

Introduction

WHEN Julius Vogel was Prime Minister in the early 1870's he carried out a vigorous public works policy as a means of creating prosperity and increasing the population in New Zealand. An extensive scheme of railway construction was undertaken by the General Government with the approval and assistance of the Provincial Governments. A railway between Napier and Palmerston North was projected and surveys of alternative routes undertaken in 1870.

There was a choice of two routes from the port of Napier to Paki Paki: the present one, and another across the Meeanee Flats crossing the Heretaunga Plain some miles west of Hastings. From Paki Paki to Waipukurau, there was little room for argument, and it seems incredible that there could have been any alternative to the present line from Waipukurau to the Manawatu Gorge. Yet trial surveys of three separate routes were made. It is amazing that a survey was made of the line to the east of Hatuma Lake up the Ngahape Valley to Tourere, where there was a choice of crossing the Te Umu Opua Hills by the present Hatuma-Whetukura Road, thence through the Waikopiro and Ngapaeruru Bush to the junction of the Mangatoro and Manawatu Rivers and on to Oringi *or* continuing over Lake Station along the east of the Raikatia Range to the Mangapoaka Creek, thence through the bush to Mangatoro clearing and Otope and Oringi. This route with alternatives is described and numbered "3" on Mr C. Weber's plan, but it is difficult to follow as most of the place names are now unrecognisable. Route No. 1 follows very closely the present main highway from Takapau to Matamatu, and No. 2 was roughly the present line. The surveyors, Messrs J. Stewart and C. Weber, to obtain a bird's eye view of the

district, climbed a high hill near Takapau (Rangitoto) and also a spur of the Ruahine Range.

Settlers on the Ruataniwha Plains were disappointed that the line did not take a direct course by way of Maraekakaho, Gwavas, Tikokino, and Ongaonga to Takapau.

Rails for the first ten-mile section from the Spit (now Ahuriri) to Paki Paki were landed at Napier on 8 April 1872 from the barque "Schiehallion". The contract to lay these rails was let to Messrs John Brodgen and Sons for £49,345.

In 1872 a start had already been made on the line between Napier and the Port, not only to provide relief for unemployed men, but to keep them on hand for the main work. When, later in the year, Messrs Brodgen and Sons began their contract, they made very slow progress, and it was not until 12 October 1874 that the line was open as far as Hastings, although the contract called for it to have reached Paki Paki and be finished by 1 December 1873.

When this 12-mile section of what was then known as the Napier-Paki Paki Railway was opened, there were only two other short lengths of public railway in operation in the North Island, apart from the wooden-railed, horse-drawn Palmerston North-Foxton tramway.

These were the Auckland-Onehunga and the Wellington-Lower Hutt lines, each eight miles in length. Before the opening of the Napier-Hastings line, the total railway route mileage opened throughout New Zealand was 155 miles, a figure which was ultimately to reach almost 3,600 miles.

No official ceremony was held to mark the opening of the new line, but it was reported that a "private picnic" was held by about 100 people to celebrate the historic occasion.

A month later, on 25 November, the two-mile line from Napier to the port of Ahuriri was opened. Passenger train services ran on this line until 1908.

In the meantime a Mr Francis Hicks had given the Minister of Public Works a piece of land on the Karamu Plain for a railway station. At the same time he set aside a hundred acres

in the neighbourhood as a site for a town to be called Hastings.

The first two locomotives for the line were unloaded from the paddle-steamer "Paterson" on 21 November 1873 and were put into service to ballast the line under construction.

The first railway station building at Hastings was officially opened, with the opening of Napier-Hastings section of the Hawke's Bay railway on 12 October 1874.

The station building was apparently erected by Brogdens as part of their contract.

A contract for the construction of the goods shed, for £525, was let in 1875 to one Edward Ashton. An 1884 list of station facilities recorded that Hastings had a "2nd Class" station building, a passenger platform and a "cart road" thereto, a loading bank, and a 100ft by 30ft goods shed. It was also a locomotive coal and watering station.

In the same year, Napier had the same facilities, although its goods shed measured 60ft by 30ft. It also had a crane, an engine shed, and a turntable.

At the same time, Spit had a "3rd Class" station building, a passenger platform and cart road, a 120ft by 30ft goods shed, a loading bank, a cattle yard, a weighbridge, and a turn-table.

Over the years additions and alterations were made to Hastings station and the present building was opened in 1962.

Construction of the first stages of the Hawke's Bay line was recalled in 1938 by Mr G. H. Hatherell who was interviewed by the Hawke's Bay "Daily Mail" in that year.

