

The formation, bridges, and station buildings on the section between the Hurunui River and the crossing of the main road near the Red Post is in progress. This will bring the railway to a central position, 69 miles from Christchurch, commanding the traffic of the Amuri and Hanmer Plains.

THE ASHBURTON BRANCH RAILWAY has been finished and opened to a point opposite Mount Somers Township, 21 miles from the point where it leaves the main line, and 23 miles from Ashburton.

THE LITTLE RIVER BRANCH has been opened for some time to Birdling's Flat, a point about 30 miles from Christchurch. Beyond this point the formation is finished for a distance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and another section of 1 mile is in progress under contract. In addition to this, also, a further short length of formation has been undertaken by day labour to give work to the unemployed in Christchurch.

THE ALBURY BRANCH RAILWAY has been completed and opened for traffic to Fairlie Creek, namely, to a point 36 miles from where it leaves the main line, and 39 miles from Timaru.

OXFORD-MALVERN.—This section, which connects the Malvern Coal Field with North Canterbury, has been finished.

#### WAITAKI-BLUFF AND BRANCHES RAILWAY.

On the HERIOTBURN BRANCH LINE a further extension from Kelso to Heriot has been opened, thus completing a total length of 20 miles from Waipahi, on the main line.

On the LIVINGSTONE BRANCH the formation works, with the exception of the tunnels, have been completed for some years, and during last year a further portion of the tunnelling has been in progress.

Of the PALMERSTON BRANCH a length of about 2 miles is completed for traffic, but is at present only used for bringing ballast to the main line. The remaining 8 miles, to Waihemo, is ready for platelaying.

Of the CATLIN'S RIVER BRANCH, between the main line and the Port Molyneux Road, distance in all about 8 miles, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles is formed ready for platelaying, leaving about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles still to be formed.

On the EDENDALE-TOITOIS BRANCH, a distance of 4 miles, from Edendale to Wyndham, has been opened for traffic for some time, and a further distance of about 4 miles is ready for platelaying.

On the WAIMEA-SWITZERS BRANCH the formation is partly completed for a distance of about 7 miles from Riversdale.

On the SEAWARD BUSH BRANCH the formation is completed for a length of about 3 miles, and a further length of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles is in progress.

#### OTAGO CENTRAL RAILWAY.

OTAGO CENTRAL.—The works in progress on this line extend over a distance of 32 miles. The formation of the Wingatui section is finished ready for the rails, and a small quantity of work was done on the Hindon section during the early part of the year by the unemployed.

The Deep Stream contract, let in February, 1882, was abandoned by the contractors shortly afterwards, and the works have not yet been resumed.

The formation of the Nenthorn section, which is the last of the rough country, is progressing rapidly.

In connection with this Otago Central Railway, I am of opinion that a great mistake has been made in not forcing on the construction of the first portions of the line, especially the Wingatui Viaduct, so that the materials for the Deep Stream and Nenthorn sections could be taken up by rail, instead of being carted so far by road, which must materially increase the cost of construction. The Wingatui Viaduct will take fully two years to complete, and until it is completed it will be a great bar to the progress of the works higher up the line.