

During the season five parties made the traverse of Mount Annette (7,351 ft.) by the Sebastopol Ridge, returning to the Hermitage by the Sealey Range, making a most interesting round trip. Four crossings of the Ball Pass were also made; and excursions to the Tasman, Hooker, Mueller, and Stocking Glaciers, Sebastopol, and other points of interest were well patronized.

Owing to the increased popularity and improved conditions of South Westland and its glaciers a number of parties crossed over the Copland Pass from the Westland side to the Hermitage, and other parties from the Hermitage crossed into Westland, several doing the round trip by crossing Graham's Saddle from Malte Brun Hut to the Franz Josef Glacier, and returning to the Hermitage via Copland, or *vice versa*.

It is with deep regret that I have to refer to the first fatal alpine tragedy which has occurred in the vicinity of the Hermitage, and which resulted in loss of Mr. S. L. King, A.C., of England, and two of the senior guides, D. Thompson and J. Richmond.

After making their successful ascent of Mount Cook on the 22nd February, and when descending the Linda Glacier on the return to their bivouac, the party was overwhelmed by a huge avalanche off the divide north of Mount Dampier. A strong search party was formed and a thorough search made. Richmond's body was eventually found, but those of Mr. King and Thomson still remain buried in the Linda Glacier, and all hope of their recovery had to be abandoned.

Guide Graham in his report says, "I shall not dwell on the long, tedious, and weary hours put in by the search party, and the sad duty which was performed by the guiding staff and their willing helpers in bringing in the remains of their lost comrade. I wish, however, to take this opportunity, on behalf of the staff and myself, to express our grateful appreciation and thanks to all those who gave such helpful assistance at the time, and also to those who sent messages of sympathy in such a sad and trying experience."

Having been at the Hermitage at the time, I would like also to place on record my appreciation of the work of the rescue party, and the extraordinary hardships endured by them. Graham was at the Hooker Hut when at midnight news of the non-arrival of Mr. King's party was received, and he immediately started back through a dreadful storm to the Hermitage—seven miles—every foot a struggle with the elements—and formed a search party, consisting of himself, Guides Brass and Milne, and Conrad Kain, who had just crossed over Mount Cook, but making nothing of his fatigue, joined the rescue party. At the bivouac the guides were joined by two other climbers—Messrs. Turner and Dennistoun—and the thanks of the Department are due also to these gentlemen for the untiring way in which they assisted in the search and the dreary work of transporting the body of J. Richmond to the Hermitage.

TE ANAU—MILFORD TRACK.

The revenue from this track is disappointing at first glance, but after taking into consideration the various events of the year, including the counter attraction of the Auckland Exhibition, the decrease is easily explained. Early in the season, also, a heavy flood swept away the approaches to the Mararoa Bridge, preventing motor-cars going through from Lumsden to Te Anau, and, until repairs were effected, the traffic was naturally detrimentally affected. Including steamer fares on Lake Te Anau, the total revenue amounted to £1,207, a decrease of £364 on the previous year.

At the commencement of the season the whole of the drainpipes at Glade House were taken up and new ones put down, and minor repairs and improvements made to the house. The track, which suffered considerably during the winter months, was put in first-class order, and at a point three miles and a half from Glade House, where the Clinton River had completely washed the track away, it was necessary to blast a path through solid rock.

The Arthur River Bridge was washed away during the year, but has been replaced by a much stronger structure, and the track is now in splendid order. I look forward with great confidence to an increased traffic over this route, which is undoubtedly one of great beauty and interest. The district is now so easily accessible, by train and motor-car, from Dunedin or Invercargill, and is of such surpassing grandeur, that it is certain to command a largely increased number of visitors year by year. No pains have been spared by the Government in improving the track, and the accommodation-houses are in charge of experienced people.

During the year a cairn was erected on the top of Mackinnon's Pass in memory of its discoverer, the late Quintin Mackinnon. The work, which was most arduous, was carried out by the track staff, assisted by a stonemason. No one without a knowledge of the country can properly appreciate the difficulty of transporting a marble slab weighing 9 cwt. to the top of the Pass, 4,500 ft.; but this was accomplished without a mishap by members of the guiding staff.

The work of the Otago Advancement Society in booming the attractions of the lakes district has been of great value in augmenting the traffic to the different resorts, and the Department has been glad to co-operate with the society in furthering its efforts. With the increased interest taken in the development of the scenic resorts of this districts and its unrivalled beauties, it is safe to predict a heavy traffic during the coming season should there be no deterrent as had to be contended with in the past year.

WAKATIPU—TE ANAU TRACK.

The Wakatipu—Te Anau Track has been fairly well patronized during the year, and I am pleased to report that Messrs. Graves and Talbot, accompanied by the District Surveyor at Otautau, and one of the guides from the Hermitage, Mount Cook, made a successful exploration of the direct route from Lake Wakatipu to Milford Sound, discovered by Messrs. Graves and Talbot three years ago.

It is hoped that next season a considerable amount of work will be done in opening up this track, and that the erection of sleeping-huts at suitable points will enable the round trip from Te Anau to Milford and thence to Lake Wakatipu to be made without difficulty.