

## WAITOMO CAVES.

At present the Waitomo Limestone Caves, in the vicinity of Otorohanga, King-country, are partly owned by the Natives. It is advisable, for the better preservation and management of these beautiful caves, that the Government should secure sole control. Already they have been greatly disfigured by thoughtless vandals, and if not put under proper control at a very early date the caves will be irreparably injured.

## KAWHIA DISTRICT.

Around the shores of Kawhia Harbour there is some beautiful native vegetation which it is advisable should be preserved from destruction. Close to Kawhia township there are several fine old pohutukawa trees, probably the largest in existence outside the Hauraki Gulf and adjacent waters. One of these trees is known to the Maoris as the "Papa-o-Karewa," and another as "Tangi-te-Korowhiti." The great overarching roots of the latter formed a cave which was formerly used as a dwelling-place. Both trees were sacred in the olden days, and were associated with some of the remarkable ceremonies of the local Maoris. Unfortunately they are being undermined by the sea, which at high water washes up under their roots, and they will sooner or later fall unless some steps are taken to protect them. I would suggest that a stone breastwork or sea-wall should be built round each tree and filled in with earth, in order to protect them from the tide. It may seem a small matter to single out particular trees for preservation, but these fine growths of centuries are well worth saving from destruction.

The Rakaunui Creek, an arm of Kawhia Harbour, and the Marokopa River, about twelve miles south of Kawhia, are two beautiful streams, the surrounding lands of which should be preserved for scenic purposes. The Piripiri Caves, said to be larger than Waitomo, are on the banks of Marokopa River.

The great drawback to Kawhia as a tourist resort is the condition of the road from Pirongia to Kawhia Harbour. It is for a great part of the year impassable for vehicles. The horse-track from Otorohanga to Kawhia should also be improved. This track permits visitors reaching Kawhia *via* Waitomo Caves.

## THE MOKAU RIVER.

Recently an officer of this Department visited the Mokau district, and canoed up the Mokau River from the Heads to the terminus of traffic, a distance of about forty-five miles, thence travelling through the King-country, with a view to gauging the value of the route as a scenic track. When the river is rendered navigable for power-launches or steamers to the vicinity of the present head of canoe traffic, it will undoubtedly become a popular route of travel, offering as it does some of the finest forest and river scenery in the Island. At present the Mokau is only navigable by steamers for about twenty-two miles; above this there are numerous rapids, averaging about one to every three-quarters of a mile, until Totoro, the head of canoe navigation, is reached. An unroaded gap of two or three miles separates the river-head from Mahoenui, the nearest point on the Kuti-Mokau Main Road. From here the railway-station at Te Kuti may be easily reached in a day. Between Waitara and Mokau Heads the main road passes through country abounding in fine landscapes, and crosses over a high ridge of Mount Messenger, an off-spur of the Parininihi Range. The road over this mountain is at times in bad condition, owing to the nature of the country, but in the summer season it is, as a rule, in fairly good order.

## TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK.

Two huts, one on Mount Tongariro and one at the foot of Mount Ruapehu, have been erected during this year. These will be a very great convenience to climbers. The attractions of this park are becoming better known, and consequently the number of visitors has greatly increased.

## TOKAANU-PIPIRIKI ROAD.

A luncheon-room has been erected at the end of the first stage from Tokaanu, in order to provide shelter for travellers there, and convenience for obtaining tea, &c. This building supplies a much-felt want; hitherto, in wet weather, travellers were compelled to take their luncheon in the stables.

The road from Tokaanu to Pipiriki urgently requires repairs in several parts. There have been more complaints concerning this coaching-road than any other similar road in the colony.

## THE WANGANUI RIVER.

Since the extension of the Auckland railway-line to Taumarunui and the inauguration of power-launch traffic from Pipiriki to that point, the Wanganui River has become increasingly popular as a tourist route. The trip down this beautiful waterway for nearly 140 miles makes one of the finest pleasure routes in New Zealand. A great deal has been done to render the upper portion of the river navigable, but a number of the rapids are still very serious and often dangerous obstacles. Snagging was proceeding during the past summer a short distance below Taumarunui. Every season sees an improvement in the navigable condition of the river, but considerable work is still needed in places. Messrs. Hatrick and Co. are providing for next season a large and comfortably equipped house-boat, which will be moored on the river at a point between Pipiriki and Taumarunui, and it is expected that an improved class of vessel will make the connection with the railway terminus.

## MOUNT EGMONT.

The ascent of Mount Egmont is becoming a more popular holiday climb every summer. For the season 1903-4 the visitors' books at the various mountain-houses showed that many more