The Daily Mail report said:

"Mr Hatherell's father, Mr George Hatherell, was one of the original employees who constructed the line from Napier. Before coming to New Zealand Mr Hatherell sen., was a platelayer employed by the Great Western Railway Company in England. When he came to Hawke's Bay and volunteered to work on the construction of the new line he was quickly

engaged when it was learned that he was an experienced platelayer.

"Whereas he had earned 24/- a week in England, he was paid at the rate of 9/- a day in New Zealand, a wage which in those days was exceptionally high.

"At the time of the opening of the Hastings-Paki Paki line the Hastings Railway Station was a plain, square wooden building with no verandah. The platform was formed of rough, timber planks, under which small boys used to climb.

"The station did service as Post Office as well, the station-master holding joint offices.

"Padded seats in the carriages were an undreamed-of luxury; there were no partitions in the cars, and all trains were comprised of goods and passenger vehicles. High speeds were never encouraged, and at best the trains travelled at little more than 25 miles an hour."

Timetables in those early days were not as closely adhered to as today, and on occasions trains would wait for a few minutes to suit the convenience of passengers. The Hatherell family lived close to the railway line about a mile from Paki Paki. When Mrs Hatherell wished to go to Napier for the day a chair would be placed alongside the line, and the accommodating driver would note the signal and halt the train to await the passenger. "They were certainly keen on business in those days," said Mr Hatherell to the "Daily Mail" reporter.

The list of rolling stock on the fledgling railway in 1875 was as follows: one 12-ton 2-4-0 tank locomotive of Class D; two 0-4-0 tank locomotives of Class C; one first class six-wheeled carriage; four six-wheeled composite (1st and 2nd) carriages; three second class six-wheeled carriages; four passenger brake vans; three covered goods wagons; six high-side wagons; 12 low-side wagons; five timber wagons.

Meanwhile, railway construction was continuing on the extension of the railway southward from Hastings, and on 1 January 1875, the Hastings-Paki Paki section was opened.

In the following year the line was opened to Opapa (then Te Aute) on 17 February, Waipawa on 28 August, and Waipukurau on 1 September.

The completion of the Waipukurau railway bridge and the opening of the station were celebrated on 1 September 1876 by a very enthusiastic crowd estimated by the "Herald" correspondent at 800, and described as the "cream of the cream". Triumphant floral arches were erected on the bridge and at the station.

A Miss Herbert, sister-in-law of H. R. Russell, a prominent farmer, broke a bottle of champagne over the engine of the crowded special train from Napier, and christened it "Die Vernon". The large elm which till recently stood at the back of the station was then planted to commemorate the occasion.

Headed by the Napier band, the crowd proceeded to the Tavistock Hotel, then nearly half mile distant, where luncheon continued all the afternoon. Notwithstanding every care on the part of the railway authorities, when the train left for Napier quite a number of people (full of joy and beer) were left behind—they would at least remember the event long after most of the sober passengers had forgotten it.

From 12 March 1877, trains were running through to Takapau, and on 25 January 1878, the line was opened to Kopua, 62 miles south of Napier. To celebrate the event, a general holiday was declared at Napier, and a well-patronised passenger train with 22 carriages ran through to Kopua.

To the great disappointment of the people of Norsewood, the line by-passed their village, as it was taken straight through the bush from Takapau to Dannevirke, which was reached in 1884.

Even Dannevirke, a much larger centre, almost missed having a railway station in the centre of the town. As railway construction neared Dannevirke, a strip of bush, one chain wide was felled along the top of the terrace on the east side of the Mangatera stream, with a view to crossing the stream

near the present racecourse, and having the railway station near Tahoraiti, thus missing Dannevirke by about one mile. Fortunately better counsels prevailed, though the felled line in the Tiratu and Tipapakuku Bush could be plainly seen even 20 years later.

The line finally reached Woodville in 1887. On the day that the line through to Woodville opened, 22 March 1887, hundreds of people, in a queue ten-deep, crowded around the Napier booking office window to purchase tickets for the special train which ran through to the new railhead 95 miles away. Three "large" steam locomotives headed the special train which consisted of 19 carriages and two vans, carrying, according to a contemporary report, a total of 1,500 passengers.

Work on the line through the Manawatu Gorge began in 1888, but connection with Palmerston North was not made until March 1891.

By 9 March 1891, when Woodville and Palmerston North were finally linked by rail through the Manawatu Gorge, the major North Island Government railway ran like a roughly formed letter U from Napier to New Plymouth, and was officially known as the Napier-Taranaki Section of New Zealand Railways.

From this railway branched the Foxton line, by then Government-owned, rebuilt with iron rails and served by locomotives, and the short length of the Main Trunk line which ended a few miles north of Hunterville.

From Longburn, the privately-owned Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company's line branched south to Wellington. Opened in December 1886 and taken over by the Government in December 1908, this line provided the only rail link between the Hawke's Bay line and the Capital until the completion in December 1897 of the Wellington-Woodville line through the Wairarapa district.

