

Wharves.—The wharves belonging to the Department have been maintained in good order. The wharf at Rangiriri has been renewed.

Buildings.—These have been maintained in good order. Extensive repairs, renewals, and additions have been carried out. The Marton refreshment-room depot, which was destroyed by fire, has been reinstated. The rebuilding and lengthening of the engine-shed at Clinton, destroyed by fire in the previous year, has been completed. A dwellinghouse at Albury destroyed by fire has been rebuilt.

Station-yards.—Increased siding and general accommodation have been carried out at a considerable number of stations.

Railways Improvements.—The Auckland-Mercer grade easements and station rearrangements in connection therewith have been completed. The total expenditure under the Railways Improvement Authorization Account during the year was £26,357.

Additions to Open Lines.—The expenditure under this heading during the year was £116,926, the principal works being station rearrangements at Topuni, Matamata, Whangarei (in hand), Rolleston, Aylesbury, Kirwee, Darfield, Racecourse Hill, Sheffield, Annat, Springfield, Kowai Bush, Arthur's Pass, Clyde, Longwood, Otira, Jackson, Inchbonnie, Rotomanu, Moana, Kaimata; siding alterations at Okoroire (in hand), Raetihi, Taringamotu, Okoia, Waitotara, Lambton, Thorndon, Carterton, Waltham Yard, Ealing, Staircase, Avoca, Craigieburn, Cass, Cora Lynn, Mount Somers, Oamaru, Burnside, Middlemarch, Riverton; stockyards provided at Rakautao, Okoroire (in hand), Okoia, Bushey, Gorge Road, and Kokiri; loading-banks erected at Mamaranui, Hayward's, Awatoto, Avoca, Aitchison's, Kurow, and Riverton; overhead bridge at Taumangi; new station building at Waharoa; 20-ton weighbridge installed at Taihape; latrines and urinals erected at Te Hauke; veranda to station at Plimmerton erected; goods-shed at Titiri and Sutton erected; 70 ft. engine-pit at Invercargill provided; veranda erected on wharf, Queenstown.

Miscellaneous.—Additions and improvements amounting to £3,024, and charged to working-expenses, were carried out. The works include porches provided to two cottages at Maungaturoto; additional accommodation for parcels at Frankton Junction; shelter for coalmen at Taihape erected; sheep-drafting race provided at Te Kuiti; engine turntables extended 5 ft. at New Plymouth, Hawera, and Otaki; improvements to stock-yards, Cromwell; stock-loading facilities at North Taieri; dwelling shifted from Switzers and erected at Kingston; oil-store erected at Queenstown.

Expenditure.—The expenditure for the year was as follows:—

	£
Maintenance (charged to working-expenses)	1,040,013
New works (charged to capital)	143,283
Other Government Departments, public bodies and private parties ..	41,640
Total expenditure	<u>£1,224,936</u>

The Maintenance expenditure charged to working-expenses amounted to £342 per mile, compared with £367 per mile in 1921-22, £350 per mile in 1920-21, £280 per mile in 1919-20, £252 per mile in 1918-19, £240 per mile in 1917-18, £243 per mile in 1916-17, £251 per mile in 1915-16, and £254 per mile in 1914-15.

Mileage.—The mileage open for traffic on the 31st March, 1923, was 3,036 miles 59 chains. During the year 7 miles 70 chains additional lines were opened for traffic, and 1 mile 10 chains taken up.

Land and Leases.—Number of leases registered during the year, 448; aggregate rental of same, £4,655 2s. 8d. Total number of leases current on 31st March, 1923, 6,004; aggregate rental of same, £46,482 12s. 6d. Private-siding agreements registered during year, 84; aggregate rental of same, £3,168. Total number of agreements current on 31st March, 1923, 470; aggregate rental of same, £16,585. Miscellaneous agreements entered into, 6. Total number of proclamations issued, taking or giving up land, 27. Total amount of compensation paid during year for land taken, £17,363.

Staff.—Maintenance Branch—Working staff, 3,514; office staff, 139: total, 3,653.

SIGNAL AND ELECTRICAL.

Mr. H. J. Wynne, A.M.I.C.E., Signal Engineer, reports as follows:—

Fixed Signals at Officered Stations.—Home signals have been provided at Opua and Onehunga Wharf. The total number of officered stations (including tablet stations) is 477, of which 304 are equipped with fixed signals, 101 are interlocked, and 73 unequipped. Twenty signal-repeaters have been installed during the year, making a total of 386 now in use.

Interlocking of Points and Signals.—Koputaroa Station has been equipped with interlocking and point motors electrically operated at low voltage and mechanically operated signals, the apparatus being worked from the station office. The Kauri Timber Company's tramway crossing near Thames South has been electrically interlocked with the tablet system, and is controlled from Thames South. Alterations have been made to signalling and interlocking at Westfield, Aramoho, and Christchurch. Interlocking with tablet system has been installed at the following: Service siding at 4 m. 21 ch. near Whangarei; Crichton and Company's private siding near Pokako; Waipuku Station; Whakaranga Station; The Gorge Station; Limestone Siding; Maharahara Station; Tahoraiti Station; Tamaki Siding; Piripiri Station; Whenuahou Station; Pukehou Station; top Opapa grade siding; Poukawa Station; Poukawa crossing loop siding; Longlands Station; Awatoto ballast-pit siding; Ngawapurua Station; Konini Station; Newman Station; Kopuaranga Station; Solway Station; Clareville Station; Dalefield Station; Matarawa Station; Fernside Station; Featherston ballast-pit