

The above are the reserves made in the ordinary course during the subdivision of the country for settlement; but amongst them are a few that attention may be drawn to. The forest reserves are principally in the Thames Peninsula and in the Wairarapa district. Amongst the "historical" reserves is an area of 2,011 acres which has been set aside at Ship Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound, where Captain Cook, on his several voyages to New Zealand, stayed some time, refitting the ships and resting their crews. The reserve is nearly all forest, and is in much the same state as when Captain Cook first anchored in the bay, on the 15th January, 1770, in H.M. barque "Endeavour."

The Commissioners of Crown Lands have instructions to reserve from sale or other disposal all places of historical or scenic interest, with a view of keeping them intact for future generations, in the belief that they will increase in interest as time goes on. It is to be regretted that this subject was not attended to earlier, for many places connected with both the Maori and European occupation of the country have been alienated in past years. The public domains referred to above included some islands in the Ashley river-bed.

The exchange of the Patua Ranges in Taranaki for Crown lands elsewhere has not as yet been effected, as the two gentlemen to whom the task of selecting an equivalent in land was delegated have not as yet been able to find a suitable locality.

With respect to the Tongariro National Park, little has been done during the past season, except in grading a line of road from the lower country up to the Ketetahi hot springs, situated on the side of Tongariro. It is proposed to form this into a bridle-track during the ensuing spring. The Wellington Acclimatisation Society has also supplied some red-deer for the park, which were successfully turned out in April last. There are four of them, and latest accounts say they are doing well in their new home.

In Appendix No. 14 will be found a report from Mr. Henry, the caretaker at Resolution Island, which gives particulars of his proceedings during the year.

The Little Barrier Island has been handed over to the care of the Auckland Institute, and that body has appointed a caretaker, who lives on the island. The Government subsidised the Institute last year to the amount of £200 to defray part of the charges in connection therewith, and the Marine Department has arranged to allow the Government steamers to call there when passing. It is hoped by placing the Institute in charge that the native fauna will be here preserved, for the birds especially are fast disappearing on the mainland.

"THE MINING DISTRICTS LAND OCCUPATION ACT, 1894."

Under the above Act a few transactions have taken place—forty-eight selections in all, covering an area of 2,817 acres—in Auckland, Marlborough, Otago, and Southland. This class of selection is intended to offer to miners on the goldfields an opportunity of securing homes for themselves near their work, but the nature of the country where mining operations are going on is generally of such a character as to preclude a great deal of settlement. Where there is suitable land it is obviously of public interest that the miners should have the opportunity of becoming permanent settlers.

SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS.

As the greater part of the lands now alienated are subject to conditions of residence and improvement, constant inspection by the Crown Lands Rangers is necessary in order to insure due compliance on the part of the selectors. In the extracts from the reports of the Commissioners given in the Appendix hereto much detail on this subject will be found, and from them it will be seen that a very large amount of work is being done by the settlers. On the whole, 5,210 inspections have been made during the year. The acquisition of estates under the Land for Settlements Acts has added much to the duties of the Rangers, for the inspection requires to be more minute and exhaustive in view of the greater value of the lands concerned and the capital sunk in them. The forests, too, are demanding more attention from the Rangers, with a view of staying the depredations which are too common in them, and, moreover, those forests worked under license require careful periodical inspection.

THERMAL SPRINGS, ETC.

It was mentioned in last year's report that the Government had taken over the establishment at "The Hermitage," Mount Cook, as this favourite resort for tourists had been closed, and one of the greatest attractions in the country likely to be unavailable for visitors. A caretaker was appointed, and the establishment has been run by the department in the interests of tourists since that time. A guide is also retained there to accompany visitors to the glaciers and other places of interest in the neighbourhood of Mount Cook. A considerable amount of repairs had to be done to make the house habitable, but it is now in good order, and can accommodate a considerable number of visitors. The road from Pukaki has also been improved, and, as the regular coach service now starts in October instead of November, a larger number of visitors may be expected this next season. The material for a new hut at the foot of the Malte Brun Range, about fourteen miles above the terminal face of the Tasman Glacier, is on the ground, and will be built next season for the use of visitors, from which other glaciers and peaks can be visited.

At the Nuhaka hot springs, in northern Hawke's Bay, a large accommodation-house is in process of erection by the tenant to whom part of the reserve was leased, so that next summer visitors will fare better than hitherto. A large number of people already make use of these springs for the benefit of their healing properties who have hitherto had to live in tents.

At Rotorua improvements have been made in the water-supply, which is used both for the baths and the town supply, by the erection of settling-tanks for the collection of impurities, by which means the water has been improved. Much has been done also to the Sanatorium, and the