The first timetable of through services is dated 11 May 1891. No. 9 express, due out of Napier at 10.45 a.m. con-

nected at Palmerston North with the mail train from New Plymouth, which was timed to leave Palmerston North at 4.51 p.m. and arrive at Longburn four miles to the south at 5.5 p.m.

Here a connection was made with the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company's train due out at 5.10 p.m. and timed to reach Wellington at 9.50 p.m. Total time for the Napier-Wellington run — 11 hours and five minutes.

In the reverse direction passengers left Wellington at 6.30 a.m. by the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company's train, changed at Longburn to a Government train, and again at Palmerston North to the Government Railways' Napier train, to arrive at Napier by 5.45 p.m. Northbound the trip took 11 hours and 15 minutes.

With the completion of the line through the Wairarapa in December 1897 the through Napier-Wellington trains were re-routed via Woodville and Masterton, and over the Fell-operated Rimutaka Incline to Upper Hutt and on to Wellington.

The times for the express trains were then as follows:—Napier was left at 8.05 a.m. and Woodville reached at 12.55 p.m., where a connection was made with the mail train which ran through the Wairarapa to Wellington (Te Aro) reached at 8.37 p.m. On the return journey the train left Te Aro at 7 a.m., connected at Woodville with the Napier train and reached Napier at 7.23 p.m. . . . a total journey time of 12 hours and 23 minutes.

After the purchase of the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company by the Government a through express was again routed through the Manawatu.

Railcars started running from Wellington to Napier and Wairoa when the line to Wairoa was opened in July 1939. The Standard railcars used ran through to Wellington from Wairoa on Saturdays and returned on Sundays, and completed the Napier-Wellington sector in 5 hours 12 minutes.

The mail trains at this time took 7 hours 32 minutes south-

bound and 7 hours 17 minutes northbound.

In 1949 the express between Wellington and Napier had been accelerated to the stage where an average run took 6 hours 58 minutes, with 15 intermediate stops.

The 88-seater articulated railcars started running on the Hawke's Bay line in March 1955 although a daily service was not started until August 1 1955.

The most recent development in Hawke's Bay passenger services was the introduction of the highly successful Endeavour buffet car express on 6 November 1972, which takes five and a half hours for the Napier-Wellington journey.

Locomotives which are known to have regularly worked the Napier Mail over the years are: Class M 2-4-4 tank locomotives, built by Hunslets (UK) in 1875; Class N 2-6-2 tender engines, built by Baldwins (USA) from 1885; Class Ud 4-6-0 tender engines, built by Baldwins for the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company in 1904 and used on the Hawke's Bay line after the company was bought by the Government; Class Ad 4-6-2 tender engines, built by A. and G. Price (Thames NZ) from 1910 and later reclassified A; Class Ab 4-6-2 tender locomotives built from 1915 onwards by NZR workshops, North British Co (UK) and Prices; Class Ka 4-8-4 tender locomotives, built at NZR Hutt workshops from 1939 onwards.

The first locomotives to serve Hawke's Bay were two little 15-ton, 4-wheel, saddle-tank "C" class engines. These were brought to Napier by the contractors, J. Brogden and Sons, who, besides building the Napier-Paki Paki railway, also constructed the Auckland-Onehunga, Wellington-Lower Hutt, Picton-Blenheim, and other colonial New Zealand railways. The locomotives were landed at Napier from Brogdens' own small steamship "Paterson", which was later wrecked on the Waitara River bar.

Larger and more powerful steam locomotives followed the stout little C class, reaching their zenith in power and size in the imposing Ka class locomotives introduced into Hawke's

Bay in the early 1940's.

Today, powerful 78-ton Da class diesel-electric locomotives operating in the area can haul 470-ton goods trains up the steepest climb on the southward run between Napier and Palmerston North, compared with the 130 tons hauled by the most powerful locomotives of 1897. Between Napier and Opapa a Da class locomotive can haul a 1,260-ton south-bound goods train. In 1897 the maximum engine load on the same run was 350 tons.

The construction and early operation of the Hawke's Bay railway was not without its moments of drama.

In 1879, a year after the Takapau-Kopua section had been opened, the New Zealand version of the Great Train Holdup occurred. The incident featured not galloping horses and six-shooters, but a sleeper barricade, a fence across the track, and an angry Maori chief with a tomahawk. Also, the commodity sought by the culprits was not gold, but a man's life.

It all began when a rather tactless guard laid hands on the chief Tohua and ran him out on to a carriage platform after the chief had refused to stop smoking his pipe in a non-smoking carriage. Later, the angry chief had a pile of sleepers laid across the rails and a wire fence erected across the track.

