

1931.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

PUBLIC DOMAINS AND NATIONAL PARKS OF NEW ZEALAND

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 1st July, 1931.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the public domains and national parks of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1931.

I have, &c.,

W. ROBERTSON,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

The Hon. E. A. Ransom, Minister of Lands.

REPORT.

PART I.—PUBLIC DOMAINS.

THE work of providing new domain areas for the recreation and enjoyment of the public received the usual attention during the year. Twenty-two new domains, covering a total area of some 1,200 acres, were brought under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. Boards have been appointed to control seventeen of the new areas, and appointments will be made in due course for the other five. Additions totalling 435 acres were also made to twenty-two existing domains. The total number of domains administered under Part II of the Act is now 738, comprising an aggregate area of approximately 73,300 acres. The various Commissioners of Crown Lands administer forty-seven of these domains, 271 are controlled by local authorities acting as Domain Boards, while the remainder are under the care of local Boards appointed from time to time.

Of the new domains set apart during the year some special features were connected with the constitution of the Motuihi Island Domain in the Hauraki Gulf. This island, containing an area of approximately 432 acres, was purchased by the Crown in 1872 under the Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870, and was later set apart as a station for the performance of quarantine under the Public Health Act, 1872, and as a quarantine ground for stock for the purposes of the Diseased Cattle Act, 1881. In December, 1928, permission was granted to the Auckland City Council to use portion of the land for domain purposes upon certain conditions which necessitated the erection of a substantial fence to enclose that portion of the island on which the quarantine buildings stood. The Council had also incurred other expenditure incidental to the use of the land for domain purposes. Section 16 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1929, validated this expenditure, and provided that pending the vesting of control in the Council as a Domain Board the Council should have all the powers of a Domain Board with respect to that portion of the island then in its possession.

In July, 1930, an area of 410 acres of the island was set apart for the purposes of a recreation-ground, and this area was brought under Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, as the Motuihi Island Domain. The City Council was thereupon appointed as a Domain Board to have the control and management, subject, however, to certain reservations and conditions providing particularly for the maintenance of the water-supply for use in connection with the quarantine station, and for the closing of the island should at any time such action be necessitated by quarantine requirements or by a national or other emergency. The Council, which contemplates the expenditure of considerable sums in effecting improvements for the benefit of people visiting the island, desired to be granted certain additional powers over the domain, and special legislation was therefore promoted (see the Auckland City Council and Motuihi Island Domain Board Empowering Act, 1930) giving the Council the following powers and authorities:—

- (a) The right to make and enforce reasonable charges for persons landing on or using the domain or the foreshore thereof, including additional or special charges for the use of any building, structure, or enclosure.
- (b) All the rights and powers the Council has in relation to land acquired under section 302 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1920, for the purpose of the enjoyment or recreation of the public.
- (c) The right to use, control, and maintain the wharf abutting on the domain, and to renew or repair the same.
- (d) The right to control the whole of the foreshore fronting the domain down to low-water mark of spring tides.
- (e) The right to close the domain and the foreshore thereof when vessels are in quarantine, or when on account of disease among stock at the quarantine station such closing is advisable, or when the Crown requires the domain in the event of a national emergency.

Orders in Council were issued appointing sixty-three Boards to control domains for further terms, while over one hundred vacancies on some eighty Boards were filled by the appointment of suitable persons nominated by the residents of the particular districts concerned. Additional members were appointed to the Hamilton, Te Naumai, Waimangaroa, and Patearoa Domain Boards. Nine gentlemen were appointed to control the Horowhenua Lake Domain pursuant to the provisions of section 2 of the Horowhenua Lake Act, 1905, and section 97 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1916.

Miscellaneous documents issued included Proclamations adding certain closed roads to the Waikiekie, Te Teko, Whaingaroa, and Rahotu Domains; a Warrant authorizing the erection of a public hall on the Carluke Domain; and Orders in Council uniting the Beckenham, Cashmere Hills, Richmond, and Spreydon Domains and the Katikati and Uritawa Domains.

