

In that month, however, phenomenal rainfall in the Kopuawhara and Maretaha Valleys on the Gisborne-Waikokopu section of the line caused unprecedented flooding in these streams. During the night of 19th February the single-men's quarters at No. 4 Camp, Kopuawhara, were swept away by the swiftly rising flood-waters and twenty-two valuable lives were lost. The disaster was so sudden that nothing could be done to save the lives of those lost, but many heroic efforts were made to save life, and in some instances men undoubtedly lost their own lives in trying to save others.

In addition to the loss of life, very considerable damage was done to the railway-construction works, the principal damage being to service roads giving access to the various sections of the railway. On these, bridges were swept away and whole sections of the service roads disappeared.

At the northern end of the railway at Boyds Camp, seven married-men's quarters were swept away by the rising flood-waters, but, fortunately, the camp had been awakened and only one life was lost.

The unprecedented nature of the rainfall and run-off can be gauged from the fact that the flood-waters covered ground which had not been covered by flood-waters within living memory and probably not for a century. The run-off from the drainage areas was far greater than anything that has hitherto been recorded in New Zealand, and a search of hundreds of records from all over the world fails to reveal anything of as great an intensity.

No concern had at any time been felt for the safety of the camps, and those living in them had not for a moment entertained any doubts as to their safety.

The Government has decided to treat this disastrous loss of life as though the lives had been lost by accident at work, and compensation is being arranged accordingly.

As well as the loss of life, many inmates of the camps lost all their belongings, and immediate succour was rendered to them by the Department and by means of special funds subscribed for the purpose.

The spirit displayed by all during and after the disaster was admirable, and I would like to take this opportunity of once more paying tribute to the work of the staff and men for the fine work they did in this sudden emergency.

I would also like to again express my sympathy with the relatives of those who lost their lives in such tragic circumstances.

The damage occasioned by this disaster had scarcely been remedied when another disastrous storm, of somewhat less intensity but more widespread in its effects, occurred on Anzac Day, 25th April.

Reference to this storm is made elsewhere, but its effect on the railway-construction works was very severe, and on the opened line between Napier and Putorino the damage was so great that it has completely changed the programme of operations on the section from Napier to Wairoa.

The restoration of the Napier-Putorino section, which had been badly damaged by the 1931 earthquake and left neglected for five years, was completed by my Department last year and the Railway Department has been running regular traffic over it. Last August the Railway Department, in conjunction with my Department, had inaugurated a through goods traffic to Wairoa. This goods service had been well patronized, as can be seen from figures given in the Engineer-in-Chief's report.

It was intended that the section between Putorino and Wairoa should be completed and handed over to the Railway Department in June last, but the disastrous floods of Anzac Day completely eliminated any chance of this being done. Although the damage between Putorino and Wairoa was not very great, the Napier-Putorino section, particularly in the Esk Valley, suffered very severely. Bridges were washed away, embankments scoured out, and cuttings were filled with slips. It is anticipated that it will take four to five months to restore the line to a condition suitable for traffic, so that it will probably be towards the end of the year before the line to Wairoa is opened for regular traffic.

Despite the handicaps inflicted by these disastrous floods and almost continuous wet weather, particularly in the Gisborne area, good progress is being made on the railway, and it is anticipated that construction will only be a few months behind schedule.

Tunnelling operations on the Gisborne-Waikokopu section are now in full swing, and most of the larger tunnels are now fully equipped with mechanical