

not to rouse suspicion. Notwithstanding the greatest care, however, some time elapsed before the Government could satisfy the Natives that it had no ulterior views, and that its only object, was to benefit the districts through which the mail passed. One of the Native Chiefs, Te Pohipi, taking a more enlightened view of the matter, used his influence in seconding the wishes of the Government. It was arranged eventually, in order to do away with every cause of alarm, that the necessary works should be done exclusively by the Natives of the district, and they should also have the contract for the conveyance of the mail.

Besides the direct benefit of a mail service, the opening of this road, it was hoped, would be of great advantage in two ways, first as calculated to exercise a civilising influence over the Natives, by opening up communications between their district and those parts of the country from which they had been hitherto cut off, and secondly, it was likely to become a means of transporting live stock overland, from the grazing districts of Hawke's Bay to the Auckland market.

So fully have the prejudices at first entertained by the Natives been overcome, that constant applications are now being made for a further extension of the service into native districts, and as a step in this direction, a line has been established branching off from the main Napier line, to Tarawera, Maketu, and Tauranga, which may for all practical purposes be considered as purely Native districts. Two separate contracts were taken by Natives for the performance of the service. One between Auckland and Taupo, the other between Taupo and Napier. The first was organised by one named W. Toe Toe, and the second by Te Pohipi, already mentioned. Not only did these two chiefs supervise the performance of the Mail service, but they also organised the parties employed in making the roads. Though willing to give their assistance gratuitously, it was not thought right that their exertions should be left altogether unremunerated, and a payment was accordingly made to each of £10 per annum.

The following is a detailed account of the expenses of this contract, to be performed once a fortnight :—

	£
Carriage of Mails between Auckland and Maungatawhiri	26 per annum.
Maungatawhiri and Otawhao	39
Otawhao and Taupo	78
Gratuity to Toe Toe	10
	—153
Taupo and Napier	78
Gratuity to Te Pohipi	10
	— 88
Total cost of contract per annum	£241

To this, however, must be added the expenses of the carriers, who have an allowance at the rate of 1s. per diem, for rations, while waiting for the return Mails, either at Auckland or Napier, and which would raise the cost to about £250 per annum.

The original contract time for the performance of the whole distance was 11 days, divided as follows :—

Between Auckland and Maungatawhiri	1 day.
“ Maungatawhiri and Otawhao	3 “
“ Otawhao and Taupo	3 “
“ Taupo and Napier	4 “
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Total	11 days.

A considerable increase of speed, however, has since then been effected, and it is not unlikely that in a short time, when further improvements in the road have been made, that the Mails will be carried within the week.

The expenses already incurred in opening the road amount to the sum of £600: a further outlay of £200 will probably do all that is required.

A whole day would be gained if the road along the Waikato were improved so as to afford a good horse track. At present the Mail is carried in a canoe up that river. This mode of transport is unsatisfactory, both because it depends for punctuality on the state of the weather, and also because some danger is incurred of damage to the Mail itself. It has already twice happened that the canoe has been upset, and the mail bags saturated with wet. The existence of a Native Tapu on the road has hitherto made it impossible to substitute land carriage for water carriage; but this difficulty will, it is hoped, be shortly overcome.

In connection with the main line between Napier and Auckland, it will be necessary to notice the lines which branch off from it.

Towards the beginning of the year, a memorial was received from some settlers residing in the Bay of Plenty, setting forth the inconvenience to which they were subjected from the want of any regular communication with Auckland. They stated that though a large amount of business was transacted by them with merchants of that city, yet, that frequently three months, and even a longer time, elapsed before advices could be received or letters answered, so that in cases where speedy communication with the chief Town of the Province was important, the only certain mode of communicating was by an express messenger at a very great expense. A second memorial was soon after received signed by 188 natives, residing chiefly at Matata, requesting that “that great treasure,” the mail, might be established in their district, urging as a reason that they were so cut off from direct communication