

WAITOMO.

In November last the Government acquired the private interest in the accommodation-house at Waitomo, and immediately took control, Mr. and Mrs. Govier being appointed caretakers.

The building has been thoroughly repaired, and several additions have been made by the departmental works' staff. The house was also adequately furnished by the Department when taken over, and is now fit to accommodate in a comfortable manner visitors to the caves. The accommodation is limited, however, and should the traffic assume the anticipated proportions it would be necessary to build a new and much larger house.

From the 6th November to the 30th March, 297 visitors were accommodated. The receipts amounted to £146 14s. 4d.

TARANAKI.

An amount was granted during the year to preserve the Kaitangata and Okeho Pas, Urenui district, and the burial pah at Huirangi.

In another appendix will be found the annual report of the Chairman of the Egmont National Park.

MOKAU RIVER.

A grant of £100 has been made to the Mokau River Trust Board for preliminary work in connection with the clearing of the Mokau for the purposes of navigation. The following is an extract from a report by an officer of this Department, dealing with the scenic and other characteristics of this river, and the obstructions on its course between the present head of steam navigation and the terminus of canoe-traffic at Totoro:—

"I have to report that, under instructions, I visited the Mokau district last month in the interests of the Department, and traversed the route from New Plymouth to Mokau Heads, thence up the Mokau River to the head of canoe navigation, and through the King-country to Taumarunui. This route undoubtedly possesses sufficient scenic attractions to make it a favourite track of travel in time to come, but at present it is little known, and the roads, means of transit, and accommodation require improvement before any considerable tourist traffic can be looked for. The principal attraction of the land route to Mokau Heads from Waitara (47 miles) is the fine forest scenery on the slopes of Mount Messenger (where there is a scenic reserve), and the coastal views around the mouth of the Tongaporutu River. In the summer season the road is generally in very fair condition, but for those to whom time is an object the best route to Mokau is probably by steamer from Waitara.

"Leaving Mokau Heads on the 24th ultimo I went up the river to the head of canoe navigation at Totoro (45 miles). As far up as the coal-mines the river is tidal, deep, and fairly clear of obstructions, but requires snagging in places. From that point to Totoro, however, we encountered about thirty rapids, many of them very difficult. For fifteen miles or so above the coal-mines the rapids are mostly caused by snags, and beyond that by boulders and beds of shingle. From the coal-mines to Totoro the river presents many of the features of the Wanganui River, calm reaches alternating with broken water and rapid runs. For most of this section of the river canoes have to be poled instead of paddled, and in some places it is only possible to proceed up-stream by hauling on the tree-branches that overhang the current, or by taking advantage of the crevices and projections in the rocky banks. In the still reaches the depth of the river is considerable, sufficient in many places for a good-sized sea-going steamer. The total fall of the river from Totoro to sea-level is 70 ft.

"I consider that the Mokau could be made navigable for light-draught steamers or power-launches as far as Te Kawakawa (42 miles) or Kaiwaka (44 miles); the former place would be a convenient terminus of the river-traffic. The removal of the snags and the concentration of the river into straight runs in the rapids do not appear to present any great difficulties.

"From a scenic point of view the Mokau is certainly well worth developing. For the greater part of its course below Totoro (which is fully forty miles from its source in the Rangitoto Mountains) it runs through thick forest, with occasional clearings. Some parts of the river above the limits of steam-navigation I consider prettier than the Wanganui. The scene just above the Panirau Rapids, where the Mokau takes a sweeping bend through a narrow gorge topped by forest-clad ranges, rising in places a thousand feet above the river, is one of great beauty. The Wanganui is much more majestic and its cliffs are grander, but for the luxuriance of the forest and ferns that bank it in the Mokau is unrivalled amongst the rivers of the Island."

WANGANUI RIVER.

The greater part of the improvement-works on the river has been in the shallow reaches within twelve miles of Taumarunui. Below Pipiriki the tail of the wall at Moutoa was lengthened 176 ft.

The passenger traffic from Taumarunui has considerably increased since the previous year.

LAKE WAIKAREMOANA.

This resort is at present almost wholly dependent upon local support, and in common with such places was not well patronised in the early summer owing to the late season. The importance of better and more expeditious means of communication with the lake must be considered, and until something is done to open up the route from Ruatahuna, or from Gisborne *via* Hangaroa, the number of visitors to this beautiful resort will not materially increase.

The total receipts for the year amounted to £409 5s. 10d., as compared with £449 10s. 5d. taken the previous year. Although the house receipts fell, the oil-launch fees again showed a small increase.

During the year an ample water-supply for the house was installed from the Okereru Creek, and a dairy, meat-house, and tool-shed added to the house.