

Hinton Bridge.

THE OPENING CEREMONY.

The ceremony in connection with the opening of the Hinton Bridge was performed with great eclat yesterday afternoon in the presence of about 1200 residents of the immediate surrounding districts by the Hon. John See, Chief Secretary. The bridge, which is a handsome and substantial structure, was designed by Mr. E. M. De Burgh, Assistant Engineer for Bridges in the Public Works Department, under the direction of Mr. Hickson, Under-Secretary for Public Works and Commissioner for Roads. The contract for the construction was let to Mr. S. McGill in 1898 for £2846, and the work of constructing 110 chains of road on Phoenix Park side to connect with Morpeth Bridge was put in hand. The bridge is 516 feet in length, made up of eight timber spans—six of 35 feet each and two of 50 feet each. There are also two timber truss spans of 92 feet 3 inches each, and a steel lift span on iron cylinder piers. The latter gives a clear opening for river traffic of 20 feet 5 inches, and can be raised so as to give a headway of 25 feet 6 inches above flood, or 45 feet above high water. In consequence of a few extras not provided for in the specifications, the contract price had been exceeded by about £200, and the total cost of the structure will be about £10,145. The manner in which the work has been carried out reflects considerable credit on the contractor who it will be collected has erected several bridges in the district, the most recent being Morpeth and Dunmore Bridges. The work was carried out under the personal supervision of Mr. J. O. Ferguson, Bridge Inspector, Department of Roads and Bridges, who also had the supervision of the other works mentioned as having been erected by Mr. McGill.

A casual visitor to the township yesterday could not fail to have been impressed with the fact that not only something unusual was about to take place but something of great moment to the residents. In short the town had assumed its holiday attire. Flags and bunting were displayed, not only from business places but many private dwellings were similarly decorated. The Union Jack, the Royal Standard and Irish and Scottish national flags fluttered gaily in the breeze from the four standards in connection with the lifting section of the bridge while streamers of bannercettes crossed and interlaced the main street at various points. The proceedings opened about half past 11 o'clock by a procession of pupils of the schools in the district headed by the Morpeth Brass Band, under the conduct of their Bandmaster W. H. Morrow. The children to the number of about 750 were mustered at the entrance to the bridge and marched along the main street to Stuart Park where they were regaled with cakes, tea and other refreshments. The following schools took part in the demonstration: Morpeth Public School, Morpeth Convent, Miss Chisholm's Private School, Miss Tierney's Private School, all under the care of Mr. J. Kelly; Large Public School and Convent under the care of Mr. M. Hoban; Iona Public School, under the care of Mr. Irwin; Wallalong Public School, under the care of Mr. J. S. Soling; Nelson's Plains Public School, under the care of Mr. V. Steinbeck; Hinton Public School, under the care of Mr. W. J. Broadfoot, and assistant teachers. The procession and subsequent picnic on the Park could not by any means be described as a magnificent success. The children after marching about a mile and a half along a dusty road in sweltering heat arrived at the Park where they were crowded into a marquee not large enough to accommodate half of them comfortably. It must be admitted that the committee did all they possibly could to make the children comfortable with the means at their disposal. In any future demonstration, however, some better arrangement should be made for the children. All arrangements in connection with the event were carried out by the following committees: Demonstration Committee: Mr. James Stuart, J.P. (chairman), Mr. James Ling (vice-chairman), John Bramble, J.P. (hon. treasurer), Mr. William J. Broadfoot, hon. secretary, Reception Committee: Messrs. George Ling, H. D. Portus, Mr. F. E. Fox (Mayor of Morpeth), Major Waddy, Messrs. W. Scott, James Beattie, H. Cronker, John Keen, G. D. Keddewhite, J. J. Pearse, G. H. Stephens, M. Murphy, T. H. Mann, Thos. Campbell, Revs. D. W. Davies, and H. Hinton. There were also committees dealing with catering, procession, and decorations. The undermentioned ladies lent the various committees valuable assistance in connection with the demonstration: Mesdames Bramble, Robson, Pascook, Wiffen, Stephens, Beattie, Inne, Misses Wilkinson (2), M. Peacock, Cullip, Atkins (4), Beaves, Ling (2), Hamilton, See, Stephens (2), Newman (2), Watson, Jones, Innes, Thomas and Yates. A steamer was kindly lent free of charge to the Committee to convey the pupils of the Woodville, Large, and Wallalong Schools to the ground, and Mr. Lavis conveyed the pupils of Nelson's Plains School to the ground in his van.

