

St. George's Bay Reclamation.—This work, being the first step towards the Auckland Station-yard works, is now being put in hand for the Department by the Auckland Harbour Board.

Expenditure.—The expenditure of the Maintenance Branch for the year was as follows: Maintenance, charged to working-expenses, £738,550 = £253 per mile of railway maintained; other expenditure, charged to capital, other Government Departments, and public and private parties, £255,811: making a total of £994,361.

The cost of maintenance per mile of railway maintained is much lower than in any of the preceding three years. This is due to curtailment of expenditure on works of improvement debited to working-expenses, and to the smaller mileage relaid. The rate must be expected to increase.

Mileage.—Mileage open for traffic on the 31st March, 1915, 2,954 miles 41 chains; opened during the year, 91 miles 25 chains.

Land and Leases.—Number of leases registered during the year, 559; annual rental, £7,197. Leases current at 31st March, 1915, 4,947; annual rental, £38,185. Private-siding agreements registered during the year, 67; annual rental, £1,175. Private-siding agreements current at 31st March, 1915, 379; annual rental, £8,250. Proclamations taking or giving up land, 53. Total amount of compensation paid during the year for land, £19,696.

Staff.—Maintenance Branch working staff, 4,080 men; office staff, 137: total, 4,217.

SIGNAL AND ELECTRICAL.

Fixed Signals at Officered Stations.

During the past year thirty-five stations have been fitted with fixed semaphore signals—viz., Wellsford, Wharepapa, Matamata, Hinuera, Tirau, Arahiwi, Mamaku, Tarukenga, Awatoto, Whakatu, Mangatainoka, Mangamaire, Hukanui, Mangamahoe, Mangaroa, Pitcaithly's, Paremata, Matawai, Nelson Port, Nelson, Wakefield, Richmond, Belgrove, Kohatu, Sergeant's Hill, Dunollie, Moana, Mina, Waitaki Bridge, Hindon, Pukerangi, Waipiata, Balfour, Fairfax, and Orepuki.

Total number of officered stations (including tablet stations), 493; equipped with fixed signals, 280; interlocked, 87; unequipped, 126.

Interlocking of Points and Signals.

The electric pneumatic installation at Dunedin has worked satisfactorily during the past year.

The following places have been signalled and interlocked: Morningside, Mount Albert, service siding at 26 m. 14 ch., Henderson, Sawyer's Bay, and Ravensbourne.

The interlocking has been added to and rearranged at Parnell signal-box, Newmarket, Otahuhu, Te Kuiti, Wingatui, and Mosgiel, and alterations have been carried out at Mount Albert, Morningside, Aramoho signal-box, Thorndon, and Mosgiel signal-box.

The following sidings and flag stations have been interlocked with the tablet system: Winstone's siding; Gaol siding and Public Works Department's siding, Mount Eden; service siding near Paerata; Messrs. Joughin and Hume's siding, Waihi Branch; Hawke's Bay Farmers' Meat Company's siding, Whakatu; Messrs. William Cook and Union Timber Company's siding near Palmerston North; Terrace End local end ballast-sidings; Taonui Station; Makino Road Station; Eastown Workshops siding; Bassett's Siding, Wanganui; Awapuni Station; Manawatu Ballast-pit siding near Longburn; Makerua Station; sand and quarry sidings, Paekakariki; and Khandallah Station.

Three additional stations in the North Island and sixty-one stations in the South Island were fitted during the year with special switch locks interlocking the facing-points with home signals.

The interlocking at Waikumete, New Lynn, Avondale, Khandallah, and Lower Port Chalmers is now in hand.

Total stations now interlocked, 87; tramway crossings interlocked, 6; intermediate sidings interlocked with tablet, 43.

Expenditure for the year was—New works, £20,486 8s. 5d.; maintenance, £9,517 7s. 2d.

Block Working (Electric Tablet).

During the year fifty-four tablet instruments and forty-four miles of line have been fitted and brought into operation, embracing the following sections: Morrinsville—Thames; also, new stations have been installed as follows: Avondale Brick Company's siding, Paerata service siding, Taratahi, Mangaroa, and Heretaunga. Total mileage now equipped with tablet apparatus, 1,583½ miles, single line.

Electric tablet instruments now in use, 874, at 362 stations. Automatic tablet-exchanging apparatus has been installed at seventeen additional stations. The total now in use is 330.

Lock and Block.

The electric lock-and-block system for double-line working has worked satisfactorily. Sections, Newmarket—Parnell Tunnel, ¾ of a mile, and Abbot's Creek—Mosgiel, 3½ miles, have been brought into use.

Total mileage of line: Double line, 44 miles; single line, 2,910 miles.

Total mileage equipped with lock-and-block apparatus, 44 miles, double line.

Total mileage now equipped with tablet instruments, 1,583½ miles, single line.