

distant. There will be some delay in completing the steel bridge over the Kaituna River, owing to the difficulty in obtaining material, but a temporary structure permits of the train passing over the stream in the meantime. The Department works a stone-quarry at Te Puke for ballast, and also supplies the requirements of neighbouring local bodies from the same source. Beyond Pongakawa earthworks are in progress over a length of fifteen miles to Matata.

Efforts were made during the year to obtain supplies of steel for the superstructure of the large bridge which is to carry the railway across Tauranga Harbour in front of the town, but owing to the extraordinary conditions prevailing in the steel industry in England, due to the war, it is at present impossible to obtain supplies, and the construction of the bridge will therefore be deferred until the return of normal conditions. At the present time the policy is being pursued of only completing the line sufficiently to enable traffic to be worked safely, in order that the funds available may be utilized in extending the line as far as possible, so as to serve the maximum amount of country at the earliest possible date.

Gisborne Northward.—From Matawai, the terminus of the opened line, to Kowhai Road Station, near Motu, the formation-work has been completed, the rails have been laid, and the line is partly ballasted. A temporary bridge carries the line over the Motu River, as completion of the permanent steel structure is delayed owing to the difficulty of procuring materials. A goods service is carried on between Matawai and the railhead, timber comprising the principal freight. Construction-work beyond Kowhai Road Station cannot be put in hand until the route of the main line towards the Bay of Plenty is definitely located.

Gisborne Southwards.—Construction-work of a varied character has been carried on to a point fourteen miles from the junction at Makaraka. The steel bridge over the Waipaoa River has been completed. Rails are laid up to and a mile and a half beyond Ngatapa (11½ miles from the junction), to which point a temporary goods and passenger service is carried on. Beyond Ngatapa some heavy cuttings are well advanced, and one tunnel-heading driven; but the funds available would not permit of this section being fully manned throughout the year.

Napier Northwards.—Construction-work has been restricted to the large reinforced-concrete bridge and approach banks, which are to carry the railway and road over the Inner Harbour. Necessary plant and supplies of steel and concrete materials have been brought to the site, piles made and seasoned, and driving in position commenced. The erection of the bridge is being carried out by the Department's staff, and the construction of the approach-banks at either end by the Napier Harbour Board under contract. The bank on the Westshore side is almost finished.

STRATFORD – MAIN TRUNK.

At the western end the section from Whangamomona to Tahora, nearly ten miles in length, has fully occupied the available staff during the whole of the past year. On this length tunnels, bridges, heavy cuttings, banks, stream and road diversions, platelaying, and ballasting have been in progress, and half the section is practically ready for traffic. From the railhead at Kohuratahi, four miles and a half from the terminus of the open line, a service tramway is in operation up to the next station-site at Tahora. The larger of two tunnels on the section is finished, and the second one is approaching completion. Beyond Tahora the line follows a recently selected route through some rough country where considerable survey-work will have to be carried out before construction can be commenced.

At the eastern end of the line the Department is constructing the concrete piers of the important bridge which will carry the line over the Ongarue River near the junction with the Main Trunk line. As steel material is still unobtainable, a temporary wooden superstructure will probably be built to permit of the bridge being used for traffic as early as possible. The new contractors for the Okahu Tunnel have got through with the bottom heading and commenced enlarging and lining the tunnel. Other small tunnels towards Matiere Township are being enlarged and lined with bricks, which are made at the works established in the locality by the Department. Earthworks are in progress by contract and co-operative party up to 10½ miles from Okahukura, but this section cannot be opened until the tunnels are finished.