

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

HOROWHENUA LAKE

(REPORT ON), TO DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST AND HEALTH RESORTS, BY MR. JAMES COWAN.

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 7th August, 1908.

Ordered, "That there be laid before this House the report on Horowhenua Lake prepared by Mr. James Cowan."—
(MR. FIELD.)

MR. JAMES COWAN to the SUPERINTENDENT, Department of Tourist and Health Resorts.

Wellington, 1st September, 1903.

SIR,—

Lake Horowhenua.

In accordance with your instructions, I visited Lake Horowhenua and adjacent localities of scenic interest last week.

The main road from Levin gives access to the Native Reserve (inalienable) surrounding Lake Horowhenua, but the public can only cross this reserve or use the lake on the sufferance of the Maoris. The local rowing club pays a small rent for the site of a boatshed on the shores of the lake, but has been unable to obtain a legal lease. For several years there has been more or less friction between the residents and the Natives over the question of the right of access to the lake, and, as this sheet of water is likely to become a favourite pleasure resort for Wellington people and other visitors, it is desirable that the present unsatisfactory state of affairs should be terminated.

Lake Horowhenua is two miles and a quarter in length by one mile greatest width. It is shallow: the greatest depth is not much over 20 ft. A series of soundings taken some time ago gave the average depth of the lake as about 7 ft. In the deepest part of the lake some large springs gush up and help to feed it. The outlet is by the Hokio Stream, which runs out to the sea (six miles), but which is much choked in places by flax and raupo. The circumference of Horowhenua is between nine and ten miles.

The most interesting features of the lake are the remarkable islets or defence mounds constructed about eighty years ago by the Muaupoko Tribe of Maoris as places of refuge from Te Rauparaha and his warriors of Ngatitooa and Ngatiraukawa. There are six of these islets—viz., Karapua, Namu-iti, Waikiekie, Roha-a-te-kawau, Waipata, and Puke-iti.

The largest island, Karapua, is separated from the mainland by a narrow winding channel, navigable only by canoes. The others lie at distances of from 50 to 100 yards from the shore, and are densely covered with vegetation—high flax, ti palms, koromiko, raupo, ngaio-trees, &c. The largest is perhaps a quarter of an acre in extent; the others are much smaller. One (Puke-iti), near the southern end of the lake, has almost disappeared, and is marked only by some high bushes of flax, &c. On these islands the Muaupoko tribespeople took up their residence when Rauparaha began to raid the district, but the lake-dwellings were all captured by the Ngatitooa musketeers with great slaughter—so great that, as the old Maoris describe it, the waters of the lake were red with blood, and the seagulls came in from the coast to feast on what the Ngatitooa left.

On Namu-iti isle, near the northern end of the lake, Rauparaha shut up a number of Muaupoko prisoners, killing some from day to day as required for food.

Some of these little islands are slowly decreasing in area, but the thick flax and other vegetation hold them together. The Maoris have been cutting the flax surrounding the lake, and if they are allowed to interfere with the islands the beauty of these interesting spots will be greatly marred, and the unprotected soil (which is only a foot or two above the level of the lake) will gradually wash away.

Another place of historic associations is the old Pipiriki Pa, on a grassy ridge on the mainland (western side of the lake). This pa was built about 1872 by the late Major Kemp and his Muaupoko for defence against the Ngatiraukawa Tribe in a quarrel over the ownership of the