Permission was granted nineteen Domain Boards to increase the charges for admission to their respective domains on special occasions during the year.

Several sets of by-laws were approved, and permission granted in four cases for the setting-apart of parking-places and camping-sites in public domains.

The reservation over the whole of the Pelorus and Coal Creek Flat Domains, and over portions of the Ruawai and Vigor Brown Domains was revoked during the year. The first-named domain comprised a small island in the Pelorus River, and had been controlled by the Marlborough County Council acting as a Domain Board. It had never been used for recreation purposes, and as blackberry had obtained a good hold the County Council decided to hand back the reserve to the Department. The land, now that the reservation has been revoked, will be disposed of to the best advantage under the Land Act. In the case of the Coal Creek Flat Domain the local Domain Board allowed the reserve to become infested with broom and other noxious weeds, and, as all endeavours to induce them to clean up the area and place it in proper order met with failure, the Department arranged to revoke the reservation and sell the land. The portion of the Ruawai Domain dealt with comprised an area of $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres separated from the rest of the domain and having no road access. The land was not used for recreation, or likely ever to be required for the purpose, and arrangements were therefore made for its sale, the proceeds to be used for the improvement of the remainder of the domain. In the case of the Vigor Brown Domain an isolated section of half an acre not required for domain purposes was sold to provide funds for carrying out improvements on the main reserve.

The members of the Kaiarau Domain Board submitted their resignations during the year, and the control of the reserve will be taken over by the Department until such time as the people of the district desire to use the land for recreation purposes.

The Cashmere, Wairoa, and Waikouaiti Domain Boards purchased additional areas during the year under the provisions of section 39 of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928.

An exchange was completed of a small portion of the Selwyn Domain at Mission Bay, Auckland, for an area owned by the Melanesian Trust Board.

Section 132 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1921, gave the Rhodes Park Domain Board power to sell the old domain and to apply the proceeds towards payment of a debt incurred in the purchase of a new domain of much higher value. It was found impossible to sell the old domain to advantage, and the matter was finally adjusted during the year by the Board's creditor generously offering to accept the land in full discharge of the debt owing to him.

The Auckland Farmers' Freezing Co., Ltd., very generously donated an area of approximately 15 acres at Moerewa as a public domain. The land is very suitable for recreation purposes, and has been placed under the control of a Domain Board of local residents.

The control of portion of the foreshore at Tomahawk, Dunedin, was vested in the local Domain Board under the provisions of section 158 of the Harbours Act, 1923.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1930, dealt with two matters affecting public domains, and requiring special legislation.

Authority was provided for the Crown, with the consent of the Palmerston North City Council, to grant to the Wanganui Education Board a lease of portion of the Palmerston North Domain as a site for swimming-baths for use primarily by the children attending the Hokowhitu School. The area concerned is approximately half an acre, and the general public are to have the right to use the baths at certain hours of the day.

The Rahotu Domain Board was empowered to pay compensation, not exceeding £50, to the former lessee of portion of the domain. The lease granted did not provide for compensation; but the lessee, with the knowledge and approval of the Board, effected certain improvements which increased the value of the land for leasing purposes, and for which the Board agreed to pay reasonable compensation. After full investigation it was considered equitable that the Board should be empowered to honour its arrangement with the lessee, and legislative authority was provided accordingly.

PART II.—NATIONAL PARKS.

No new parks were constituted during the year, but various areas of Crown land and reserves were added to the Arthur Pass National Park under section 71 of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. Certain small subdivisions in the Arthur's Pass Township were also added to this park under the authority of section 8 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1930. Some of the sections had been let on temporary tenancies by the Land Board as sites for huts and cottages; but the Park Board has now been granted full control, with power to lease sections upon such terms and conditions as the Minister approves. Arthur's Pass is rapidly becoming a popular resort, and it is considered desirable that the Board should have authority over the township area, situated as it is in the heart of the park, so as to effectively control the land and regulate the leasing of the subdivisions.

