

as left by the February freshets. More than nine-tenths of the work are now completed, and have cost £2,455 2s. 8d., the estimate for the whole being £2,700.

ROADS IN NELSON SOUTH-WEST GOLD FIELDS.

(A. D. DOBSON, Provincial Engineer, in charge.)

The object of the works undertaken in this district is to connect the Valleys of the Buller and the Grey with a main trunk line of road laid out in such a way as to serve the principal centres of population, and utilizing and improving what had already been done in this direction. Commencing at the north end at the junction of the Inangahua River with the Buller, it proceeds up the valley of Inangahua and over the intervening saddle or watershed line into that of the Little Grey, passing Reefton (which is situated on or near the watershed) on the way, thence down the Little Grey Valley, and crossing the Grey near the junction of the latter, proceeds across the intervening flat land to the Ahaura township, situated a short distance up the river of that name. The road joins the rivers Buller and Grey at points to which supplies of all kinds can be brought up those rivers by means of cargo-boats built expressly for the trade.

For convenience of description the work will be divided into sections, viz., the Inangahua Road, reaching from the Buller to Reefton—and the Grey Road, from Reefton to the Ahaura.

Inangahua Road.—Section 1, from Buller to the ferry crossing the Inangahua, five and a half miles, of which three miles thirty chains are under construction in four contracts, but progressing slowly on account of the difficulty of getting an outfall for the water of a swamp through which the road must run. Sections 2, 3, and 4 are progressing favourably, and the work is well done. The cost of the work under contract will be £2,602, or about £600 per mile; in addition some heavy cuttings to the river banks and a short bridge will be required, costing probably £600 more.

Section 2: Six and a half miles, in six contracts, £3,600. The work on this has been much delayed by bad weather and other unavoidable causes. The main part of the work is done, but the metalling over two swamps will occupy a considerable time, on account of the distance of haulage.

Section 3: Three and a half miles, in four contracts, £2,880. This work is nearly completed, and the contractors are pushing it on vigorously.

Section 4: About four miles—from Waituhu to Reefton—in four contracts, £2,880. The work on this will commence at once, the contracts having been just let.

Reefton to Grey.—Section 1: Seven miles—Reefton to Plain near Mai Mai. This is being executed by day labour (about 200 men), the contractor having entirely failed to carry out his contract. The work will be pushed forward as rapidly as possible.

Section 2 lies entirely through open ground; and although the road will eventually require to be formed and metalled, drays can work at present on the natural surface of the ground.

Section 3: Along this, the river bed and part of an old track is used by the drays, but the road must be formed as soon as possible, particularly through about five miles of bush, swampy in part. Probable cost of this section, £3,000.

Section 4: This includes the improvement of the existing road between the Little Grey junction and the Ahaura, and its cost was estimated at schedule prices at £1,170. The work required was the levelling of the steep gradients; the forming and metalling of that part between Lardi's and McNiel's, and thence to the Little Grey.

The amount above named will be increased by about £500 by reason of a greater amount of traffic being thrown on to the road, consequent on the completion of some cuttings by the Provincial Government. The goods are now landed at the Ahaura instead of Totara Flat, and will be carted over the road in question. This will necessitate the metalling of many parts not before provided for.

The cost of all the roads in this district will be, it is feared, thought high; but this follows naturally on the execution of so much work being required in a limited time, coupled with the unfavourable nature of the season.

It is estimated that to complete the road for through traffic the following works will be required:—

	£	s.	d.
Grey Road, section 3, estimate	3,000	0	0
Cutting at Sandstone Bluff, Inangahua	300	0	0
Punt, &c.	250	0	0
Side-cuttings near Inangahua Junction	500	0	0
	<u>£4,050</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

Tenders were called for the construction of the punt required at the crossing of the Inangahua; but only one was received, and, being too high, was declined. It is hoped, however, that satisfactory arrangements will be made shortly for the establishment of this ferry, as an eligible offer has since been received. Some difficulty will be experienced in getting good approaches, with reasonable gradients, to the punt-crossing; and the cuttings, it is expected, will be heavy.

Summary.—The cost of the works in progress may be stated approximately as follows, viz.:—

	£	s.	d.
Contracts in progress	13,632	15	0
Day-labour and piecework	5,320	0	0
Paid to surveyors, overseer, labourers, &c.	358	3	0
	<u>£19,310</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>0</u>
Estimate of remaining works	4,050	0	0
	<u>£23,360</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>0</u>