

small bridges on this length which are still incomplete are likely to be finished within a month or so. The laying of the rails has already been commenced, and the ballasting and erection of station-buildings will follow in due course. I fully expect that the first section at this end of the line—14½ miles in length, and extending as far as Skargill—will be ready for traffic early in the new year. The earthworks have been started on the section between Skargill and the Hurunui River, and are making satisfactory progress, and plans, &c., for the important bridge over the Hurunui River have been prepared, and tenders invited for its construction. This bridge will be 376 ft. long, and will include two spans of 100 ft. each, supported on concrete piers. Plans are also being prepared for the bridge over the Waiau River, near Parnassus, but, as this is beyond the point to which the construction of the railway has been authorised, it will be necessary to make provision for a further section of the line before a contract for this bridge can be entered into.

The total expenditure on the Blenheim-Waipara Railway last year was £33,280, while liabilities to the amount of over £20,000 existed at the close of the year. This year an authorisation of £45,000 is proposed.

OTAGO CENTRAL.

Good progress has been made with the works on this railway during the year. The section between Wedderburn and Blackstone Hill is rapidly approaching completion, and will probably be available for traffic early in December next. The heavy work in the Poolburn Gorge is well in hand, and much of it is nearing completion. All the masonry culverts are complete up to the Manuherikia River, and the work in the tunnels is about half done. The foundations for the piers and abutments of the Poolburn Viaduct are in progress, and a contract for the steel superstructures of both that viaduct and the Manuherikia Bridge has been let, and the majority of the cylinders for the latter are being conveyed to the site. Work has recently been undertaken on the Manuherikia-Spottis Section, several parties being now employed upon it. Altogether the work on this railway has been pushed along with vigour, and the progress made is satisfactory. The expenditure on the line last year, according to the published accounts, was £61,347, but in reality it was in excess of this, as, owing to an unfortunate accident in the Dunedin office, accounts representing nearly two months' expenditure on the railway were shut out at the close of the financial year. For the current year an authority for £100,000 has been provided.

HERIOT EXTENSION.

Work on the extension of the Heriot line towards Edie's was put in hand shortly before the close of the financial year. Some little time was lost through the severity of the weather in the winter, and the work has also been delayed by a difference of opinion amongst the local residents as to the route which the line should take, which has rendered it advisable to restrict operations to the portion of the section about which there is no division of opinion. It will probably be to the best interests of the district to adhere to the route originally surveyed, and to make the terminus of the line at Edie Vale, as proposed originally.

Scarcely any expenditure was charged against the vote of last year, and this year £5,000 has been provided on the estimates for this railway.

CATLIN'S RIVER-SEAWARD BUSH.

At the Catlin's River end of this railway an extension of three miles and a half from Owaka has been in hand during the year, and the formation-works are well advanced and proceeding satisfactorily.

At the Seaward Bush end of the line the survey to Tokonui, which was in progress last year, has been completed, but the result has not been entirely satisfactory, and a further survey has therefore now been ordered to ascertain definitely which of the routes proposed for this section of the railway presents the greater advantages. Owing to its having been impossible to com-