

(f) MOUNT COOK (THE HERMITAGE)

This resort becomes increasingly popular year by year. The latest figures show a 12½-per-cent. increase on the previous year. It can be claimed that the extension of facilities for the comfort and entertainment of guests is reflected in this increasing popularity.

Maintenance and general work were carried out as usual and a comprehensive scheme of fire protection has been planned and tested. The immediate surroundings of the hotel have been improved.

A most successful winter sports season was experienced, and the installation of two ski tows on Ball Glacier proved a great attraction to ski-ers and spectators alike. Climbing conditions were excellent and the total number of peaks ascended was 98. There was a large number of trans-alpine crossings via the Copland Pass and Graham Saddle. The services of the Department's guides were in great demand. The Hermitage is the headquarters for the training of young men as mountain guides, and activities in this direction have produced good results. They are the means of furnishing technical assistance to climbers and also bring experience and skill to search and rescue operations.

The rebuilding of the high-altitude Haast and Hooker Huts was completed during the year, and aircraft were used to supply building-materials to the Mueller and Malte Brun Huts. These two huts will be repaired and reconditioned thoroughly as soon as weather conditions permit. The Ball Hut was renovated and extended and new quarters for staff were added. Plans are well advanced for an increased water-supply and for hot showers, which will be appreciated by the increasing numbers of visitors to this snow-sports base.

Garage accommodation at the Hermitage, destroyed by fire some months ago, has been restored. There were one or two very short periods during the year when the hotel was isolated because of heavy flood damage to the access road. Bridge and road works in progress will serve to minimize this inconvenience in the future.

Until recently the Hermitage depended on a party-line service, but it now enjoys direct telephone communication with all parts of New Zealand.

(g) FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER (GLACIER HOTEL)

This hotel has just completed its first full year under the Department's control. Increasing popularity is evidenced by New Zealand residents and overseas tourists who visit this resort. The Department's plans for renovations, improvements, and extensions scheduled for attention within the next few months are most urgently needed to meet the requirements of the visitors.

An interesting phenomenon reported by the Manager is the rapid advance of the Franz Josef Glacier. After having for sixteen years receded up its valley, the glacier is now entering a period of fast forward movement. The rate of ice-movement during the past twelve months averages 2 ft. per day at the terminal face. Recently the lake at the foot of the glacier's terminal moraine has disappeared.

Sightseeing side-trips, additional to the most popular glacier excursion, have been provided for visitors. The principal subsidiary excursion at this resort is a cruise on Lake Mapourika, where a new launch is located, and where splendid reflections of the mountains and Franz Josef Glacier are features. Climbing during the season was restricted to trans-alpine journeys to the Hermitage. These are becoming more and more popular and the services of the Department's local guiding staff are accordingly in increasing demand.

The aerodrome at the Glacier Hotel has been well maintained. Many visitors make their first acquaintance with air travel here, and invariably concede that it is a novel way of becoming more familiar with the magnificent alpine, lake, glacier, and forest scenery for which the region is renowned.

The farm associated with the hotel continues to be a most useful adjunct for the supply of fresh meat, milk, poultry, &c., to the hotel.