations amply justify the first cost.

The work proposed to be undertaken next season consists mainly in the construction of training-walls on various parts of the river, and for this purpose I would ask for £1,000, making with the estimated cost of a launch £2,000.

I attach herewith a copy of interim report No. 68, made by me in February, which gives a general indication of the condition of the river, the work in progress or completed, and some proposals for the future.

I have, &c.,

T. D. CUMMINS,

Chairman, Wanganui River Trust.

Wm. C. Kensington, Esq., I.S.O.; Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

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.

No.

206. Haumoana.—Steamed over; good water. (NOTE.—A wall of large shingle, put in by Anderson before the Trust took charge, was exposed on the left bank. I have not previously seen this.)
205. Kawaeroa.—Hauled over; good water.
200. Te Puha.—Hauled over.
199. Hauled over.
198. Hauled over.
- Pipiriki.—Water on gauge, $41\frac{1}{2}$ in.
- 197 to 190. Hauled over all rapids; good water. At foot of Ngaporo (190) Captain Allan had removed a snag from the bottom of the rapid, and Captain Marshall had recently removed a considerable number of large boulders from the fairway at the rapid above Upper Ngaporo (188, Parakiwai), and as soon as Marshall has attended to some difficulties down-stream he will return here and complete this place. The walls constructed at Ngaporo last year have very considerably improved this previously difficult rapid.
184. Omaika.—There is a shallow reach, where I found only 20 in. water.
181. Just above Parinui a broad shallow will require a wall.
179. Tangahoe.—Ran line and hauled over; 21 in.
160. Otapapa.—Hauled over; good water.
156. Kaiaroa.—Snag to remove; good water otherwise.
- 155, 154.—Long shallow reach. Ran line, hauled over; 20 in. water.
152. Hauled over.
135. Ohineika.—Broad shallow, wants wall badly. Ran line, hauled up by lines from port and star-board. This was a difficult place, and took half an hour to negotiate. So far, this is the worst place I have struck.
131. Matapiki.—Very shallow; wall would improve.
128. Tarepokiore.—This previously difficult place gave no trouble. There is a very swift current, with good water and channel. The work done here last working season will materially help Tarepokiore in flood-time. The old whirlpool has disappeared.
122. Horowhenua.—This place, as has been previously reported, wants a wall from either bank to hold the water up over the shallows. Hauled over. (NOTE.—On the previous down trip the boat had to be hauled *down-stream* at this place.)
120. Kokiri.—Hauled over.
108. Otahua.—A wall was constructed here last year and is now being lengthened on the left bank, also a short wall from right bank; these are of large stones. There is a deposit of shingle scoured out of the channel at the foot of the rapid, but the first fresh will remove this. The party here have removed a large quantity of stones from the channel, both up and down stream. Hauled over.
106. Whakatara.—Hauled over.
78. Kairakau.—At this place there was an apparent drop of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in 1 chain. Hauled over; good water.
61. Paparoa (Upper).—Good water; steamed over. The captain of the steamer working this section has removed some loose papa boulders from the channel, and reports it now satisfactory.
57. Tokaa te Atu.—Estimated fall here is 3 ft. in 2 chains. Poled over.
- 39-38. Shallow, but not bad with careful navigation. Poled over.
32. Whakarae.—Hauled over. Estimated lift in 2 chains is 4 ft. Swift run, good water.
31. Manawanawa.—Boulders have been removed here, but there are still more to come out, otherwise good water.
26. Omaka.—Poled over; good water. This was one of the bugbears of the river in its early history; it is now an excellent channel.
22. Heikamutu.—Wall here wants repairs. Good water.
16. Tauteti.—This channel is now a good one. Steamed over without any trouble; good water.
14. Towhenua.—Good water; steamed and poled over. Wall on left bank wants attention. (NOTE.—A reef on the left bank generally covered is now bare, probably 2 ft.)
11. Kokirae.—Met punt here with party clearing boulders from here down-stream, having worked down from Taumarunui. Instructed Tahu Parae (foreman in charge of punt) to give all attention to the wishes of the steamer-captains till return of the foreman.
5. Turangahoru.—The wall put in here recently from the right bank has made a good channel, and the extension in height against the bank should prove effective in flood-time for preventing erosion of the river-bank, which is here composed of shingle and liable to damage. There is no doubt that had the wall not been constructed here this season the traffic could not have been carried to Taumarunui.
1. From Ngahuinga to the landing at Taumarunui it has been found necessary to put in temporary walls of scrub, &c., to confine the water, so as to be able to reach the landing.

On the return journey I left Taumarunui by the "Waireka" at 7.45 a.m. on Thursday, 23rd. There were twenty-two through passengers, ten wayside passengers, and cargo. Put in to land wayside passengers and cargo at Te Maire, Okupae, and Kokakoanui, arriving at the Houseboat 12.15 p.m. Remained at Houseboat that night, and resumed the journey to Pipiriki the following morning at 7.45 and arrived at Pipiriki 4.45 p.m., and the following day reached Wanganui at 11.50 a.m. On the return journey the water was slightly lower, showing 42 in. below Hatrick's mark at the Pipiriki gauge.

In conclusion, I may say I was exceedingly satisfied with the conditions of the river-channel, taking into consideration the fact that the water was lower than it had been previously recorded, or that it was anticipated it was ever likely to fall to.

As I have previously mentioned, large boulders in the fairway are the cause of most of the difficulties in the present low river, and strenuous efforts are being made to have as many of these removed as possible before the river rises. It is also satisfactory to note that the steamer service has been uninterrupted so far as the carriage of passengers is concerned, although only settlers' immediate requirements in the way of cargo are being carried. I noticed at several places at the different landings stacks of bales of wool awaiting shipment.

The steamer-proprietors, Messrs. Hatrick and Co., are deserving of much credit and are to be commended for the strenuous efforts they are making to continue the service under trying conditions.

It was satisfactory to observe that the stone walls all over the river have stood splendidly—indeed, I did not notice in a single instance damage or weakness in any of them. Almost the same may be said of the shingle and wire-net walls above Pipiriki, which, although not so stable as those constructed entirely of stone, are very much tighter, and are doing excellent work.

T. D. CUMMINS, Chairman.

Wanganui, 25th February, 1911.

NOTE.—I found that soundings taken on the journey were most unreliable for showing the correct depth, as the boats frequently struck or grazed over places where soundings were taken from either side of the boat showing 4 in. to 5 in. more than the boat's draught—this, no doubt, caused by the unevenness of the river-bed. I discontinued the sounding after reaching Pipiriki.—T. D. C.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation; not given; printing (1,550 copies), £2 10s.

By Authority : JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1911.

Price, 3d.