Extracts from the annual reports of the Tongariro, Egmont, Arthur Pass, and Peel Forest Boards are appended hereto.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF PARK BOARDS.

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

(W. ROBERTSON, Under-Secretary for Lands, Chairman.)

It is with regret that the Board records the inability of the Tongariro Park Tourist Co., Ltd., to carry on with the running of the Chateau. On the 2nd February, 1931, a resolution was passed for the winding-up of the company, and the Board entered into possession of the Chateau at the close of business on Friday, the 20th February. An application was made to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Wanganui, on the 27th February, 1931, for the sale of the leasehold and chattels comprised in the Board's securities, and on the 30th March the leasehold was bought in at auction on behalf of the Board for £46,000 and the chattels for £15,000. The Board is now in full possession of the Chateau and other buildings erected by the company at Whakapapa, subject to the loan charges with respect to the moneys borrowed from the Public Trustee. All steps taken by the Board in regard to entering into possession and subsequent sale under conduct of the Registrar of the Supreme Court were with the approval of the Hon. the Minister of Finance. Immediately upon entering into possession the Board appointed a Manager and staff to carry on the running of the Chateau, so as to ensure that accommodation and other services would be available for the enjoyment of the public. Arrangements were also made with Webbs Motors, of Raetihi, to run a suitable transport service to and from the Chateau. There has been no break in the continuity of these services.

Questions relating to drainage, heating, lighting and power, development of golf-links, repairs to buildings, &c., are now engaging the attention of the Board.

It is evident that with the present financial depression and the falling-off of the tourist traffic, the Board will have some difficulty in carrying on the running of the Chateau, unless assistance is granted until times improve. The position will be carefully watched and reports submitted to the Government from time to time. Notwithstanding the depression, the park has been visited by large parties during the holidays and the winter-sports season should see a large gathering at the Chateau for ski-ing and winter climbing.

ROADS AND TRACKS.

Roads.

Bruce Road Main Highway.—No construction work was carried out on this road during the year under review. Ordinary maintenance work was undertaken by the Prisons Department, the metal being boxed up where necessary.

Whakapapa-Mangatepopo Road.—As stated in last year's report, formation on this road has been completed for a distance of a little over a mile. No further construction work was carried out on this road during the year, but the culverting of the portion already formed was completed, nine culverts of an aggregate length of 250 ft. being laid.

Whakapapa-Scoria Flat Road.—A length of 1 mile 11 chains of this road has been formed to a width of 14 ft., and nine culverts of an aggregate length of 167 ft. have been laid. A start was made with the erection of a bridge across the Whakapapa Stream of length 27 ft. and roadway 7 ft. wide. This road, when completed for its full distance of three miles and a quarter, will provide excellent access to the ski-ing grounds on the slopes of Mount Ruapehu.

Tracks.

A new footbridge has been erected across the Waiuku Stream and a good track has been formed through the bush for a distance of one mile and a half. This track, when completed, will open up a new and interesting route to the Tawhai Falls. The Main Tama Track for some distance has been trenched and widened, and a new track has been formed close to the Taranaki Falls. The Waihohonu Valley route for a distance of about two miles has been poled, indicating the direction to the hut. Repair work has also been carried out on the Main Ruapehu Track, and poles have been put in indicating the route to the Glacier Hut. The track to the Silica Springs has been repaired and a footbridge erected across the Whakapapa Stream. A further footbridge has been erected across the Upper Taranaki Stream. At Ohakune the track from the hut to the Mangaturuturu Valley was poled and general track maintenance carried out. The maintenance of existing tracks and the opening-up of new routes is an important feature in connection with the future development of the park. It is now possible for visitors to walk for many miles through bush and plain, broken by waterfalls and mountain streams, but much has yet to be done in the way of track formation to enable the public to fully appreciate the beauties of the park.

