

Wharves.—The wharves under the control of the Department have been efficiently maintained.

Buildings.—These have been maintained in good repair.

Auckland station building was damaged slightly by fire, and cottages at Wiri, Waimiha, and Waiuku were destroyed by fire.

Station-yards.—Increased siding and general accommodation has been provided at a number of stations.

Railway Improvements.—The expenditure under the Railway Improvement Account for last year was £399,943, as against £337,049 the previous year. This amount does not include the expenditure under this account on the Auckland–Westfield deviation or the Hutt Valley line, which are being carried out by the Public Works Department. Good progress has been made during the year with the rearrangement of Auckland station-yard. The erection of Campbell's Point overbridge is nearing completion, and the erection of the outward goods-shed is in hand.

The architects for the new station, Auckland, expect to have the plans ready early in the current year, and to call for tenders before the end of the year.

The duplication of the track between Westfield and Otahuhu was completed, and earthworks are now in hand between Otahuhu and Papatoetoe.

The new yard at Helensville is nearing completion, and a large part of it was brought into use during the year. The extension of Frankton yard was practically completed at the end of the year.

The contractor for the sea-wall at Wellington finished his original contract, and a further extension of 450 ft. of sea-wall that had been arranged was also completed. Reclamation is now in hand, two dredges being employed on the work.

It is expected to start on some of the work in Wellington yard during the current year.

The platelaying in the Middleton yard is finished, and the signalling-work, which is well advanced, should be ready to be brought into operation at an early date. A start was made during the year on the Elmer Lane engine-depot.

Bridge-strengthening has been carried out in connection with the programme. The strengthening of the Waiteti Viaduct, on the North Island Main Trunk line, is in hand.

Tenders for the workshops at Otahuhu, Petone, Addington, and Hillside were accepted during the year, and the contractors have commenced work.

The elimination of level crossings was carried out during the year, and the following crossings were replaced by bridges: Water and Walton Street and Rust Lane at Whangarei, Victoria Crescent, Newmarket, Old Tauranga Road (Waihi Branch), Kopaki Crossing, Annesbrook Crossing (Stoke). The elimination of the following crossings is in hand: Turakina Crossing, Weka Pass Crossing, and Hanover Street, Dunedin.

Additions to Open Lines.—The expenditure under this account was £53,845.

The Whangarei station-yard was completed during the year, and sidings were altered or extended at the following stations: Onehunga, Wiri, Waimiha, Kopaki, Palmerston North, Marton, Riccarton, Dunedin.

New stations were opened at Tironui and Mahia.

Connection of the railway premises and houses to the borough sewers was made at Otahuhu.

Betterments.—Expenditure charged to "betterments" during the past year was £25,868, the principal works being, provision of loading-banks at Pukehou, Awatoto, Ormond, Whenuahou, Mata-mau, and Greymouth; improvements to stockyards at Taihape, Feilding, Makotuku, Pleasant Point, Cave, and Edendale; improvements to station buildings at Newmarket, Waimiha, Okahukura, and Ratana; shelter-shed provided at Croydon Road; ladies' waiting-rooms and conveniences provided at Portland and Melling; goods-sheds provided at Puketutu and Arahura; provision of verandas at Melling and Wellsford; improved water-services at several stations; cranes provided at Wanganui, Takapau, Huntly, and Greymouth; shed for train-examiners at Marton; engine ash-pit at Huntly; 70 ft. turntables replacing 55 ft. at Linwood and Te Kuiti; and sand-dryer house at Taumarunui.

Expenditure.—The expenditure for the year was as follows: Maintenance (charged to working-expenses), £1,074,334; new works (charged to capital), £453,788.

The maintenance expenditure charged to working-expenses amounted to £338 per mile, compared with £369 in 1925–26, £362 in 1924–25, £373 in 1923–24, £342 in 1922–23, £367 in 1921–22, £350 in 1920–21, £280 in 1919–20, and £252 in 1918–19.

Mileages.—The mileage of track opened for traffic on the 31st March, 1927, was 3,176 miles 50 chains. During the year 28 miles 12 chains of additional lines were opened for traffic.

Lands and Leases.—The number of leases registered during the year was 598; the aggregate rental of same amounted to £6,938 4s. 7d. The total number of leases current on the 31st March, 1927, was 6,679; the aggregate rental of same amounted to £56,074 1s. 11d. The total number of agreements current on the 31st March, 1927, was 274.

The number of Proclamations, Orders in Council, notifications, and other documents issued taking and giving up land was forty-two. The number of transactions purchasing land by certificate of title was three, and the amount of compensation paid for land acquired was £85,849 15s. 5d.

Staff.—Maintenance Branch: Working staff, 4,604; office staff, 212: total 4,816.

SIGNAL AND ELECTRICAL.

Fixed Signals at Officered Stations.—Home and distant signals were provided at six stations not previously equipped. Of the 486 officered stations, 333 are equipped with fixed signals, 114 are interlocked, and 39 are unequipped.