

The reports of the Chief Surveyors and road surveyors attached hereto describe in detail the many works which the department has had in hand during the year; but the following summary will show at a glance their extent:—

Roads graded, not included in the items below	...	...	202 miles.
Dray-roads formed	...	...	151 "
Bridle-roads formed	...	...	27 "
Dray-roads improved	...	...	52 "
Bridle-roads improved	...	...	20 "
Dray-roads maintained	...	...	851 "
Bridle-roads maintained	...	...	241 "
Number of bridges constructed	...	...	34

The maintenance of several important main roads of the colony now falls within the duty of the department. These are generally situated in the more sparsely-populated parts, and where little or no money is derived from rates by the local bodies; hence the necessity for the colony continuing the charge, or otherwise these important roads would fall into complete disrepair. The following are the principal roads maintained: Oxford to Rotorua, Rotorua to the Tauranga County boundary, Rotorua to Maketu, Rotorua to Waiotapu, Rotorua to Taupo, Taupo to Pohue on the Napier Road, Maungaiti to Taupo, Taupo to Tokaanu, Tokaanu to Okahukura, Mokau to Taumarunui (partial maintenance), Pipiriki to Ohakune (part now under construction), Ohakune to Karioi, Karioi to Moa-whango, Karioi *via* Field's Track to Mason's, Turangarere to Makohine, 8 miles from Hunterville (partly under construction); Kowhai (near Springfield, Canterbury), *via* the Bealy and Otira Gorge, to within a few miles of Kumara; the Haast Pass bridle-road, and the Catlin's-Waikawa road (partly under construction), besides furnishing subsidies to the Buller, Grey, and Westland Counties for maintenance of parts of the main road from Nelson to Hokitika and Westport. The above are the principal maintenance works in hand, but repairs have been made and assistance rendered to local bodies in numerous other parts. Mr. G. T. Murray has supervised the snagging of about 40 miles of the Wanganui River, besides looking after the numerous contracts, and the unemployed within his district. Considerable advance has been made in the construction of the Hunterville-Turangarere Road, which will shortly be open for traffic. Beyond that, a length of 13 miles of easy country remains to be completed to connect Hunterville with Tokaanu and the Auckland roads. When finished, a new route from Wellington to Auckland will be open to the public, which passes through some of the finest scenery of the North Island; and it will add another to the attractions for the tourist, and make the central mountains of Ruapehu and Tongariro easily accessible.

The so-called "Stratford route" has been considerably advanced during the year, and on the completion of the contracts in hand a dray can be taken from Stratford northwards a distance of 21 miles. The survey for the extension of this work has been in hand some time, under Mr. G. Robinson, who has the immediate supervision of all roadworks in Taranaki. The survey from the northern end is also in progress, under Mr. C. W. Hursthouse. It will take a long time before the two survey parties meet, as the work in such an inaccessible district is necessarily slow. The completion of this road will form a much-wanted means of overland communication between Auckland and Taranaki, and it will, moreover, lead to a very considerable extension of settlement for which much of the county is suitable in some form or other.

Considerable progress has also been made with the Pipiriki-Ohakune Road, under Mr. G. T. Murray's supervision, the works having been done partly by contract and partly by the "unemployed" in small contracts. The country is difficult and expensive to form roads in, but its completion will open up a considerable area of land lately disposed of to special-settlement associations, and to the public generally; and, moreover, will allow of a coach being taken from Napier to Pipiriki, on the Wanganui River, where steam-communication connects it with the Town of Wanganui. Were the means available this road should be continued right through the Crown lands into the Stratford route, and thereby open up for settlement a considerable extent of Crown lands of fair quality which at present is unapproachable by the settler.

Another main line of road—that from Mokau Railway-station to Taumarunui, at the head of canoe navigation on the Wanganui River—has also advanced towards completion under Mr. C. W. Hursthouse's direction, and the traveller can now pass between those places and avoid some of the exceedingly steep hills on the old Native track. The portion between Mokau Station and the tunnel, however, remains untouched, for the reason that the railway is being extended over that part. Much remains yet to be done before a good driving-road is secured. It is from this road that the Stratford route branches, at about twelve miles from the tunnel.

Outside the numerous works under the direct charge of the department, all the works proposed by the local authorities to whom "thirds" of deferred payments and perpetual-lease rents are payable have first to be approved by the Chief Surveyors and Land Boards. This in itself is no slight work, from the scattered nature of the holdings which are to be benefited by the expenditure.

The ensuing season will see extended operations in connection with the expenditure of sums borrowed and to be borrowed under "The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act Amendment Act, 1891." The sums which have already been applied for to the Treasury are shown in the following copy of report, but the expenditure in all cases has not, from various causes, commenced at the close of the financial year.