

One of the eel-pas, which hindered navigation, was taken out of the channel at Kauaeroa Rapid on the 4th January, 1896, the Natives consenting to this removal. The visit of the Premier to Pipiriki in November had a favourable influence on the Natives towards consenting to the removal of these obstructions in general.

The training-wall at Haumoana Rapid is 620ft. long, and contains about 750 cubic yards of stone. This wall starts from the right bank of the river, leaving there a small passage for canoes. It throws the water over to the steamer channel near the left bank, and improves a rapid which had always been a difficulty to the steamers.

A training-wall at Motoa Rapid has also been put in. This is at the lower end of the island, and guides and deepens the water in the steamer-channel, which here lies near the right bank of the river. This wall is 310ft. long and about 12ft. wide at bottom, the upper end of the wall being sunk into the shingle-bank. There are about 600 cubic yards of stone in this wall.

Te Puha Rapid, between Hiruharama and Pipiriki, was always a dangerous place for steamers coming down, when the river is low, owing to the numerous large boulders and stones which were along and across the channel, and several times the steamers have been seriously damaged by striking on these. This rapid has been cleared of these boulders and stones in the channel, and a large number of snags imbedded in the shingle at bottom of channel removed. This involved a good deal of blasting and dredging for the broken up and smaller stones, and, consequently, took a considerable time. It was a work that could only be done in very low river, and the month of March gave this opportunity.

The low water of March was also taken advantage of to remove a number of snags and do other work at the channels in the lower part of the river, especially at Tupapa and Te Ahi-nei-nei Rapids, below Parikino, and at Whakarua-waka and Oakura Rapids, a short way higher up the river.

The regular Tuesday weekly trips of steamer were kept up, except for three consecutive trips when the river was exceptionally low, and the navigable channels narrowed in consequence. This was between the 10th and 25th March, 1896. On these occasions the steamer remained in the vicinity of Parikino, and canoes were sent on with passengers and mails, meeting return canoes sent down from Pipiriki. Numerous other trips, generally on Fridays, were run by the steamers to Pipiriki during the year as occasion arose.

During the low river a depth of not less 2ft. continued in the cleared channels, but the widening of several of these channels, which get narrower in low river, and further guiding-walls to direct water into channels at several places, are objects to be kept in view, and carried out when low river permits of such work being done.

The necessity for an additional punt is obvious, so as to take advantage of the comparatively short period of the low-river season; and steps have been taken to have another punt got ready for next season.

Above Pipiriki the importance of opening the river for steamers as far as the Manganui-teao, and prospectively further up as far as the Tangarakau junction, was considered by the Trust, and an amount of £250 was appropriated by the Trust for work as far as the Manganui-teao, with a view of improving the rapids so far as to admit of navigation when the river was somewhat above the summer level, as it was obvious that this small sum could not do more. This would, it was expected, admit of frequent trips being made when the river was not too low, and the work of improving further would be considered at a future time. A contract for the amount of £180 was let for a portion of this work.

The Natives interfered with the contractor on his commencing work at Te-au-te-mutu Rapid, and two of the Police Force again went up, and the obstruction practically ceased after a short time. The thanks of the Trust are due to the officer in charge of the police at Wanganui for his prompt aid in this matter. These obstructions, however, cause loss of valuable time at a period when the river is favourable for work. It has always been the desire of the Trust in carrying out necessary works to avoid, as far as is consistent with the prosecution of works to improve the navigation, any action that might seem likely to create prejudice against the works among the Natives, and also to consider their interests as far as possible.

The contractor has had to discontinue work owing to the river rising, and this work cannot be completed till next season. This contract dealt with the works on the following rapids: Upper Ngapora Rapid, a small rapid below that rapid, Mangaea Rapid, Ruahinetoro Rapid, Haratira Rapid, Te-au-tapu Rapid, and Te-au-te-mutu Rapid.

The necessary work on the large rapid called Paparua, just above Pipiriki, will be undertaken by the Trust's working party when the season permits.

There will also be some moderate work required, principally in snagging, between the Manganui-teao and the Tongarakau junction.

A special survey of the river from Kanihinihi upwards, for which the Government Survey Department allowed the services of an experienced surveyor, Mr. H. J. Lewis, while the River Trust met the expenditure for labour on survey, has been in progress during the season. It was intended to have carried this on to Pipiriki, and, if possible, seven miles further to the Manganui-teao, but the rising of the river has compelled the work to be discontinued for the season before reaching these points. The frequent rises of the river during the late season have much delayed the progress of this work. The survey is complete with sections and levels as far as Kawana (a short way below Banana), and a distance of about twenty-nine miles above Kanihinihi, leaving about ten miles to complete to Pipiriki, besides the further distance to the Manganui-teao. Kanihinihi is about seventeen miles above Wanganui, and the tidal influence is felt here and some distance above it. This work will show a detailed map of the river with longitudinal and cross sections, showing the slopes and depths and features of the river, and the various rapids in more detail. It will be advisable to have this survey completed to Pipiriki next season, and also to carry it on to the junction of the River Manganui-teao, as several important rapids occur in the seven miles between Pipiriki and that point. Mr. Lewis now proceeds with the mapping of the survey work.