Finance.—The Board in entering into possession of the Chateau on the 20th February, 1931, was faced with a considerable outlay for the purchase of stores, printing, advertising, and other incidental expenses.

Debenture (No. 4) for £1,356 16s. 5d., being one of the series of seventy-three issued in 1929 in connection with the loan of £40,000 from the Public Trustee, fell due on the 1st March, 1931, and payment was made by the Government out of the Consolidated Fund under the provisions of section 36 of the Finance Act, 1928.

During the year the bequest of £100 (with accrued interest) under the will of the late Mr. W. Salt was received from the Public Trustee, and the sum will be expended on some appropriate work in the park.

EGMONT NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

(T. C. LIST, Chairman.)

During the past twelve months the Egmont National Park Board has continued to carry out its duties of conservation and administration over the area comprised in the Egmont National Park, and although good work has been done, the activities of the Board have been considerably curtailed, owing to the necessity of conserving its funds in view of the uncertainty of the financial position in the future.

Valuable financial assistance was again available from the trustees of the estate of R. C. Bruce, to the extent of £250, by way of grant. This sum is made available conditional on it being expended on afforestation or the making of tracks, and conditional also on a like amount being contributed by local bodies surrounding the mountain.

The local bodies now realize the enormous importance of the work of the Egmont National Park Board to the Province of Taranaki generally, and contributions have been made as in former years. The funds derived from local-body contributions are allocated to the various local committees to assist in the essential work of the committees in maintaining tracks and houses. In view of the financial assistance received in this manner, it is possible for the Egmont National Park Board to apply its funds derived from the opossum royalties and sale of trapping-rights, together with any grant received from the Government, to carry on the work of the extermination of goats, so vital to the preservation of the Native flora on Mount Egmont. In addition, the mountain is ranged for trespassing cattle, illicit trapping of opossums, removal of timber, and destruction of Native bird life.

The sale of dead timber has yielded a small financial return to the Park Board over the past twelve months, and this phase of the Board's operations is under the direct control of an officer to ensure that the true principles of conservation are adhered to, and only dead timber is permitted to be removed.

For the period under review 1,291 goats have been destroyed, making a total of 4,280 altogether destroyed since the commencement of operations three years ago. Although the total elimination of this menace will take some years to effect, very good work has already been done and many acres of Native forest, which were totally denuded of undergrowth, are now showing rapid regeneration and, provided the work is carried out continuously, the conservation of the forest will be assured.

A number of goats are still reported to exist on the Pouakai Ranges, although these ranges have been worked over on several occasions. The Kaitake Ranges have been gone over again this season, and it appears evident that a number of the animals work in from neighbouring farms during the winter period.

It is particularly pleasing to note that the undergrowth is developing again in a very marked degree over areas which were definitely menaced a few years ago, and this is most encouraging to all those who have the interests of our Native flora at heart.

The Board has a very great responsibility in respect of the adequate fencing of the park lands against the neighbouring farms surrounding the mountain. The completion of fencing in many places is the only solution to prevention of trespass from wandering stock, and it is hoped in future years to direct more attention to this essential part of the Board's programme of work.

Legislation.—A draft amending Bill dealing with certain phases of the Board's work and its relations with the various committees, and also dealing with matters relating to the keeping of accounts and the auditing of same, has been prepared, and is being submitted for parliamentary action during the coming session.

Afforestation.—A total area of 255½ acres has now been planted on the northern slopes of the Kaitake Ranges between Oakura and Tataraimake. The trees consist principally of *Pinus radiata*, which had to be planted to suppress the tremendous growth of gorse, blackberry, and ragwort, which was previously the subject of constant complaint from the farmers in this district. Other trees planted are *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *Eucalyptus* (the principal varieties being *fastigata*, *maidenii*, *Macarthuri*, *botryoides*, and *viminalis*), *Acacia decurrens* variety *mollis*, and a very small number of *Sequoia sempervirens* (Californian redwood) and *Abies Douglasii* (Douglas fir). The latter two varieties have been planted in a moist valley known as Lucy's Gully, which is surrounded by Native forest. The acacia have been planted with the object of supplying future needs for posts of the Egmont National Park Board.

