

In addition to the usual traffic the guide conducted sixty-one excursion passengers from the excursion-steamer "Waikare" from Milford Sound to Sutherland Falls.

The bulk of tourists who passed over the track did so without guides, and the question of abolishing guiding-fees and substituting a smaller charge, to be applied to all persons leaving Glade House for Milford Sound, is now under consideration, such charge to cover use of track, ferrying across the Clinton River, and for the use of the chair or boat on Arthur River, an extra charge to be made for the boats on Lake Ada if used, guides to be provided at a moderate charge for those who require their services.

It is also proposed to station cooks at the principal huts: this has been found necessary in the interests of economic working. Hitherto all provisions for the huts have been carried by the guides, but during the coming season it is proposed to place pack-horses on the track for this purpose.

The huts' accommodation to Mintaro and Sutherland Falls stages is not adequate for the traffic, and improvements should be undertaken at an early date.

Two more rowing-boats are required on Lake Ada, and a track should be made from the junction of the Cleddau and Tutoko Rivers to the Tutoko Glacier. This track will open up a most interesting trip for visitors to the sounds.

I regret to have to report that owing to carelessness on the part of persons quarrying for greenstone in the sounds some of the native bush has been burned. Destruction of native vegetation in this district cannot be regarded as other than a national loss.

The key to the development of the whole of this overland trip is the steamer service on Lake Te Anau. I have again to repeat the strong recommendation made in last report for the purchase of this steamer by the Government. The Postal Department and this Department are now contributing £300 per annum by way of subsidy and for carriage of mails, and for this amount adequate return is not being received, and the tourist traffic is not receiving that attention and encouragement which could be given it were the boat under the control of this Department.

I am pleased to record that the recommendation made in last report that the Government should reserve a large area in the Fiords County, embracing the wild and rugged country between Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri and the west coast (with the exception of such portions as may be fit for settlement), for the preservation of native fauna and flora, has been given effect to. This great region of mountain, forest, and lake is henceforth to be a grand national park and a home for the native birds. Inquiries are being made as to the suitability of any portions of the country for settlement.

The setting aside of the Fiords land reserve is to be gazetted shortly, but the Lands and Survey Department is not at present able to put in hand such a costly work as the topographical survey of this large area of rugged and only partially explored country.

In the meantime the Clinton and Arthur Valleys are being reserved for "internal communication," in order to enable the Department to make regulations for the proper control of the traffic over Milford Track and the use of the huts. As these parts abound in native birds, including the tui, kiwi, kakapo, blue mountain-duck, &c., feathered life will be protected, and will continue to be an interesting feature of the overland route from the great scenic lakes to Milford Sound.

Routes to other Sounds.

The opening-up of overland routes to the numerous magnificent sounds south of Milford is a work of great magnitude, and can hardly be coped with for some years to come, except in so far as concerns the tracks from Lake Manapouri to the head of Doubtful Sound, and from Te Anau to George Sound.

For the protection of the boats at Doubtful Sound a shed has recently been erected by this Department. The former track (10 miles 65 chains in length) is in order for foot traffic; there are shelter-huts *en route*.

The George Sound track from the Middle Fiord of Lake Te Anau has been almost obliterated by the growth of vegetation, and the whaleboat on Lake Hankinson has gone to pieces. The track is a fine scenic route, but there does not appear to be any immediate prospect of any volume of tourist traffic in this direction.

The Otautau-Manapouri Route.

An excellent alternative route to that *viâ* Lumsden to and from Lake Te Anau is the Otautau-Manapouri Road. I am strongly in favour of developing the traffic by this route. Travellers returning from Milford Sound and Te Anau would be able to visit Lake Manapouri, thence steam some miles down the Waiau River (the outlet of the two lakes), and drive to Otautau, where the train is caught for Invercargill. The scenery along the Otautau route is much more interesting than that *viâ* Lumsden.

SOUTHLAND.

The work of snagging the Pourapourakino River has been taken in hand, and a grant of £60 from the votes of this Department to the Riverton Borough Council has been authorised. It is hoped that the work will be finished in June, and the river as a fishing-resort should be much improved.

STEWART ISLAND.

Stewart Island has been visited by a considerable number of southern holiday-makers during the year, and also to some extent by English and Australian tourists. It is steadily gaining in popularity as a pleasant, quiet resort, with abundance of good sea-fishing, and many fine boating excursions. There are several accommodation-houses at Half-moon Bay; these were well filled all through the summer.