

the Department conveys them from Te Wairoa to Waimangu over Lakes Tarawera and Rotomahana, or *vice versa*. The Department's charge is 11s. per passenger, including guiding. This new tour has become one of the most popular in the district. The Department built good rowing-boats for Lakes Tarawera and Rotomahana, erected a boat-shed and landing at each lake, formed a number of tracks to enable the approaches to the lakes to be traversed in comfort, and built two shelter-sheds near Waimangu. The expenditure for maintenance and construction of boats, boat-sheds, shelter-sheds, &c., up to the 31st March last, was £516 17s. 11d. The receipts, although the tour was only opened in December, amounted to £565 5s., showing a net profit of £48, after paying for all equipment and working-expenses. The organization of the trip has therefore been an unqualified success. The receipts for the year ending the 31st March, 1904, are estimated to reach £1,500. The rowing-boats now on the lakes, though capable of carrying some twenty-four passengers on each trip, have already been found too small for the work required of them, and I have to recommend that a steam-launch be placed on Tarawera and another on Rotomahana at the earliest possible date.

This excursion includes a view of Waimangu and a row over boiling water on Lake Rotomahana, and is unquestionably unique, and the most attractive tour in the thermal district. The policy of keeping such trips under Government control is, I think, one that will ultimately prove of great benefit to the tourist traffic, and of considerable financial value to the Government.

The construction of the boats, &c., for the Waimangu tour was carried out by Chief Guide Warbrick, who is in charge of these trips.

A question worthy of consideration is the desirability or otherwise of erecting barriers of some description to prevent visitors from entering the prohibited area immediately surrounding the crater-basin of Waimangu. The large stones, &c., ejected from the geyser frequently fall a considerable distance beyond the margin of the crater, and owing to visitors approaching dangerously close to the crater it has been found necessary to erect notice-boards defining the limit of safety. These warnings, and the admonitions of the guide, have not always, however, deterred people from going within the danger radius. Barbed-wire fences would probably serve the purpose, but I am reluctant to recommend their erection, as they would in a measure detract from the strikingly weird character of Waimangu surroundings.

The demand for accommodation in the vicinity of Waimangu has been so persistently urged that the Government decided to erect an accommodation-house close at hand. A contract for a suitable building to contain fifteen rooms was let, and the work of construction will shortly be completed. The building occupies a prominent position overlooking the geyser, so that from the verandah or the dining-room or sitting-room windows a good view of the geyser in action can be had.

This house will be open for the accommodation of visitors before next tourist season begins. The popularity of the geyser is such that, although the building will accommodate fifteen to twenty guests, I am convinced that it will be found necessary to provide additional bedrooms at an early date. There is every reason to believe that this house will prove a financial success.

ORAKEI KORAKO.

At the instance of this Department, the Roads Department is constructing a coach-road from Atiamuri to Orakei Korako, along the banks of the Waikato River. This road will open up a very fine scenic drive on the journey between Rotorua and Taupo, and the interesting Geyser Valley of Orakei Korako will be an agreeable break in the long coach trip. It is expected to be in readiness for traffic by the coming summer. A boat has been built by Guide Warbrick, and placed on the Waikato River to replace the Maori canoe used in ferrying visitors across from Orakei Korako to the terraces and the Alum Cave on the opposite bank.

The sum of £37 has been spent during the year in making new tracks and repairing existing ones.

This district is little visited at present, but is certain to become one of the popular resorts in the thermal-springs region. Its remarkable silica terraces of many colours, its beautiful iridescent cave, its geysers, and excellent mineral waters will secure for the place a wide celebrity in years to come.

TAUPO DOMAIN.

In March last a sum of £250 was paid to the Taupo Domain Board for improvements to the Domain. During the year the Board planted 270 trees obtained from the Forestry Department; of that number 250 are reported to be growing. Further planting will be done during the year, and it is proposed to lay down an asphalt tennis-court for the use of visitors.

TOKAANU—WANGANUI RIVER ROAD.

In connection with the Wanganui-Lake Taupo route a new road is proposed from Te Rena, on the upper Wanganui River, to Tokaanu, on the southern shores of Lake Taupo. The Public Works Department's officers report that there is a good route for such a road, which would reduce the journey from the Wanganui River to Lake Taupo from two days (as at present) to six hours. Te Rena has been fixed upon as the southern terminus of this new road, because it is at a convenient stage on the Main Trunk Railway route, some distance below Taumarunui.

Messrs. Hatrick and Co., of Wanganui, expect to be able to reach this locality with a river-launch next tourist season, and also possibly to navigate the river as high as Taumarunui. Te Rena will occupy an important position in the near future as a station on the Wanganui-Taupo route, and also as a stage on the round trip down the Main Trunk Railway from Auckland, and across country to Taupo and Rotorua, or *vice versa*. The proposed road, which will traverse a portion of the Waimarino Forest, will provide a fine scenic drive, and it is desirable that it should be constructed as soon as possible.

Should the head of power-launch navigation be fixed at Te Rena, the route thence to Lake Taupo will obviate the present long journey from Pipiriki to Tokaanu by way of Waiouru.