

1913.
NEW ZEALAND.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMBERS.—T. D. Cummins, Government nominee (Chairman); G. V. Pearce, M.P., Patea; W. A. Veitch, M.P., Wanganui; W. J. Polson, Chairman, Wanganui County Council; W. Ritchie, Chairman, Waitotara County Council; C. E. Mackay, Mayor of Wanganui; David McFarlane, President, Chamber of Commerce; J. T. Stewart, W. G. Bassett, and T. B. Williams, elected by the ratepayers of Wanganui.

REPORT.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 20th April, 1913.

I have pleasure in furnishing you with a report of the operations of the Trust for the year ended the 31st March, as well as notes taken on a visit of inspection commenced on the 12th April.

Following my usual practice in visiting the river for the purposes of making my annual report I endeavoured to catch the river at a low level, so that the improvements effected during the past year and the necessary works to be undertaken next working season could be noted.

I left Wanganui by the steamer "Ohura" for Pipiriki on the 12th April. The water-gauge at Hatrick's Wharf at Pipiriki showed 36 in. below "the mark"—a zero established by Messrs. Hatrick at the inception of the steamer service, and at which level local steamers could safely reach Pipiriki—this before the river improvements were commenced. The 36 in. referred to was the lowest level found this year (1st April, 1912, to 31st March, 1913). The steamer had about forty passengers and a full load of cargo, and, despite the low conditions of the river and a full cargo, no difficulties were experienced in the navigation. We reached Pipiriki at 5.30 p.m. simultaneously with the s.s. "Wakapai," also passenger- and cargo-laden from Wanganui. It was noticeable with both steamers that the major portion of the cargo and most of the passengers were for wayside ports, thus showing the importance of the service in assisting settlement on lands adjacent to the river—the passengers being mainly settlers, bushfellers, and roadmen; the cargo being fencing and building material, tools, and provisions.

The conditions of the river gave an excellent opportunity of noting the work accomplished this working season below Pipiriki, consisting of clearing the channel of obstructions, renewing shingle and wire-net walls with stone, and lengthening stone walls at Tupapa (235), Ohaoa (232), and Matahiwi (212), and at several points snags and a few large boulders that will require removal later, notably between Parikino and Upokopoito (Nos. 232 to 238). At Upokopoito the shingle island in mid-channel is increasing in width and height. Willows have taken root and will hold the shingle, and should be at once eradicated, as by their growth the island will be still further enlarged and will be, in case of severe floods, a menace to the adjoining lands on the right bank. It would be of advantage to lengthen the tail of the wall from the island: this would have the effect of scouring away the shingle-bank now forming at the foot of the wall on the right bank and make easier entrance for steamers to the Upokopoito Rapid. The work below Pipiriki will in the future be more in the nature of maintenance.

On Sunday night while I was at Pipiriki it rained heavily, and the river had risen over a foot on Monday morning when I left for Taumarunui *via* the houseboat, and from Pipiriki on to the houseboat the river was steadily rising. This was specially unfortunate, as it completely negated any possibility of noting the works, as the walls were completely covered. Leaving the houseboat the following morning for Taumarunui, the river was still too much in flood to allow me to take notes of any value, and this continued till I reached Taumarunui.

At Taumarunui I was joined by Mr. W. J. Polson, Chairman of the Wanganui County Council, a member of the Trust. Leaving Taumarunui on the 17th by launch for Pipiriki, we found the river had fallen somewhat and the walls were showing up, although the conditions were not of the best for