

A number of conducted party tourists visited the Sound from the North Island, and notable visitors included Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Lady Freyberg and party, Ministers of the Crown (including the Hon. the Minister in Charge of Tourist and Health Resorts), and the Ministers of the United States of America, France, and the Netherlands.

Plans have been formulated for additions to staff quarters and for recreational amenities.

*Tongariro National Park.—The Chateau Tongariro:* The Chateau Tongariro remained unoccupied during the year, and no renovations to the building have been undertaken.

The hydro-electric-power installation, which was damaged extensively by abrasive ash ejected from Mount Ruapehu, was restored to full running-order in August by the Public Works Department. The system is not altogether satisfactory, as deposits of ash continue to enter the intake and tend to block the pipe-line following heavy rains. At such times the plant has to be shut down to obviate risks of blockage of hydro pipes and the known disastrous effects of ash on moving machinery. Whenever the Whakapapanui River is high it carries large quantities of ash. In the previous report it was stated that a source of ash-free water was being sought for guests' purposes. This ash-free source has now been located and a survey for a pipe-line has been made. It is hoped that some work may soon commence on the fresh-water supply.

Subsequent activity on Mount Ruapehu involved the ejection of very little ash, most eruptions being of steam and other vapours.

It is proposed to start the boilers and continue the central heating system of the hotel throughout the winter to help to maintain the building in a good state of repair. The cold and damp at that time of the year has a detrimental effect on walls, ceilings, fittings, &c.

The various huts and lodges in the vicinity of the Chateau Tongariro were maintained and made available for hire. Full advantage was taken of huts by members of ski clubs and by winter sports enthusiasts and others. Accommodation for 100 persons was provided, and each week-end from 1st July, 1946, to 31st March, 1947, the huts and lodges were fully occupied.

Steps were taken in October to restore the golf-links, which had lain idle since the Mental Hospitals Department took over the hotel temporarily. This asset has been prevented from reversion to tussock and will be ready for use when the Chateau Tongariro again reopens.

*The Thermal Region.—Wairakei Hotel:* This hotel, formerly conducted by Wairakei Ltd. (and for some time in the temporary possession of the Mental Hospitals Department), together with the lands and appurtenances associated with it, was acquired by the Department during the year.

Arrangements are being made for the complete renovation and refurnishing of the hotel and for the development and improvement of facilities and amenities which have fallen into disuse in recent years.

A Manager has been appointed, and the hotel will be opened for tourist business at the first possible opportunity. In the meantime, the operation of the principal side-trips, for which the resort is widely and favourably known, has continued under the conductorship of a former employee of Wairakei Ltd., now on the Department's local staff.

*Lake Pukaki.—Pukaki Hotel:* The Department's hotel at Pukaki, one of the original staging-places for horse-drawn tourist vehicles before the advent of more rapid transport, has been leased to private individuals for many years.

In view of pending hydro-electric developments at Lake Pukaki, which will submerge the site of the hotel, arrangements are in hand for the transfer of the premises to an improved situation some distance away.