

The Stratford-Okahukura Railway, connecting the Taranaki with the Main Trunk district, was completed during the year. Although the newer sections of the line are still operated by the Public Works Department, goods-trains are being run and are carrying mails. This route, when it is taken over by the Railway Department, will provide a very convenient mail-service connection between the Auckland and Taranaki Provinces.

For a few days at the end of April and the beginning of May heavy rain interrupted the Napier-Gisborne and Napier-Taupo services and a number of minor services in the vicinity.

In August severe floods in the Wairarapa district interfered for short periods with a number of services.

A severe earthquake on the 16th September caused slips on the roads and interrupted the Wairoa-Ruakituri and Gisborne-Tiniroto mail-services. For some weeks the latter service was undertaken with difficulty.

In January heavy floods in the Blenheim, Nelson, and West Coast districts caused minor suspensions of services, but no appreciable delay to mails was occasioned.

Following torrential rain on the night of the 21st March, train services on the Main Trunk Railway in the vicinity of Taumarunui were disorganized to such an extent that a week elapsed before normal running was resumed. The main line was affected for a distance of approximately twenty-three miles between Okahukura and Owango, and, in addition, extensive damage was occasioned to the Okahukura-Stratford Railway between Okahukura and Matiere, in the Ohura district. Roads in this district and, consequently, mail-services were also seriously affected. During the period of the interruption of the Main Trunk line a reduced train service was provided by the Railway Department, normal running not being resumed until the 28th March. The blockage of road and rail was so effective that in the first few days the Department was able to arrange for the transshipment of few mails apart from letter mails. On the 25th March, however, the position had improved to the extent that it was possible from then on to transfer all mails over the damaged portion of the line. To dispose of the early accumulation of second-class mail-matter and parcels it was necessary to effect despatches of mail by sea. Despatches to Auckland were made on the 24th March from Wellington by the "Waipiata" and from Napier by the "Waimea"; while a despatch from Wanganui to Onehunga was made by the "Hauturu" on the 25th March. In the opposite direction, a despatch from Auckland to Wellington by the "New Zealand" was made on the 24th March. Notwithstanding the long hours and trying conditions, excellent service was rendered by the officers responsible for the transferring of the mails, transfers which were effected expeditiously and without delay to trains. Officers in other branches also rose to the emergency in coping expeditiously with the appreciably increased volume of work. Fortunately, telegraph and telephonic communication was not interfered with. It was not until the 23rd March that communication was re-established with the Ohura district, mails being sent by road (instead of by rail as usual) and then the mails had to be transferred by cable and cage across the Otunui Stream, on the Wanganui River Road. In this way the mails reached Ohura in two stages, and from there were forwarded to adjacent offices not served *en route*. From the 30th March it was possible to arrange an improved daily road service Taumarunui-Ohura via Ongarue; and this service continued until the resumption of the branch line train service on the 8th May following. The floods were responsible also for the interruption of three rural deliveries operating from Taumarunui, bridges being swept away in a number of cases.

OVERSEAS MAILS.

The contracts for the Vancouver and San Francisco ocean mail-services were renewed from the 1st April for a further term of twelve months at the existing subsidies. From the 1st April, 1933, the services are to be further renewed for an indefinite period, subject to three months' notice of termination by either of the contracting parties. The services were regularly performed over the whole year, the average times of transmission of mails being as follow:—

Auckland to London via Vancouver	..	..	..	31.3 days.
London to Auckland via Vancouver	..	..	..	31.16 days.
Wellington to London via San Francisco	..	..	..	29.08 days.
London to Wellington via San Francisco	..	..	..	32.46 days.

The Vancouver service was maintained by the "Niagara" and the "Aorangi." On the San Francisco route the "Makura" and the "Monowai" were the contract steamers at the commencement of the year. The "Monowai" was withdrawn from the service in November and transferred to the trans-Tasman service, being replaced on the San Francisco run by the "Maunganui."

In May and June the Matson steamers "Sonoma," "Ventura," and "Sierra," engaged in the San Francisco-Auckland-Sydney trade, were withdrawn and replaced by the steamers "Mariposa" and "Monterey," the service being altered in frequency from once every three weeks to once every four weeks and extended to Melbourne. On the 1st December the "Monowai" (Union Steamship Co.) took up summer running in the trans-Tasman service, while on the 20th January the "Wanganella" (a new Huddart Parker steamer replacing the "Zealandia," which vessel some months previously had replaced the "Ulimaroa") commenced in the same service, each of these vessels also making a monthly extension of the service to Melbourne, the "Monowai" from Auckland and the "Wanganella" from Wellington.

The advent in the trans-Tasman service of faster steamers has resulted in a reduction on occasions to three days in the time taken in the transit of mails between the two countries.