The whole planted area is very conspicuous from the Main South Road, and it elicits much favourable comment from the neighbouring farmers and those visiting the district. This plantation is a splendid example of weed-suppression, as the area was formerly covered in dense gorse, fern, blackberry, ragwort, &c., and with approximately three more years' growth, the whole area should be fully clothed with forest growth, and complete suppression of weeds assured.

A further very important point in this connection is the protection afforded the Native forest behind the plantation. In previous years the forest-line was inclined to recede owing to occasional fires, but with the protection now afforded, the Native forest is making rapid growth and development along with the newly planted areas of exotic trees.

By-laws and Letters of Delegation to Local Committees.—New by-laws have been gazetted and letters of delegation of certain powers of the Board to the various local committees are now in operation, and their effect in the effective administration of the Board is already noticeable.

Local Committees.—The various local committees have again co-operated with the Board in catering for the many thousands of visitors to the park, but, owing to the financial slump experienced during the year, the admission charges and house fees show a decrease as compared with the returns for the previous year.

North Committee.—Besides carrying out the usual work of maintaining houses, grounds, and road, the committee has improved the tracks, prepared camping-grounds, and metalled and rolled the lower mile of the road in the reserve.

Access to North Mount Egmont is now available by means of an excellent road, and visitors can secure comfortable accommodation at very reasonable charges.

South Committee.—Many improvements have been made by this committee during the year. The Syme Hut, situated on Fantham's Peak, about 6,000 ft. above sea-level, has been completed, and is proving a very popular attraction. The car-parking area has been enlarged, four miles and a half of new tracks have been formed, including a new track to the foot of Fantham's Peak. A ski track has been prepared about one mile above the hostel, and the grazing-paddock cleared of stumps.

East Committee.—This committee has done considerable work in improving the area under its charge. During the year the houses have been renovated and furnished, new tracks have been formed, a car-parking area made, and general improvements to the grounds effected. The road from the reserve to the accommodation-houses has been metalled, and a road formed above the houses to a height of 4,000 ft. This work has been carried out by unemployed men.

West Committee.—Owing to the rather isolated position of its accommodation-house, this committee has been handicapped in many respects, but with the small amount of money available excellent work has been accomplished. The house has been repaired, tracks maintained, one new track formed, and everything done by the committee to cater for the visiting public. The committee has also assisted the Board materially in conserving the forest.

North Egmont Hostelry, Ltd.—This company has done everything possible to maintain an attractive, up-to-date, and comfortable hostel. The tariff has been reduced and tourists are assured of every attention. Outbuildings have been painted and repaired, the inside of the hostel renovated, and grounds improved. As a result of the improvements effected, considerable increase in the number of visitors has resulted.

Alpine Clubs.—During the past year the support received from the three alpine clubs in Taranaki has been of great assistance to the Board.

ARTHUR PASS NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

(W. STEWART, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch, Chairman.)

This report covers the first complete year of the Board's activities, the Board having been instituted on the 19th September, 1929. The year has been marked by considerable activity and progress, and already much benefit has resulted from the Board's work. There have been four meetings of the full Board, and four committee meetings. The various aspects of the Board's work will be dealt with separately.

Finance.—Finance has presented a considerably greater difficulty than was anticipated at the beginning of the year. The Christchurch City Council promised to give the sum of £500, provided other local bodies between them contributed a like sum. The economic depression through which the country is passing has made that sum difficult of attainment. However, the sum of £315 has been donated by local bodies, both in Canterbury and Westland, and the Christchurch City Council has paid over £350. It is hoped that later on further representations to local bodies will meet with success. The Board is, nevertheless, grateful to those who have contributed. The canvass of the various Councils has had the desirable effect of stimulating interest in the Board's work.

