

OPUNAKE BRANCH.

Construction-work has been in progress principally over the first seven miles between the junction at Te Roti and Kapuni Station. Earthworks are well advanced, culverts constructed, piers and abutments for two bridges built, and preparations being made for constructing concrete piers to carry a substantial bridge over the Waingongoro River. From Kapuni towards Auroa the route has been cleared and some culverts put in. Clearing and fencing along the five-mile branch line from Kapuni to Manaia have also been carried out.

RAETIHI BRANCH.

Very little formation remains to be done on this branch. Rails have been laid for half the length, and ballasting is now in hand. Progress during the year has been slow, principally owing to efficient labour not being available in the district.

SOUTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

At the north end on the eight-mile section between Ward and Wharanui, platelaying and ballasting were finished under contract towards the end of 1915. Station buildings were erected under another contract, and the completed section was taken over by the Railway authorities and opened for traffic on the 4th December last. Beyond the new terminus formation is complete, rails laid, and the line partly ballasted for a distance of three miles and a quarter; but two small steel bridges on this length are unfinished, owing to difficulty experienced in obtaining steel material for their manufacture.

WESTPORT-INANGAHUA.

The three unfinished contracts for rock-cuttings and short tunnels along the north bank of the Buller River have been completed during the year, but all other work has been suspended. It is not proposed to resume construction-work for the present.

NELSON—WESTLAND.

At the Nelson end earthworks and culvert-construction were continued, principally during the winter months, on the three-mile section between Glenhope and Kawatiri. Formation is completed for about half the length, but there is some heavy work ahead before the rails can be laid to Kawatiri.

ARTHUR'S PASS TUNNEL.

The driving of the Arthur's Pass Tunnel continued steadily during the whole period under review, by day labour in three shifts at the Otira end, and under co-operative contract on a lesser scale at the Bealey end. From Otira on the western side the bottom heading in slate rock was advanced 26 chains during the nine months, and the excavation and lining was carried over 17 chains during the same period. From the Bealey end only moderate progress was made, the results being about $11\frac{1}{2}$ chains of heading and $13\frac{1}{4}$ chains of excavation and lining. There has been a shortage of efficient labour during the whole period, the average number of men working being thirty-five at the Otira end and fifteen at the Bealey end. The tunnel when completed will be 5 miles 25 chains in length. The present position is that the bottom heading has been driven 3 miles 78 chains and the tunnel excavated and lined for 40 chains less. The untouched distance between the headings from the eastern and western sides of the tunnel at the end of March was 1 mile 27 chains. There are some grounds for hoping that the wettest of the material has been traversed, and that an improvement in working-conditions at the face may be looked for.

CULVERDEN—WAIKAI.

Formation-work over the whole length is almost complete; bridges and culverts are in hand; necessary fencing has been done and rails laid over seven miles and a half. Ballasting is proceeding, and the line is expected to be ready for traffic early in the current year.