The Hon. John See, Chief Secretary, accompanied by Messrs. W. Bennett, R. Atkinson, Price, A. D. Nelson, W. Higgins, Major Ferris, and W. Spruson, M.P., the Hon. W. A. Meek, M.L.C., and Mr. E. M. de Burgh (Assistant Engineer for Bridges) arrived at Morpeth at half-past 2 o'clock. The Minister and party were received on the railway platform and formerly welcomed to the town and district by Mr. F. S. Fox (Mayor of Morpeth) on behalf of the Reception Committee. The party then entered

the district by Mr. F. S. Fox (Mayor of Morpeth) on behalf of the Reception Committee. The party then entered a drag and were driven to Hinton, thence to Stuart Park where the picnic to the school children was being held. Here the party was entertained at an admirably arranged luncheon provided by Mr. W. J. Snayson, of West Maitland, in the usual excellent style. Mr. James Stuart, J.P., President of the Hinton Progress Association, occupied the chair, and among those present in addition to the members of the Ministerial party, were the Mayor of Morpeth (Mr. F. S. Fox), the ex-Mayor of Morpeth (Mr. J. G. White), the Mayor of East Maitland (Mr. J. H. P. Waller), the ex-Mayor of West Maitland (Colonel Wilkinson), Messrs. E. M. de Burgh (Assistant Engineer for Bridges), and H. G. Edgell (Roads Superintendent). The toasts honoured were—"The King," "The Governor-General," "The State Ministry," and "The State Parliament."

The Hon. JOHN SEE, in responding to the toast of "The State Ministry," said it afforded him great pleasure to be present that day to take part in the important ceremony which they were about to perform. He had to thank his friend Mr. Bennett for his courtesy in inviting him to perform the ceremony of opening the Hinton Bridge. Personally he was glad to have the opportunity to come back to Hinton, a district with which he had been associated in his boyhood some forty years ago. He was also pleased to meet a number of old friends, many of whom were present. Many of these friends, however, had passed away, and in the old cemetery by the church were the remains of his beloved parents. He would always be pleased to visit the town. The Government of which he had the honour to be a member had at all times attempted to do its duty, and in that he claimed they had succeeded. They had succeeded in giving legislative effect to much that would live long in the memory of the people of New South Wales. The latest work of the Government had been the forging of the link of the chain of the Federation of the Australia colonies, and he trusted that the people would complete that great work by sending sterling men who could be depended on into the Federal Parliament.

Messrs. Bennett, Nelson, Meek, and Price having each briefly responded to the toast, a Ministerial party re-entered the drag and were driven to the bridge, when the opening ceremony was performed. At the Hinton end of the bridge a large concourse of people had collected, and some difficulty was experienced in making a passage to enable the Ministerial party to reach the centre of the structure, where the ceremony was to take place.

Mr. Stuart, President of the Hinton Progress Committee, opened the proceedings by explaining that they had met that day to complete a work for which the people of Hinton had long been urging the Government to carry out. It was upward of thirty-five years since the suggestion was made that a bridge should be constructed at that place. From time to time during that long period public meetings were held and deputations from the district interviewed successive Ministers, urging the claims of the district to a bridge. Nothing was done, at least no definite promise was made, until about seven years ago, when they invited Sir William Lyne to a banquet and obtained from him an assurance that the work would be carried out. That promise Sir William Lyne had redeemed, for which they must all feel grateful; not only to him but to the Government of which he is the respected head. There was one matter he would like to mention: That bottle of wine which was to be used in connection with the ceremony, was one that was served from the banquet tendered to Sir William Lyne seven years ago. In conclusion he requested Mr. See to declare the bridge open to the public, and to request Mrs. T. H. Pearse to name the structure.

The Hon. JOHN SEE then formally declared the bridge open to the public. He then directed Mrs. Pearse to cut the ribbon by which a bottle of wine was suspended and to name the bridge.

Mrs. T. H. PEARSE having severed the ribbon and the bottle having been smashed said: "I name this bridge 'The Hinton Bridge.'"

The Hon. JOHN SEE then delivered an address from the balcony of Sharp's Hotel. He said he much appreciated the honour that had been conferred upon him by asking him to open that handsome structure which now spanned the river. The opening of the Hinton Bridge completed a line of communication between East Maitland and Morpeth and the district lying on the left banks of the Paterson and Hunter rivers, including Woodville, Wallalong, Bowthorne, and adjacent townships. Hitherto the traffic had been carried across the Hunter River at a point just below the junction of the Paterson by a ferry; while prior to the opening of the Morpeth Bridge in 1898 another ferry, worked by hand, was the only means of communication between Morpeth and the fertile area known as Phoenix Park. Since 1882 the claims of the district to an improved means of communication were constantly urged on the Department of Public Works, and when in 1896 a contract for the Morpeth Bridge to connect that town with Phoenix Park was accepted, it was recognised that a bridge over the Paterson must follow. So far as the through traffic was concerned, one bridge at Hinton ferry would have been sufficient, but in that case the residents of Phoenix Park would have derived the benefit, and would have remained with no better access to high land in flood time than they had before. Added to this