Expenditure has so far been kept to a minimum, as the Board has been carefully considering the best sites for improvements, and what are the most desirable improvements to make.

Township.—During the year the Government transferred to the Board all the Crown land in the Arthur's Pass Township. The area included over one hundred surveyed residential allotments, of which fifty were already leased. The Board decided to grant renewable leases over these holdings for terms of seven years. The lease has been prepared, and is at present awaiting the approval of the Hon. the Minister of Lands. When this has been received, the unoccupied sections will be advertised, and the present occupiers will be given an opportunity of acquiring a lease of their holdings. The Board is thus provided with what may be regarded as an endowment fund which, as a sure source of revenue, will prove very useful in the future.

Extension of Park.—Additions have been made to the park totalling 2,621 acres. Most of the area concerned comprised reserves within the boundary of the park, and were excluded when the park was first constituted. The park boundaries have been thereby considerably simplified.

Deer.—The park has been divided into six deer blocks, all of which have been licensed for stalking at different periods. While this has produced a little revenue, the Board will doubtless evolve a more comprehensive scheme for dealing with the deer menace and, at the same time, make some revenue. The general restrictions have been raised, and therefore the Board is entitled to initiate its own scheme.

Publicity.—The Board is much indebted to the Christchurch and West Coast press for the facilities placed at the Board's disposal for publicity. The newspapers have exhibited a gratifying interest in and support of all the Board's efforts.

Railway Surcharge.—Strong endeavours have been made to obtain from the Railways Department a surcharge on all excursion tickets to the park. The Board has contended that the revenue thus derived would be expended on improvements that would add to the convenience and pleasure of excursionists, and have the result of enhancing the popularity of the park. It was considered reasonable that as the Board was expending moneys on improvements there should be reciprocation on the part of the Railways Department. The Department, however, declined the application, and

was later supported in this attitude by the Minister of Railways on the two chief grounds that the Department was not represented on the Board, and that the surcharge would have the effect of diminishing the patronage of the excursions.

Use of Park.—There is no doubt whatever that the facilities provided by the park for sport, picnicking, and holiday-making have never before been so greatly utilized. The weekly excursions organized by the Railways Department carried an average of six hundred passengers, and, on one day, 1,400 were carried. Altogether, it is stated 7,162 people visited the park in this way. The Christchurch Ski Club had a successful year, although there was the poorest fall of snow for many years. It is probably true to say that the activities of the club were largely responsible for the number of visitors to the park. The membership of the club increased very considerably, and there are even better prospects for the next season. The club has done a large amount of observation and exploration work with a view to determining the best grounds for sports. Permission has been obtained from the Board to use the Hills Peak ground, and it is the club's intention to clear this area. The club members have worked very amicably with the Board, and have displayed every desire to render every possible assistance. At present negotiations are in train for the erection of a mountain hut by the Board for the use of the club and the public. The club has made an open offer in this connection of monetary assistance and voluntary labour.

The number of casual visitors to the park has also much increased. Without doubt, when the necessary amenities for visitors are provided by the Board, there will be a still greater influx. Mountain-climbing has been much indulged in, with the result that there are but few peaks unconquered. Fortunately, there have been no serious accidents to mar the year's record.

Works and Grounds.—The following report is submitted by Dr. William McKay, Chairman of the Grounds Committee: The Grounds Committee have much pleasure in reporting that during the past year the park has increased much in public favour. As was anticipated, this park is becoming renowned as the only one of its kind in the Dominion that can be visited and enjoyed by day excursionists from the centres of population. Realizing this fact, the committee have advocated a policy of, first of all, providing facilities which can be enjoyed by the multitude, and with this end in view have carried out improvements to existing tracks and have formed new ones. These have been so graded and cleaned that even moderate walkers will find them easy, and will be able to reach the various points of vantage.

