

EAST COAST MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY—WAIHI EASTWARDS.

During the year substantial progress has been made towards the completion of the East Coast Main Trunk Railway between Waihi and Taneatua. The main features of the work have been the completion and handing-over to the Railway Department of the first 14 m. eastward from Waihi, the steady progress on the section 19 m. 11 ch. long being constructed under contract by Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth, and Co., and of the progress towards completion of all works on the length of 66 m. between Te Puna and Taneatua station-yards, over which the running of traffic has been continued by the Public Works Department. A description of the work that has been done on the various sections of the line is as follows:—

Athenree Section (0 m. 0 ch. to 8 m. 68 ch. ; length, 8 m. 68 ch.).—This section was completed and put in order for handing over to the Railway Department. The Athenree quarry continued in operation till the end of March, 1927, and from July, 1926, to that date had supplied 16,000 cub. yd. of crushed metal for ballast and other purposes.

Katikati Section (8 m. 68 ch. to 16 m. 28 ch. ; length, 7 m. 40 ch.).—This length as far as the 14 m. peg was completed by the Department. At 12 m. 61 ch. a reinforced-concrete slab bridge 40 ft. long, in three spans, was built. For a short period a passenger and goods service was run to the 14 m. peg as a continuation of a similar service that had been maintained on the Athenree Section. On the 2nd May, 1927, the Railways Department took over the length from 0 m. 0 ch. to 14 m. 0 ch., and commenced running a service thereon.

Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth, and Co.'s contract commences at the 14 m. peg. The formation is almost complete, with the exception of the Tahawai embankment, trouble being experienced here through the sinking of the heavy bank through the soft mud-flat foundation. This is not an uncommon feature of this East Coast Main Trunk Railway construction. The subsidences, as they occur, are made good by fresh filling, and the embankment gradually becomes stable. The fencing is now almost complete. The 6 ft. arched concrete culvert at 14 m. 38 ch. was built during the year. Road-overbridges at 14 m. 46 ch., 15 m. 38 ch. (both with deck 9 ft. wide), and at 15 m. 74 ch. and 16 m. 6 ch. (deck 12 ft. wide), were also built, and the railway-bridge across road at 14 m. 71 ch., started the previous year, was completed. A start was made with the platelaying and ballasting, and also with the Katikati Station buildings—the latrines, and 6,000 gal. water-vat being completed.

Aongatete Section (16 m. 28 ch. to 21 m. 5 ch. ; length, 4 m. 57 ch.).—With the exception of some trimming of batters and of some widening of banks, all formation on this section is now complete. The principal work has been the erection of bridges. My last year's report indicated that piers of the Uretawa Bridge at 16 m. 46 ch., Te Rereatukahia Bridge at 18 m. 12 ch., and Te Mania Bridge at 18 m. 50 ch. were in hand, and these bridges are now complete. In addition, the Waitakohe Bridge at 19 m. 4 ch. and Aongatete Bridge at 20 m. 45 ch. have been completed, except for one pair of girders still to be placed on Waitakohe Bridge. The total length of these five bridges is 675 ft. On the section seven road-overbridges were completed during year, six with roadway 12 ft. wide, and one with roadway 9 ft. wide. Of these bridges three had been started in the previous year. Platelaying was done from 20 m. 51 ch. back to 16 m. 28 ch., and a start was made with ballasting. In the Aongatete station-yard the buildings, well advanced the previous year, were completed, except for stock-yards, which are now in hand.

Apata Section (21 m. 5 ch. to 27 m. 70 ch. ; length, 4 m. 12 ch.).—(Note : Short length is due to deviations from original line.) Fencing is practically complete, and the culverting on the section has also been completed. The reconstruction of the Wainui bank at 23 m. with greater width and flatter batters, involving greatly increased earthwork, is finished. At the Wainui Bridge site at 23 m. 2 ch. the piles had been driven and piers completed. Ground-subsidences and other movements that took place as railway-bank was first run out so seriously damaged the piers that they had to be abandoned, and new piers will be built as the reconstructed bank stabilizes. In order that platelaying would not be unduly delayed, the contractors deemed it advisable to construct a temporary deviation over the Wainui Valley, crossing the stream about 20 ch. above the permanent-bridge site. Road-overbridges at 27 m. 35 ch. and 23 m. 19 ch. are now completed.

Three miles of platelaying were completed on the section during the year, and the first and second lifts of ballast were placed throughout the section, except on Wainui bank and bridge, where track is not yet laid. Four platelayers' cottages, in hand last year, and goods-shed and passenger-shelter for Apata Station were completed.

Te Puna Section (27 m. 70 ch. to 34 m. 78 ch. ; length, 7 m. 72 ch.).—The clearing, fencing, culverting, and formation are now substantially complete. The bridge at 28 m. 29 ch. (three 20 ft. spans), and Waipapa Bridge at 29 m. 29 ch. (six 35 ft. spans, one 45 ft. span), and bridge at 31 m. 63 ch. (three 20 ft. spans) are now complete, except the placing of the first span in the Waipapa Bridge. The second lift of ballast is complete throughout the section, except on the larger banks, which are still settling. Station buildings at Omokoroa and Te Puna Stations were completed during the year.

This section completes the length of 19 m. that is in the hands of the contracting firm of Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth, and Co. Summarizing the position of the works on the contract, practically all the earthwork is complete, a yardage of 600,000 cub. yd. being handled during the year ; all bridge-work is practically complete, except the new structure required at Wainui Stream ; rail connection exists from the company's rail-head at 16 m. 3 ch. to the junction at 34 m. 78 ch. with the line built by the Department, though a detour at Wainui is necessary, as already pointed out. Ballasting and road-metalling is, however, proceeding very slowly. Out of a total of 83,000 cub. yd. called for by the contract, only one-third had been delivered by the 30th June last. As the completion of this contract is already overdue, the backwardness of the ballasting programme is very serious and calls for special concentration by the Contractor, with a view to pushing this portion of the work.