benefit, and would have remained with no better access to high land in flood time than they had before. Added to this any bridge erected at Hinton Ferry would need an opening span capable of accommodating the large steamers which trade on the Hunter as far as Morpeth, while for bridging the Hunter above that town a fixed bridge sufficed, and a comparatively small opening in the Hinton bridge would have met the requirements of the vessels trading on the Paterson. The Morpeth Bridge, a timber structure 925 feet long, was completed at a cost of £2,855 10s 3d in 1898, and in 1899 a contract was let for the Hinton Bridge for £9,845, and the work of constructing the chains of road on Phoenix Park to connect the two bridges was put in hand. The Hinton bridge was 510 feet in length, made up of 8 timber spans (6 of 25 feet each and 2 of 30 feet each). Two timber truss spans of 92 feet 3 inches each, and a steel lift span on iron cylinder piers which gave a clear opening for river traffic of 59 feet 5 inches, and could be raised so as to give a headway of 26 feet 6 inches above flood, or 45 feet above high water. This was the second lifting bridge constructed by the Public Works Department over the Paterson, the old bridge at Dromore having been replaced by a lifting bridge in 1899, and there are now nine bridges constructed on that principle in the State, four on the Darling, three on the Murray, and two on the Paterson, while another was almost completed across the Tweed. In the Hinton Bridge advantage has been taken of the experience gained elsewhere, and the roadway on the lifting portion of the bridge was wider than had hitherto been provided, while at the same time the cost of the structure had been reduced. Both of these bridges had been designed by Mr. de Burgh, Assistant-Engineer for Bridges in the Public Works Department, under the direction of Mr. Jackson, the Under-Secretary of Public Works and Commissioner of Roads. The contract for the whole work was let to Mr. S. McCall, the same contractor who carried out the Morpeth Bridge; the iron and steel work was manufactured by Messrs. Pope, Maher, and Company; and the steel ropes which support the lifting span and counterpoise—a total of 34 tons—were manufactured by Messrs. Gullivant and Company, and supplied by the agents in Sydney.

on the accomplishment of a very important and necessary work. There were two or three places at which bridges over the Hunter were necessary and he with his friend Mr. Bennett had determined to urge their claims to attention by the Government. One of them was between Nelson's Plains and Raymond Terrace. He apologised for the absence of the Hon. E. W. O'Sullivan who was prevented from being present on that occasion by a prior engagement to visit the Riverina district. This brought the proceedings to a termination, and the Ministerial party left in time to join the 4.50 p.m. train at Morpeth.

The completed cost of the Morpeth and Hinton Bridges, with the connecting roads, may be set down at £21,000. The Minister of Works had decided that so soon as the Hunter Steam Ferry (which will no longer be needed at that place) was overhauled, it will take up the running at Raymond Terrace, while the Raymond Terrace steam ferry will be transferred to Nelson's Plains, where hitherto a handworked punt has been used. He trusted that the bridge would facilitate the traffic from both sides of the river, and tend to the progress and prosperity of the district generally. He complimented the contractor for the excellent manner in which the work had been carried out. The Government of which he was a member had, he claimed, given attention to the roads, bridges and means of internal traffic which had been neglected by their predecessors. They had placed an additional road vote of £135,000 in the estimates making the total expenditure on such works £700,000 for the current year. They recognised the necessity of works such as roads being kept in repair if they wished to settle the people on the land. They were on the eve of a very important legislative change, but he desired to say he was not one of those who thought the advent of Federation would lessen the importance of the State Legislature. The requirements of the vast territory of this State would have to be attended to, and it would never sink, as some had declared, to the status of a mere municipal institution. He congratulated them on having such a capable and energetic representative as Mr. Bennett, and so long as they had his services he could assure them that their interests would not suffer. With respect to the federal campaign he was of opinion that too much must be a compromise. It would not be wise to adopt a policy that would benefit one State and militate against the interests of others. There must be a national policy in which the best interests of all the States will be conserved. He certainly would not be in favour of a policy that would have the effect of destroying established or growing industries, or that would militate against the chances of our young men being provided with stable and permanent employment. Self-preservation was the first law of nature and consequently their aim should be to guard and protect the interests of those Australians who had to come after them, against the competition of foreign or alien labour. He assured them he was pleased to be with them on that occasion, and to have been afforded the privilege of declaring Hinton Bridge open to the public.

Mr. W. BENNETT, M.P., was pleased to see such a large gathering at the opening of the bridge. He had been asked to perform the ceremony, but as he was only a common member of Parliament, he thought it would be better to have a member of the Ministry present. He, therefore, requested Mr. See to come up and perform the ceremony which he kindly consented to do. He referred to the facilities for traffic the bridge would afford the residents, and the great possibilities of the Hunter Valley which he considered was destined to become the Birmingham of Australia.

Mr. R. ATKINSON PRICE, M.P., congratulated the residents on the accomplishment of a very important and necessary work. There were two or three places at which bridges over the