The Bealey Glacier Track, being always a popular one, received particular attention, as a result of which it is now in excellent order. Avalanche Peak affords splendid and extensive views of the surrounding country, and as the ascent is commenced quite close to the Arthur Pass Railway-station, a considerable amount of care has been taken in grading and forming the track. This climb should soon become one of the favourite excursions of visitors to the park, as even the first few hundred feet opens up views of a series of excellent waterfalls.

On the Westland side a first-class track has been laid down from the main highway to the saddle on Kelly's Range, at a height of over 4,000 ft. This is a key position to much magnificent open mountain country, and will soon establish itself as a popular tramp, both for mountaineers and the general public.

Negotiations with the Railways Department resulted in the Board securing the suspension bridge leading over the River Bealey to the Punch Bowl, and also the lease of the land in the vicinity. This being a favourite spot with holiday-makers, and there being very fine camping and picnicking grounds on the other side, the Board instructed our committee to have the bridge repaired. This was carried out very satisfactorily by the ranger, the steel ropes being tightened up and hardwood planking laid down. Unfortunately, the heavy floods in January undermined one of the anchors, so that the bridge carried away. We are pleased to report, however, that most of the material has been salvaged. Whether this bridge should be rebuilt, and, if so, in what locality, will be a subject for discussion by the Board.

Other matters attended to have been the providing of open-air fireplaces, erecting of sign-posts and guiding-flags on the various tracks. Warning notices and copies of by-laws have also been placed in conspicuous positions.

The question of erecting a suitable shelter at the settlement received attention, various designs being dealt with, but before one had been adopted it was learned that there was a probability of securing the disused school building at a favourable price. After examining this building and noting what repairs would be necessary, the committee resolved that it would recommend to the Board its purchase on certain terms.

The Christchurch Ski Club, having approached the Board on several occasions with a view of obtaining assistance in the erection of a mountain hut on the Blimit Range, your committee carefully examined the possibility of forming a horse-track up this mountain, so as to facilitate transport of the required material. It soon became obvious, however, that on account of the nature of the country, the cost of such a work would be prohibitive. Even a graded 2 ft. track would be beyond the present means of the Board.

The Canterbury Automobile Association have promised to co-operate with the Board in the selection of a suitable site for a motor camping-ground within the park. The unfavourable weather conditions have prevented the carrying-out of the necessary preliminaries, but it is hoped that before next summer something definite will be accomplished.

We wish to place on record our appreciation of the valuable services rendered gratuitously by Mr. James McKay, surveyor, who made several trips to the park and spared no pains in examining and discussing the various matters submitted to him. We also cordially commend the work done by our Ranger, Mr. C. E. Warden, who has always shown enthusiasm in his duties and loyalty to the interests of the Board.

PEEL FOREST BOARD.

(J. M. H. TRIPP, Chairman.)

Improvements.—During the year the following work has been carried out: A new fence has been erected along the south-east boundary of Reserve 1554. The remains of the plantation on Reserve 1803 has been cleaned up, the firewood being stacked in cords ready for sale. The track from Deer Spur to Acland Falls has been completed. At Te Wanahu Flat the springs which have been very troublesome have been tapped by pipe drains, and an open drain has been formed along the north-east boundary to carry the water to the side channel on the roadway, along which the fence has been repaired, and gate erected. This flat requires reploughing and working, and next season when laid down will form an ideal parking-place for cars, and later a sports-ground.

Opossums.—One hundred and twenty-eight opossums were trapped by the ranger, and the skins were sold; although in better condition than usual, the price obtained was poor. All noxious weeds have been cut and grubbed, and the tracks are in good order.

Wekas.—Those birds that were turned out last year have been heard at various times, and we hope they will increase.

Visitors.—The summer proved fine and warm, so a great many people visited the forest, especially on Sundays and holidays. Twenty-seven parties made use of the camping-grounds, and large numbers of picnickers used the fireplaces and shelters. We were very glad to welcome so many members of the Canterbury and South Canterbury Automobile Associations to the forest on the 1st March, when the weather was perfect. They were met by members of the Board, and spoke in very appreciative terms of the developments being carried out.

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