

Roads and Level Crossings.—A number of level crossings and approach roads to stations were tar-sealed during the year. Several rail-joints on roadways at level crossings were welded.

Fences and Cattle-stops.—In pursuance of the Government's policy that the Department should undertake the maintenance of all boundary fences in order to relieve adjoining owners of expense in this connection, arrangements were made to put fencing-repair work in hand in all districts.

Buildings.—All buildings have been maintained in satisfactory condition. A dwelling at Woodhill, one at Wiri, one at Morrinsville, and one at Oio were destroyed by fire during the year. A two-roomed car-cleaning storeroom at Thorndon was also burnt down. The station building at Lumsden was destroyed by fire, and arrangements were made to transfer the station building from Dunback to Lumsden to replace the building destroyed. The following structures were damaged by fire during the year: Station building at Melling, workshop at Invercargill, engine-sheds at Fairlie and Waipara, drivers' room at Elmer Lane, and dwellings at Okaihau, Patea, Greatford, Paremata, and Edievale.

Wellington New Station and Yard.—The contractors are up to schedule with the contract for the erection of the new station building at Wellington. The construction of platform fronts and the erection of the verandahs over same is well advanced. The new signal cabin has been erected. A building to accommodate shunters and the yard staff was completed during the year. A new locomotive depot, together with offices and conveniences for the locomotive staff, are now in course of erection.

Mileage.—The total mileage of track open for traffic on the 31st March, 1936, was 3,278 miles 45 chains.

Unemployed Relief.—During the year an average of 213 men were employed on new works at Wellington (exclusive of contract for erection of station building) and an average of forty-four men were engaged on the Puketeraki deviation. The wages for these men were subsidized by the Unemployment Board. An average of twenty sedentary relief workers have been employed assisting in offices. An average of 505 relief workers have been employed over a period of seven months on earthworks for grade easements, deviations, carrying out improvements to the track, cutting noxious weeds, repairing fences, &c.

SIGNAL AND ELECTRICAL.

All installations and apparatus have been maintained in good order and condition.

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

SIGNALLING.

Wellington New Station and Yard.—The interlocking-machine has been installed in the main signal-box. This machine is of the all-electric type, and the first section of thirty-one levers has been brought into use. The machine has a total of 127 levers, and the entire installation will be completed in 1937.

Automatic Signalling.—Automatic signalling has been completed between Heathcote and Christchurch on the double line a distance of 4 miles 24 chains. Work on the Dunedin-Mosgiel Section is being proceeded with.

Porirua.—A complete relay interlocking-system with motor-operated points was installed at this station during the year. This system was designed by the Department's own staff, and the operating-equipment for it was manufactured in the Railway Workshops.

Huntly and Morrinsville.—Work in connection with the installation of power interlocking at these stations was commenced during the year.

General.—Colour light distant signals were installed at Taumarunui, and alterations were made in connection with the provision of an outer home signal in order to provide improved working of level-crossing signals in the locality.

Alterations and additions to existing signalling and interlocking were carried out at Helensville, Koputaroa, Heathcote, and Christchurch.

Home and distant signals and Woods locks have been installed at Te Hana, Morton Mains, and Crichton, and dismantled at Porirua.

Tablet locks interlocking siding-points with the tablet system have been installed at eight service sidings and stations, and similar equipment was removed from eight service sidings and stations during the year.

Frame levers with facing point locks were installed at thirty stations.

The total number of signalling-installations is as follows:—

Miles of single-line automatic signalling	..	..	..	..	190 m. 41 ch.
Miles of double-line automatic signalling	..	..	..	..	68 m. 65 ch.
Automatic crossing-loops	..	..	..	..	33
Automatic switch-locked sidings	..	..	..	..	35
Power interlockings	..	..	..	..	29
Mechanical interlockings	..	..	..	..	96
Interlocked tramway crossings	..	..	..	..	7
Mechanical fixed-signal and Woods locked stations	..	..	..	..	306
Tablet locked sidings	..	..	..	..	270

Block-working.—During the year Te Hana was opened as a tablet station, and Crichton and Durham Road as "switch-out" tablet stations. Maxwell, Topuni, Linton, and Koputaroa Stations were converted to "switch-out" working. The Maxwell installation is a special arrangement, the block being extended over three ordinary sections. The lock-and-block working between Christchurch and Heathcote has been superseded by automatic signalling.