The land over which the railway ran belonged to his tribe and, although negotiations had been made for its purchase by the Government, no payment had yet been made for it. Tohua, it was reported, therefore considered that he was "merely exercising his rights as an owner".

Tohua announced that he had no intention of preventing the trains from going through. All he wanted to do was to hold the train up long enough for him to drag out the guard who had insulted him and tomahawk him.

By the time word of the planned hold-up reached the local authorities the train was already on its way. A message was hurriedly tapped out over the railway telegraph to an intermediate station, warning the guard to keep away from the danger area until the trouble had blown over.

A few years later, while construction work was in progress on the extension of the line further south, it was reported that a certain firm of railway contractors had "levanted, owing a large sum of money in wages".

The angry workmen (called "navvies" by the reporter, a term inherited from the English pre-railway navigation canal diggers) trooped into Dannevirke to protest.

As the birds they sought had flown, their protest took the form of taking entire possession of the local hotel in true, though unarmed, Ned Kelly style. Control of the situation was soon regained, however, by police reinforcements hurriedly despatched from Napier.

Another minor instance of direct action, with permanent results, occurred at Tomoana, near Hastings, in 1881. A new flag station opened there had been named Karamu, a name to which local Maori patriots took exception.

For a few days after the opening of the station the offending station name board remained in place. Then it was removed by the complainants, who replaced it with another board bearing the name Tomoana. And, reported a contemporary newspaper a little later, Tomoana it remains.

On 3 February 1931, a disastrous earthquake caused great havoc in Napier, killing 264 persons, and isolating Napier from the rest of New Zealand. The Railways worked hard to repair their lines and managed to re-establish train services with the south by the 6th February.

Hundreds of refugees were carried away by special trains free of charge, and by this and other services the Railways were able to show of what great value they can be in times of peacetime emergency as well as war.

After the completion of the Napier-Palmerston North railway, 32 years were to elapse before the first section of the Napier-Gisborne railway, upon which work was commenced in 1912, was opened to Eskdale, on 23 July 1923.

By the end of February 1939, the line had been opened to Raupunga, and in July the same year it was opened through

Wairoa to Waikokopu.

Finally, on 1 February 1943, after delays occasioned by war and depression, earthquake and disastrous floods, the rail link was completed and opened right through to Gisborne.

During the first complete financial year after the opening of the 12-mile Napier-Hastings railway in October 1874, the line carried 73,021 passengers at an average fare of 1/8, and 15,283 tons of goods and livestock for a total revenue of £6,083. By the end of the year concerned (to June 1876), the line had been opened as far as Opapa, 26 miles from Napier, and the navvies and plate-layers were pressing on toward Waipukurau.

In March 1887, the railway was open to Woodville, 94 miles from Napier, and in the following year it carried 69,883 tons of goods and livestock, including 37,217 tons of timber and firewood mainly from country stations to Hastings and Napier. In addition, 156,769 ordinary passenger tickets and 504 season tickets were issued.

Today, the outward traffic alone consigned from stations between Napier Port and Dannevirke amounts to practically 400,000 tons, plus some 700,000 head of sheep and cattle. In addition, the railway brings in several hundred thousand more tons of goods, and carries much through traffic to and from stations north of Napier and south or west of Woodville.

Passengers today no longer include many of the short-distance travellers who made up the numbers 60 and 70 years ago, but rather the inter-city travellers of the fast long-distance services. Today, stations between Napier and Dannevirke book about 100,000 journeys a year at an average fare of \$1.40 each, representing an average journey of about 90 miles per passenger. Today Napier is the Railway's administration centre in Hawkes' Bay. The Area Traffic Manager is in charge from Paki Paki in the south to Kotemaori in the north. The Train Control Office controls all trains in the area between Woodville and Gisborne. It also controls the supply of wagons and trains for that area. Also

stationed at Napier are locomotives, railcars, engine crews, and guards. Wagons are repaired at the workshops.

Recently the Hawke's Bay line was chosen as the venue for testing a sophisticated computerised wagon control system which is centred on Napier, and covers the line from Woodville through to Gisborne. The new system, which replaces the standard method of laboriously recording wagon movements and orders, allows railway staff to check on the position and status (loaded, unloaded etc) of any wagon on the Hawke's Bay line.

The results are twofold—a better service for customers who can quickly be told of the progress of their consignments, and for the Railways a better utilisation of wagons.

The signs are that this pioneering computer installation will be extended over all busy sections of the Railways in the next few years and that its impact will rank in effectiveness along with more visible modernisation schemes, such as new locomotives and rolling stock, new signalling systems and new stations.

It is fitting that the Hawke's Bay line should be chosen for this undoubtedly successful pilot scheme in its 100th year.
