

am now of an opinion that this road might be again reopened so as to be available for tourist traffic on to Lake Tarawera. My reason for thinking so is, that a portion of the road made two years ago beyond Pareheru is standing the weather well, and the volcanic mud is about the same depth. The three bridges on Waiotapu Road have been repainted; also three culverts, two of them 18in. by 21in., average length 36ft. each, and the other one 18in. by 21in., and 48ft. long. Maintenance-labour is employed when required.

Huka Falls to Puketaratarata.—With the exception of the repairs to Huka Falls Bridge, which required new suspension wire ropes throughout, the principal expenditure has been on that portion of road lately taken along the old track to Wairakei from Rotorua Road. About 3 miles have been improved into a safe cart-road, and will prove a great boon to the travelling public, as the grades are now within the limit. Ordinary maintenance as required has been done from time to time.

JOHN C. BLYTHE, Road Surveyor.

REPORT ON ROADS TO MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

THESE roads are situated partly in the basin of the Wanganui River and partly in that of the Rangitikei River, and are chiefly intended to act as feeders to main trunk line from Marton to Te Awamutu; but, besides their prospective connection with this railway, they are designed to open through communication between the low-lying lands of the West Coast and the high open country, of which a great part of the interior of the North Island is composed. They all, with one exception, traverse heavy bush country for most of their length, and the land through which they pass is still chiefly in the hands of the Natives; nevertheless, a large portion of the lands adjacent to the Ohakune-Pipiriki Road already belongs to the Government, as, for instance, the Atuahae Block, the Rangatana and the Waimarino Blocks, and the Awarua Block, through which the Hunterville-Turangarere Road passes, are now being dealt with by the Native Land Court.

1. *The Wanganui-Murimotu Road (Field's Track)*, sixty-four miles in length, establishes communication between Wanganui and Karioi on the Murimotu Plains. About 24 miles are already of dray-road size, the remainder being a good 6ft. bridle-track. The route lies alongside the banks of the Wanganui for 6 miles, then up a tributary of the same river for 10 miles, then up the valley of the Mangawhero River for about 18 miles to Parapara. Here the track leaves the Mangawhero River, climbs a succession of broken spurs between the Mangawhero and Wangaehu Rivers, finally getting on to the Karioi Flats, at 54 miles from Wanganui. The altitude above sea-level increases from about 20ft. at Wanganui to 2,200ft. at Karioi. If this route be converted into a dray-road, several important deviations will have to be made, or at least tried, chiefly one about 2 miles long, to avoid a bad elbow, and unnecessary ascent at Otuku (28in.), and another—a total deviation—leaving the present track at Parapara, and continuing up the valley of the Mangawhero till a junction is effected with the Ohakune-Pipiriki Road. For the most part this latter deviation would lie over flat lands. There would be no long ascents and descents on ground of an unstable nature, as on the present track, though a certain amount of bad sideling is likely to be encountered. The country passed through is of a much more valuable description. Another item worthy of consideration is that there is more chance of finding suitable metal on this proposed line than on the present one. A considerable extent of the present track lies along steep sidelings of slippery papa. A road in such places is difficult to make and worse to maintain.

Most of the track is already felled and grassed 3 chains wide. On the whole, Field's Track is by far the best travelling-track between the West Coast and Murimotu. There are several gullies at about 24m. which urgently require improvement. I had the honour of reporting upon them last March. There have been two or three men permanently engaged in keeping the track clear from slips, trees, &c., repairing culverts, &c. During the year, besides maintenance, the road party have constructed thirty-eight new culverts, 10 chains new water-tables, 15 chains catch-water drains, besides building a new whare about 3 miles to the south of Parapara. Mr. F. Pemberton, the overseer, has been most energetic in keeping the track in good repair. The total expenditure for the year ending 30th June is £338 0s. 4d. The returns of traffic for the same period are: Travellers on horseback, 2,779; pack-horses, 1,205; sheep, 2,979; cattle, 67; pigs, 75.

2. *Kuripapanga-Karioi Road.*—This road establishes dray communication between Napier and Karioi, on the Murimotu Plains. It lies almost entirely through open country of high altitude. Starting from Kuripapanga the Ngaruroro River is crossed by a good truss bridge; then by long ascents and descents of grades up to 1 in 8, till the Taruarau River is crossed by a ford at 9m. Then a very long rise of about 2,000ft. on to the Ohauko Flats, which extend for about 8 miles, when the descent to the Rangitikei River commences, the ford being at 24m.; then a long ascent of 1,500ft. on to the table-land, on which Birch's station is situated; then down to the Moawhango River at 39m. (altitude 1,400ft.). This road has already been passable for horse-drays for about two years. From Moawhango the new road to Karioi has been constructed during the past year. Contracts for a 14ft. dray-road with culverts, &c., extending over 22 miles (in which, however, there were only 12 miles of actual formation), were let, and completed at a total cost of £1,649 3s. 11d. The parts intervening between these contracts were either repaired, formed, tussocked, or improved, as was required, by day-labour. The new road follows up a tributary of the Moawhango for 7 miles, when the basin of the Hautapu is reached, along which the road continues for 12 miles; the Waitangi Valley is then followed down till the Wangaehu is crossed at 3 miles from Karioi. During last summer a weekly coach ran as far as Moawhango, and next summer it will be able to extend its journey to Karioi at least, if not to Tokoaanu. The Waipawa County Council maintains the road as far as the Rangitikei River; thence to Moawhango Mr. Birch has attended to the most necessary repairs out of his own rates. From Moawhango to Karioi (29 miles) the maintenance and repairs have been attended to by the day-party under Mr. C. Field, at a cost of