

On the 1st June, 1907, a length of 5 m. 70 ch. net from Taihape (44 m. 70 ch.) to Mataroa (50 m. 70 ch.) was completed, handed over to the Railway Department, and opened for traffic.

On the 30th June, 1908, a further length of 18 miles 12 chains from Mataroa (50 m. 70 ch. to Waiouru, 69 m. 2 ch.) was completed and handed over to the Railway Department and opened. This length was delayed for some considerable time owing to slips, over one of which, at 53 m. 65 ch., a bridge had finally to be built with piers carried down to the rock below, to allow the slipping material to pass through it as it comes down.

On the next length of 13 miles 68 chains, known as the Murimutu Section, and extending to 82 m. 70 ch., or to Rangataua Station, the heavy length of earthwork still in hand last year from 70 m. to 73 m. 30 ch. has been finished, the rails laid over it, and the line almost fully ballasted. With the exception of station buildings at Waitangi, Kariōi, and Rangataua Stations, all in course of erection, and minor work, this section is now complete.

The last section, from Rangataua (82 m. 70 ch.) to Horopito (91 m. 50 ch.), or 8 miles 60 chains in length, known as the Raetihi Section, has been the centre of the most concentrated effort this year. On it there are two large steel viaducts, four other considerable bridges, a tunnel of 220 yards long, some very heavy cuttings in difficult ground, and some equally large banks. Work was fairly started previously, but it has been a most satisfactory result to get what remained to be done completed in so short a time. One instance alone may be given of the work accomplished—and it was done by Government labour entirely: The Hapuawhenua Viaduct, which is on a 10-chains curve, has thirteen concrete monolith piers, averaging 40 ft. high each, four 4-legged steel piers, averaging 100 ft. high each, founded on four concrete blocks each, or one to each leg, and two concrete abutments of fair height, with thirteen steel-plate girder spans of 36 ft. each, four steel-plate-girder pier spans of 36 ft. each, and five truss spans of 64 ft. each, or 932 ft. in length in all. The erection of this bridge, including the excavation of foundations, was begun in August, 1907, and by April, 1908, it was completed and the train running over it.

The whole of the iron and steel work for these bridges was manufactured at the Department's workshops at Makohine, and has been turned out most satisfactorily in every way.

The laying of the rails from Ohakune, at 85 m. 51 ch., was resumed as soon as this viaduct was completed; and, though delayed by some banks and cuttings further up, reached the end of the section, at 91 m. 50 ch., towards the end of July, and joined up with those at the north end on the next section.

There is still a large quantity of ballasting, widening of cuttings and banks, fencing, and water-supplies, besides the necessary buildings, to complete; but in about another month trains will be able to run through, and by the end of the year nearly everything will be finished.

The sections mentioned above are as follows:—

	M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.
Paengaroa, part of (Taihape to Mataroa)	44 70	to 50 70	= 6 0	= 5 70 net.
Turangarere and Waiouru Sections (Mataroa to Waiouru)	50 70	" 69 2	= 18 12	= 18 10 "
Murimutu Section (Waiouru to Rangataua)	69 2	" 82 70	= 13 68	= 13 70 "
Raetihi Section (Rangataua to Horopito)	82 70	" 91 50	= 8 60	
			46 60	

STRATFORD—WHANGAMOMONA.

Huiroa Section (11 m. 18 ch. to 15 m. 68 ch.; length, 4 miles 50 chains).—This section, which extends from Douglas to Huiroa, was finally completed, handed over to the Railway Department, and opened for traffic on the 1st April, 1908. The station buildings at Huiroa, being built by contract, are somewhat behind time, but are now just on completion.

Te Wera Section (15 m. 68 ch. to 22 m. 35 ch.; length, 6 miles 47 chains).—Work was started on this section last November, but owing to the scarcity of men it went on very slowly during the summer, but since March more men are available. The first portion, of four miles, is in low swampy country, so the line is being formed just sufficiently wide to lay rails on it, and the banks will then be widened out by train. From 18 m. to 20 m. the formation is partly done, and the tunnel and heavy work immediately beyond this is being put in hand.

MOUNT EGMONT BRANCH.

Manganui Section (0 m. to 6 m.).—This section, which includes the hydraulic stone-crushing plant and machinery, barracks, and two cottages at 5 m., also the sidings, engine-shed, &c., and cottages at 0 m., Waipuku Junction, on the main line, with the ballast-siding at the Manganui River, was handed over to the Railway Department on the 1st April, 1908, and that Department is now crushing ballast there.

A proposed quarry at about 9 m. is being prospected. So far considerable stripping has been met with in getting to the basaltic rock suitable for metal, but it is hoped to avoid this, and further prospecting is to be done.

MIDLAND.

Nelson—Westland Section, North End.

Tadmor Station, at 41 m. 29 ch. from Nelson, is the end of the opened line in the hands of the Railway Department, and was opened to this point on the 7th August, 1906.