

Buildings.—Oamaru Station building and goods-sheds were re-roofed, and the Lumsden Station (destroyed by fire) was rebuilt from buildings shifted from other localities. Four dwellinghouses were shifted to new localities to meet staff requirements.

The following buildings were damaged or destroyed by fire during the year: The station buildings at Otoko and Lumsden and dwellinghouses at Drury and Raurimu respectively were totally destroyed, while the following were damaged: the engine-sheds at Whangarei, Auckland, Frankton Junction, and Wanganui respectively, the refreshment-room at Ohakune, houses at New Plymouth and Waikaka, and a store-shed at Invercargill.

Wellington New Station.—The construction of the new station-yard has progressed. The new car-yard is completed, and foundations for the new locomotive depots are now in hand, together with the construction of platforms, the new signal-cabin, housing for shunters, and the yard staff. The laying of the tracks with "Thermit" welded rails on the Tawa Flat Deviation is proceeding, this method having been adopted after satisfactory tests on a section of the Lower Hutt suburban line.

Considerable progress has been made with the construction of Bunny Street on its new alignment.

The contractors are up to schedule on the contract work on the new station building, the foundations of which are completed and most of the steel framing erected. Concreting work in connection with building of the floors and walls is well forward.

Mileage.—The total mileage of track open for traffic on the 31st March, 1935, was 3,278 miles 48 chains.

Unemployed Relief.—The new works in progress during the year have afforded considerable extra employment. An average of 480 men were employed for thirty-two weeks under the No. 5 Unemployment Scheme, and 26 men for twelve weeks under the No. 10 Scheme.

During the year an average of 183 men have been employed on Wellington new works (apart from the contract for the new station building) and 33 men for twelve weeks on the Puketeraki Deviation. The wages for these men were subsidized by the Unemployment Board.

SIGNAL AND ELECTRICAL BRANCH.

During recent years there has been an increased expenditure by the Department on electrical equipment. This has been due to the great advance in the application of electrical inventions to railroad operations, principally in the direction of telephone communication, power units for signalling, lighting, and general purposes. The Board has adopted a policy of installing up-to-date equipment in all cases where a reasonable return on cost is assured. Telephone facilities have been greatly improved, especially along the main lines of operation, while signalling and interlocking and general safety-appliances have been provided. Considerable sums have been spent on lighting facilities for passenger stations and shunting-yards, and a progressive plan for the provision of electric lighting in departmental dwellings has been pursued. Very satisfactory results have been secured from such a policy, which has not only enabled the Department to keep abreast of the times, but has introduced a measure of safety into the system of train operation which must always be of first consideration. The installation of these appliances necessarily entails the maintenance of an ever-growing technical staff, but the economies and effectiveness of the new system more than offset any disadvantage through the discarding of the older methods.

The following is a summary of the principal activities of the Signal and Electrical Branch during the year:—

SIGNALLING.

Automatic Signalling.—Automatic signalling has been completed between Christchurch and Addington on the double line, a distance of 1 mile 27 chains, and the Heathcote-Christchurch section is nearing completion. Work on the Dunedin-Mosgiel section has commenced.

Makarewa.—Key-locking has been completed and brought into operation.

Wellington New Station.—Stage three alterations have now been completed, which include the re-location of the Hutt main lines and the engine-roads at Thorndon.

The Kaiwarra signal-box has been dismantled and the line alterations effected in connection with the permanent position of the new station. The main signal-box is under construction, the interlocking-machine and other imported material has come to hand. The interlocking of the junction points at Tawa Flat has commenced and the signalling-power supply-cables and aerial conductors are in the course of erection.

Material for the power and telephone reticulation is now available, and arrangements to proceed with the laying of ducts and cables and the erection of the buildings for the switchgear have been completed.

Equipment for the flood-lighting of the new station-yard has been received and three towers have been erected. These are in use.

The contractor has started the lighting and power work in the new station building.

Okahukura-Stratford.—Home-semaphore and approach-lighted colour-light distant signals have been installed at Whangamomona, Tangarakau, and Ohura.

General.—An interlocking-frame has been installed at the temporary siding at Poro-o-tarao Tunnel.

Alterations and additions to existing signalling and interlocking have been carried out at Morningside, Stratford, Palmerston North, Christchurch, Antigua Street, and Addington.

Repeater light signals have been installed at Whangamarino and Kakariki.

Home and distant signals and Woods locks have been installed at Ruatangata and dismantled at Kamo, Kauri, and Ngawapurua.