

TABLE showing SLEEPERS required for Ordinary Repairs and Re-spacing for the Years named.

Year.	Ordinary Renewals.	Respacing.			Total Number of Sleepers required.
		Extra for relaying New Standard.	Respacing without Relaying.	Per Mile of Track. (Present Mileage.)	
1899-1900 ...	287,000	33,396	25,604	28.3	346,000
1900-1901 ...	303,000	37,752	18,248	26.9	359,000
1901-1902 ...	319,000	41,140	12,860	25.9	373,000
1902-1903 ...	335,000	43,560	7,440	24.5	386,000
1903-1904 ...	351,000	45,980	3,020	23.5	400,000
1904-1905 ...	350,000	47,432	2,568	24.0	400,000

The following table shows the charges made to the Maintenance Account for the past eight years (as per Railway Accountant's returns):—

Year.	Amount.	Year.	Amount.
1891-92 ...	£245,163	1895-96 ...	£282,593
1892-93 ...	262,600	1896-97 ...	301,981
1893-94 ...	268,451	1897-98 ...	327,987
1894-95 ...	272,718	1898-99 ...	357,189

The estimated expenditure for the Maintenance Branch for the current year and forecast for ensuing years are as under:—

Year.	Reconstruction.		Ordinary Maintenance.		Total.	
	Amount.	Rate per Mile.	Amount.	Rate per Mile.	Amount.	Rate per Mile.
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1899-1900 ...	101,810	49	294,309	141	396,119	190
1900-1901 ...	100,000	48	295,000	142	395,000	190
1901-1902 ...	97,500	47	309,500	148	407,000	195
1902-1903 ...	95,000	46	303,000	145	398,000	191
1903-1904 ...	92,500	44	305,500	147	398,000	191
1904-1905 ...	90,000	43	300,000	144	390,000	187

The amounts set down for reconstruction are the estimated value of rails and labour for relaying, additional sleepers for re-spacing, and reconstruction of bridge structures, based upon present mileage of line, rates of wages, and prices of material, and it will be found that the cost of track renewals will increase and that of bridge reconstruction will decrease during the years included in the forecast.

Provision is included for an anticipated increase of traffic, but it is assumed that the present maximum engine-axle load will be maintained.

It will be wise to take advantage of an expanding revenue to provide for the inevitable increasing cost of reconstruction of the lines.

Private Sidings.—Seven new private sidings were granted during the year, and the number on the register at the 31st March, 1899, was 252, with an aggregate rental of £4,162.

Leases.—New leases registered during the year were 311; the number of leases in force 1,497, having an aggregate rental of £13,749.

Staff.—The working staff employed during the year was 2,210, with an office staff of seventy-five.

This is my last annual report, by reason of my retirement. It occasions me many regrets to leave the Railway service, in which I have so many friendships as well as interests, which have grown strong during twenty-seven years. I wish to express my esteem and regard for the whole staff of officers and employes. Harmony and good-feeling characterizes the working of the various branches of the service in their relation to each other. I shall continue to take a great interest in the progress of New Zealand railways.

I append the usual returns.

I have, &c.,

J. HENRY LOWE,
Chief Engineer, Working Railways.

The General Manager, New Zealand Railways.

APPENDIX D.

ANNUAL SIGNAL REPORT.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st April, 1899.

As the traffic on the New Zealand railways developed in weight and speed it became increasingly apparent that some measure of modern railway signalling should be gradually introduced. To this end about a year ago a branch of the Engineering Department was formed to construct and supervise interlocking and block signalling, together with the other signalling appliances suitable to the New Zealand lines.