

*Mangawharariki Road.*—A contract for metalling 66 chains, from Mangaweka Creek to and across the bridge, is now nearly completed. This makes continuous metalling from the main road to the Mangawharariki-Kawhatau Junction.

*Mangaweka Bridge (Rangitikei River).*—This bridge is to consist of two spans of 121 ft. each, with two end spans of 40 ft. each, equal to 322 ft. in all. The understructure consists of two concrete abutments, two concrete piers, and one central pier of cast-iron cylinders 6 ft. in diameter; the superstructure of two standard 40 ft. spans and two 121 ft. timber spans, with iron lower chords. The work was started in May, 1896, some preliminary work being previously done to the approaches. The excavations for the concrete piers were sunk 14 ft. below the river-level in solid papa. The concrete work, consisting of 453 cubic yards, was completed in October, costing, with timbering, excavations, &c., somewhat over £1,000. A contract for the supply of 56 tons cast-iron cylinders was let to Messrs. Luke and Co. on the 22nd September, 1896, and completed in March, 1897, at a cost of £778, landed at Mangaonoho. Plans and specifications have been prepared, and tenders are now being invited, for the supply of ironwork for lower chords, plates, bolts, &c., for the central spans. In December a start was made with the temporary scaffolding. This was extended to the centre of the river, when an exceptionally high flood took away the whole fabric on the 31st January, causing a loss of about £250. A start was again made in February. A large supply of piles, &c., were obtained, and about 90 ft. of temporary scaffolding was driven from the Mangaweka side, when another fresh again cleared everything away, causing a further loss of nearly £100. Driving is again being started, but this time from the eastern side of the river, where the scour is less. The trouble is that there is only about 7 ft. of gravel down to the papa, and the piles, not being able to get sufficient hold to resist the tremendous current, are scoured out. All the material is now on the ground for the cylinders sinking; 50,000 superficial feet totara and 2,000 superficial feet of dressed maire are also ready, but not all delivered. The ironwork is all to be delivered by the middle of August. If the season turns out at all favourable the whole bridge should be completed about next Christmas.

*Otara Bridge.*—80 chains of formation and metalling has been completed on the western approaches to the bridge. The department paid £600 towards the cost of this. A suspension bridge was proposed here, but a plain cylinder and standard 80 ft. truss bridge has been adopted, and the drawings are now in preparation.

*Mangaonoho.*—Only maintenance work over one mile of road has been done.

*Te Kapua.*—The work done comprises six miles engineering survey, chiefly on the Whaka and Ngaunga Roads; 475 chains bushwork; 492 chains horse-track; 30 lineal feet bridge across Mangaone; 30 lineal feet culverts. Of the side-roads, the Pukemapou Road is now finished; the Wairepu Road East and West will be so during April; one mile and three-quarters of the Quarry Road is done; two miles and three-quarters of the Whaka Road is completed, and the two miles more remaining will soon be started. The block is now becoming well settled. The main road is being repaired, but will shortly require conversion into a dray-road.

*Turakina Valley Road.*—By making use of about three-quarters of a mile of bush-track horses can now easily get as far as Harper's Track. The work done comprises five miles and a half engineering survey, four miles of traverse and plans, 327 chains bushwork, 200 chains horse-track, 100 lineal feet culverts, three miles dray-road and seven miles horse-track maintenance. Surveys and estimates are being prepared for widening out about two miles, up to the Rerepapa Waterfall. Settlement is now progressing in a much more satisfactory manner; all the men employed on the roads are settlers.

*Hunternville, 1, 2, 3.*—The only road that has been worked upon during the year is the Mangamahoe Valley, on which the work done comprises six miles engineering survey, 650 chains bushwork and horse-track formation; papa cut 4 chains long, 8 ft. wide, and from 8 ft. to nothing in depth, over which a dray-bridge is now being erected. This cut carries the whole Turakina River, except in high floods. The roads in this block urgently require pushing on, as most of the sections are still inaccessible even by horse-track.

*Momahaki Village Settlement.*—The main through road has been completed, and the works, after being put into good repair, were, on the 14th October, 1896, handed over to the Waitotara-Momahaki Road Board. The work done during the year comprises 57 chains dray-road formation, 88 lineal feet culverts, and maintenance of two miles and a half for six months.

*Mangamahu Village Settlement.*—A subsidy of £73 5s. 7d. was granted for this settlement, £50 of which has been expended on part payment of suspension-bridge for horse-traffic, which is to be 81 ft. clear span, with two end spans 24 ft. each, across the Wangaehu River, a short distance above Mangamahu Stream.

*Tangarakau River.*—The snagging of this river was started about the 1st December. It was intended to have cleared a canoe-channel 15 ft. wide through the snags and shallows from the confluence to Putikituna, a distance of about fourteen miles; but, owing to the very unfavourable season since the middle of January, only ten miles has been done; and even in this channel the floods have lodged some trees that require reclearing. The work is now stopped for the season, and the gear stored at Pipiriki in readiness for a fresh start next spring. There is still sufficient money in hand to clear a good canoe-channel to Putikituna, and probably to Kohuratahi, two miles further on.

*Wanganui River Steamer Subsidy.*—The mail-service has been carried on with perfect regularity to Pipiriki throughout the year, except from the 26th December to the 12th January, when, owing to the lowness of the river, the steamers were unable on six occasions to get the whole way up, and the mails and through passengers were carried by canoes. No steamers have yet gone beyond Pipiriki. The tourist traffic to and from Pipiriki this season has been fairly large, but the number of through passengers is still small. Messrs. Hatrick are having a new light-draught steamer built in England for the extension of the river traffic to and possibly up the Tangaraka.