

Christchurch-Hokitika Road.—The portion of this road which lies between the Kowai River crossing, three miles from Springfield, and Arthur's Pass Saddle, comprising a length of about fifty-two miles, was under the supervision of Mr. Frederick Wither, Resident Engineer, till the end of January last. Mr. Wither's report thereon is as follows: "On the road from the Kowai River, three miles from Springfield, to the top of Arthur's Pass there has been the ordinary maintenance. In the Bealey Valley, where a new piece of road is being constructed, one section, about two miles in length, was completed last December, and opened for traffic. Part of it had been constructed previous to the 1st July, 1891, but when the road was nearly finished the whole section had to be gone over. Altogether, about a mile and a quarter of this section was done between the 1st July and the 31st December, 1891. This section is between 47 miles and 49 miles. The other section is between 49 miles 20 chains and 50 miles 20 chains, and this is not yet open for traffic. About three-quarters of a mile was completed, and the rest, including a bridge, which I estimated to cost £318, is unfinished. The bridge is not begun, and about 8 or 10 chains at the start is not begun either. No doubt the heavy rains during this month have done some damage to this section, and a little more work will in consequence be necessary before the road is opened for traffic."

The cost of maintenance for the nine months, including £820 7s. 10d. spent under Mr. Wither's directions, was £1,067 0s. 9d.; and upon construction of new road in the Bealey Valley the same officer expended £4,101 7s. 8d., as stated in the report quoted above. I have inspected the road on two occasions, and have already reported to you thereon. I have now to state that the large bridge in the valley, which is said to have been built as far back as 1876, slightly repaired at various times, and redecked in 1888, requires overhauling. Mr. Wither had the bridge examined in September, 1891, when it was reported that the bridge required repair and renewals; and he recommended in April, 1891, that £500 should be expended on the bridge. There are no other bridges on the road worthy of mention. The road has suffered more from the action of water and frost than from the traffic, and, as long straight grades are common, the road has become lower than the sides, making it difficult now to prevent scouring action. As a consequence of this, long lengths of the road require remetalling. I have had an examination made, which shows that at least £500 will be required during the year for this class of work. The road near the Kowai has become enclosed by gorse and broom, which should be burned by the adjacent landowners.

During the months of February and March the rainfall was excessive, and there were heavy floods in the rivers, which caused much damage and extra cost, the traffic being blocked on two occasions by floods and slips. Eight men and an overseer have been constantly employed on the fifty-two miles. The number is not sufficient to save the road from serious damage and to maintain it properly; but the former Inspector had no power, I understand, to increase the number.

The unfinished portion of the road in the Bealey, between 49 miles 20 chains and 50 miles 20 chains, mentioned by Mr. Wither, and which he estimates will cost about £760 (instead of £600, quoted in my estimates) to finish, would save two crossings of the river; nevertheless, it appears to me more urgently necessary to attend to the large bridge, remetalling where most needed, and to rebuild and strengthen retaining-walls.

Proposals.—For particulars of new works and road-maintenance during the current year, please refer to my memorandum of the 3rd May, and schedule of items and amounts. I have not included any proposals for Mount Cook or other tourists' resorts, for the reason that you have full reports on the subject, and are alive to their importance. If any money is available, we should reopen the old track from the Bealey to the Waimakariri Glaciers.

MOUNT COOK TO THE GLACIERS ROAD.

Mr. Young, Overseer, reports,—

The construction of the track up the Hooker to the point where Mr. Huddleston expects to have a hut erected, and where the snow prevented us going further, has been continued.

During the last fortnight the party was engaged repairing the landing and track round the bluff where the cage crosses the Hooker to the Tasman Valley Track. Owing to the numerous land-slips the work was very dangerous, the track being quite impassable. The obstacles complained of so much by Mr. Huddleston no longer exist, and I think the season's work may be considered satisfactory. The cutting gives easy access to all the grandeur of the Hooker Glacier, St. David's Dome, and Mount Cook. Previously only those who were physically strong could attempt the ascent, but now it is available for every one, and the time saved through travelling by the cutting is six hours.

The Blue Streams up the Tasman Valley have been bridged, and a handrail placed over the Suspension Bridge.

J. W. A. MARCHANT, Chief Surveyor.

OTAGO.

Pomahaka Bridge (subsidy, £1 for £1).—This bridge was completed some months ago, and is a very substantial work. The piers are of concrete, with a timber superstructure. There are four spans—two of 30ft., one of 42ft., and one of 25ft. Erected by the Clutha County.

Maniototo County.—The roads under construction and repair were—the road to Gimmerburn, the main road, and the main road near Eweburn. The work carried out consisted of the gravelling, scrub-clearing, ditching, and side-cutting of those roads; also the making of several culverts and open crossings. In Block VII., Gimmerburn, a pile-bridge of 12ft. span was erected. The total cost of these works amounted to £1,118 15s. 6d., which have been expended on nearly 23½ miles of road. The area of land improved by these roads is—surveyed land 11,090 acres, and of unsurveyed land 900 acres; and Mr. Richard Brown, County Engineer, supervised them.