

TE ANAU—MILFORD SOUND TRACK.

An exceptionally heavy year's traffic was experienced on the Milford Track, and was capably and successfully dealt with by the manager and staff. The track was opened on the 1st November, and the first boat from Te Anau arrived on the 3rd November. Visitors toured from all parts of the globe to do the walk. The accommodation at Glade House was greatly overtaxed during the busy times, and the extra accommodation at the huts, which was completed during the winter months, proved its need. In fact, at times this was insufficient.

The work on the track has progressed steadily and harmoniously this season, the hut-keepers, track hands, and staff at Glade House having carried out their various duties with every satisfaction. Coming on the heels of a very severe winter and also late spring, the track was found to be in a bad condition, much of last season's track-work having been undone by avalanches, washouts, landslides, &c. Extra hands had to be employed to cope with these difficulties. As a result of this extra labour the track is now in first-class order throughout. Heavy rains followed by high floods have been prevalent during the summer, thus greatly increasing the difficulties of timber-hauling, bridge-building, and packing of stores, &c.

The launch at Milford Sound has been kept busy running extra trips on the sound, in addition to the ordinary routine. This has been much appreciated by visitors.

The improvements and additions to the Department's house at Te Anau, leased to Mr. Govan, have been completed, and the comfort of travellers thereby very much enhanced. The steamer "Tawera" ran regularly on the lake during the season, and did its work very well. The steamer is getting out-of-date, and the question of a new one must be faced before many seasons pass, especially when the new hostel is erected at Milford.

It is understood also that the track from Manapouri to George Sound, under control of Mr. L. Murrell, had a busy season and was well patronized. Business at Manapouri was also good, and the house and steamer were kept fully occupied.

QUEENSTOWN.

This has been undoubtedly a record year for visitors to Queenstown. Very favourable comments have been received from visitors as to the excellent condition of the gardens, playing-greens, &c. A tea-kiosk was built as an addition to the bowling pavilion, and visitors to the grounds can now enjoy light refreshments without returning to the town for them. New lavatories have been built in the park, and many minor improvements have also been effected. An amount has been placed on the estimates for a hut on Ben Lomond. The Queenstown Progress League has done good propaganda work, in which the Department has rendered them assistance.

STEWART ISLAND.

Owing probably to the large number of Southlanders visiting the Dunedin Exhibition, it is reported that this favourite tourist resort has not had quite such a large number of visitors this season as in the preceding one.

The Department has made provision on the estimates for granting a subsidy of £1 for £1 towards tennis-courts, which will no doubt prove a great added attraction to visitors. On the recommendation of the Department the Public Works spent a sum on improving the tracks, &c., on the island during the year. When the proposed new steamer is in commission it is safe to predict a large increase in visitors, as the present vessel is totally inadequate for tourist traffic.

NEW ZEALAND AGENCIES.

These have all been conducted in a most satisfactory and efficient manner, and the returns from them have shown a remarkable increase, particularly in Auckland and Wellington. The Auckland increase is in the main due to the establishment of the new offices in Queen Street, instead of being in the old Government Buildings in Customs Street. This has proved the correctness of my contention for some years that we were losing good business in Auckland by the unsuitability of our offices. In Wellington also the taking of new offices in the Huddart-Parker Building at the head of the Queen's Wharf has justified the expenditure.

The figures from the various agencies are,—

	1924-25.			1925-26.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Auckland	14,562	6	2	41,853	0	2
Rotorua	4,736	18	3	6,562	6	7
Wellington	23,850	18	11	36,153	13	10
Christchurch	23,439	9	8	23,579	14	1
Dunedin	13,551	4	8	25,235	9	11
Invercargill	4,272	4	4	6,042	3	9
Te Aroha	96	9	8	122	7	11
Greymouth	1,548	14	4	3,228	7	1
Nelson	59	3	6	791	10	10
Government Departments' orders	11,311	4	1
	<u>£86,117</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>£154,879</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>3</u>

OVERSEAS AGENCIES.

Reports from the Australian agencies show that there was a large amount of business done not only for this, but for other Departments. Mr. Manson (Melbourne) in his report states :—

"The prosperous times enjoyed in the Commonwealth, the improved industrial outlook, and the better all-round conditions prevailing throughout the year have been of material assistance to the more successful working of our offices. With restored confidence in things generally and less shipping trouble, many people in Australia have felt more disposed to take the risk of a visit to New Zealand than has been the case for some years past, owing to the uncertainty of getting back again. This