

## THE OLD TARATA BRIDGE

LOC 7423  
**BUILT 63 YEARS AGO  
FOR £1200**

Mr. Fred Clare, Ngamotu Beach, New Plymouth, is the only man living to-day who worked on the original Tarata Bridge 63 years ago.

The old bridge is now being replaced by a modern structure. Mr. Clare can still remember even the smallest detail of the months of heart-breaking work it took to complete the bridge.

The Tarata bridge spans the Waitara River 11 miles east of Inglewood.

The bridge was designed by the late Mr. G. F. Robinson, who at the time was Public Works engineer for the district. The contractors were the late Messrs. T. Clare and S. Rundle.

Mr. Clare said that 60,000 super feet of timber was needed for the job with the exception of brace blocks, which were hardwood. The remainder of the timber was all totara and was supplied by a sawmill in the Ashhurst district at a cost of 14/- per 100 feet and was railed to Durham Road the nearest side line to the bridge. The contract to get the timber to the site was let to two different contractors.

### **BULLOCKS USED.**

To get to the site the contractors used bullocks to drag the timber over 11 miles of mud road. Both contractors failed, losing several bullocks in the attempt. As no other contractors could be found, Mr. Fred Clare and his two older brothers had the firm purchase 11 pairs of bullocks and then completed the work themselves.

"It was a heart-breaking job," said Mr. Clare. "Often the 36ft. piles would drag the bullocks over the bank on a treacherous zig-zag bend near the site, into the gullies below. Through delays at the sawmill the job ran into two winters.

"With the bad roads and heavy floods I never wanted to see any more of that district. However, over 30 years ago, I was persuaded by a younger brother, the late Mr. W. J. Clare, to tender for the redecking of the bridge. The men had to work again in the middle of the winter.

"The old structure is now in a bad state of repair and has had to be strengthened with wire rope cables. The cost of the old bridge with a few extras was £1200; the new bridge with its little deviation is to cost about £29,000," said Mr. Clare.