

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

ANNUAL REPORT ON WORKING RAILWAYS.

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson, with leave of the House, and ordered to be printed.

The GENERAL MANAGER, New Zealand Railways, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.
SIR,—

I have the honour to report upon the opened railways for the financial year ending the 31st March, 1888.

At the end of the year there were 1,758 miles of line open, against 1,727 miles in the previous year.

Interest at the rate of £2 6s. per cent. has been earned on the cost of the opened lines, which is the same as for the previous year.

The expenditure has been reduced to £687,328, being nearly £3,000 lower than it was four years ago, and nearly £12,000 lower than in the previous year. Very stringent economy has been exercised to effect this, as there are nearly 300 miles more railway than in 1885. The means which have operated to allow of this economy have been chiefly the work of previous years—improved appliances introduced, saving labour in the shops; better engines introduced to take heavier loads, effecting savings of labour thereby; improvements in the roads due to better rails, sleepers, drainage, and a more permanent condition of the bridges gradually effected under maintenance; improvements in the locomotives, leading to diminished consumption of fuel; and finally the close head-office scrutiny exercised, and the intelligent and close application of the local officers.

On the average we are able to work with nearly 200 less hands than was the case in 1884–85.

It is to be regretted that the traffic has remained practically stationary since last year: this is largely due to a late harvest, and to grain being held for more favourable sea-freights. While the tonnage is slightly lower the traffic work done is slightly greater than in the former year, the average distance traffic has been carried being greater. The wool traffic shows a moderate increase. The fact that the live-stock traffic has not much increased is probably due to the fact that the export of mutton has curtailed the increase of flocks.

The nett revenue has slightly increased. The gross revenue is lower than in the previous year. It is £50,000 below that of four years ago: this is mainly due to the numerous and large reductions which have been made in rates and charges during the past five years, the effect of which in reducing the revenue has doubtless been generally anticipated. It is to be borne in mind that the changes have nearly all been in favour of local products, so that producers have been benefitted.

Return 31 shows the alterations in rates made during the year.

Following are the comparisons of traffic revenue and expenses for the past nine years:—

Year.	Miles.	Revenue.	Expenditure.	Tonnage.	Parcels, &c.	Cattle, Sheep, &c.	Passengers.	Season-tickets.
		£	£		No.	No.	No.	No.
79-80	1,172	762,573	580,030	1,108,108	180,331	285,209	2,967,090	5,077
80-81	1,277	836,454	521,957	1,377,783	286,865	300,704	2,849,561	6,499
81-82	1,319	892,026	523,099	1,437,714	316,611	343,751	2,911,477	7,207
82-83	1,358	953,347	592,821	1,564,793	341,186	477,075	3,283,378	8,621
83-84	1,396	961,304	655,990	1,700,040	359,896	686,287	3,272,644	9,036
84-85	1,477	1,045,712	690,026	1,749,856	347,425	729,528	3,232,886	8,999
85-86	1,613	1,047,419	690,340	1,823,767	349,428	858,662	3,362,266	10,717
86-87	1,727	998,768	699,072	1,747,754	372,397	942,017	3,426,403	11,821
87-88	1,758	994,843	687,328	1,735,762	399,109	940,209	3,451,850	11,518

and also of the traffic in local products during a similar period:—

		Wool.	Timber.	Grain.	Minerals.	Horses and Cattle.	Sheep and Pigs.
		Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	No.	No.
1879-80	...	41,895	149,428	240,144	321,060	30,393	260,816
1880-81	...	42,387	169,695	421,142	406,266	27,230	280,683
1881-82	...	44,681	192,905	375,725	433,659	32,511	319,837
1882-83	...	51,703	197,231	367,428	510,088	37,455	449,470
1883-84	...	62,066	183,449	432,223	574,312	39,230	656,612
1884-85	...	68,523	178,909	414,590	618,512	43,096	696,790
1885-86	...	74,778	202,572	413,847	669,081	46,152	822,028
1886-87	...	82,963	175,581	345,254	719,579	46,600	904,582
1887-88	...	84,147	158,024	358,021	700,140	42,067	907,443