

1949
NEW ZEALAND

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY

**PUBLIC DOMAINS AND NATIONAL PARKS OF
NEW ZEALAND**

(ANNUAL REPORT ON)

Presented to Both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

Department of Lands and Survey,
Wellington, 27th July, 1949.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the public domains and national parks of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1949.

I have, &c.,

D. M. GREIG,

Director-General of Lands.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

REPORT

PART I—PUBLIC DOMAINS

As at 31st March, 1949, the total number of public domains administered under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, was 841, covering a total area of 80,316 acres. Fifty-two of these domains are controlled by various Commissioners of Crown Lands, 293 are administered by local authorities acting as Domain Boards, and the remaining 496 are under the control of local Boards.

During the year 15 new domains, comprising a total area of 122 acres, were reserved and brought under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. Additions totalling 207 acres were also made to 20 existing domains.

The conclusion of the war saw a quickening of public interest in the development and administration of our domain areas, and it is pleasing to note that this interest has been maintained and increased during the intervening years. Another encouraging factor is the ability and willingness of the public to assist themselves by raising money and carrying out improvements to domain lands by voluntary effort. Several areas were donated for domain purposes by public-spirited citizens during the year, and these generous gifts are gratefully acknowledged.

Domain Boards generally have displayed energy and enthusiasm in the administration of areas under their control. The Department is fully conscious and appreciative of the services given gratuitously by members of these Boards, and of the time and labour which they expend on the care and improvement of lands set apart for the recreation and enjoyment of the general public.

Many excellent development projects have been completed on domain lands during the past twelve months, and a number of others are approaching completion. In many instances Domain Boards have drawn up comprehensive programmes of improvements, but owing to shortages of certain essential materials and labour it has not always been possible to implement improvement schemes in full. This has resulted in a number of Boards being unable to take full advantage of grants and subsidies made available to them during the past financial year.

As mentioned in previous reports, increasing use is being made of domain lands for camping purposes, particularly in seaside localities. Many excellent sites have been laid out, and Domain Boards generally have been most co-operative in making provision for this form of public recreation where required. Valuable assistance and advice in regard to the layout and control of camping areas have been received from various automobile associations. These bodies have also made generous cash donations for the purpose of assisting in the improvement of camping facilities on domain areas.

An important phase of domain administration has been the leasing of areas for grazing and other purposes. In granting approval to these leases, care has been taken to ensure that public rights of recreation will not be interfered with or affected.

New domains constituted during the year :—

East Takaka Domain, area $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is situated 64 miles north-west from Nelson.

A swimming-bath, conveniences, dressing-sheds, and croquet-lawn have been constructed on the area.

Gimmerburn Domain, area, 5 acres, is situated in the Otago Land District about 92 miles north-west of Dunedin. The public hall for the district is situated on this area. Tennis-courts have also been laid out and development of the area as a sports-ground is proceeding.

Karamea Memorial Domain, area $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is situated on the west coast 62 miles north of Westport. This area was formerly a school-site, but is now being developed for general recreation.

McKee Memorial Domain, area, $28\frac{1}{4}$ acres, is situated at Ruby Bay, 22 miles from Nelson. The McKee Estate donated $21\frac{1}{2}$ acres of this Domain, and an additional area of $6\frac{3}{4}$ acres has been leased from the Nelson Automobile Association. The estate land and that of the automobile association has been used for very many years by the public as a picnic and camping ground. It is a well-sheltered resort and contains some 10 acres of native bush of unique value from a botanical point of view. It was largely to preserve this bush and at the same time to perpetuate the name of the late Arthur McKee that the beneficiaries decided to offer the land for domain purposes.

Motueka Beach Domain, area $17\frac{1}{2}$ acres. This domain comprises land along the foreshore of Motueka Harbour, and an area adjacent thereto. It was taken over from the Motueka Harbour Board and is being developed for picnic and general recreation purposes. Swimming-baths have also been constructed. Part of the land is laid down in lawn, and a band-rotunda, bathing-sheds, and children's playing equipment have been erected.

Omihi Domain, area $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is located on the South Island Main Trunk line about 47 miles north of Christchurch. The area was donated for a sports-ground for the district and is being developed as such.

- Patons Rocks Domain*, area 1 acre, is near Takaka, Nelson Province, and is on the foreshore of Golden Bay. This area is used as a picnic-ground.
- Pine Island Domain*, area $5\frac{3}{4}$ acres, is on an island in the upper reaches of the Waitemata Harbour, Auckland. It comprises the greater part of the foreshore of the island and areas capable of development for picnic spots and a camping-ground.
- Springfield Domain*, area $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is situated at Mangapai South (Springfield), 20 miles south of Whangarei. Part of the land was donated, and the balance purchased from funds supplied by the Department. Tennis-courts have been laid down, and the balance is being developed as a hockey-field.
- Swirey Park Domain*, area $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is situated in the Borough of Kaitia 210 miles north of Auckland. This area is very suitable for development for general recreation.
- Tasman Memorial Domain*, area $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres, is situated 4 miles south-east from Motueka, Nelson. This domain was purchased for development as a community centre and recreation-ground.
- Te Arahono Domain*, area $9\frac{3}{4}$ acres, is situated in the Inangahua Junction Township, at the junction of the Buller and Inangahua Rivers. It is proposed to develop the area for general recreation.
- Thornbury Domain*, area $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is located 20 miles west of Invercargill. This area was given to the Crown as the site for a community centre and war memorial for the district. A bowling-green is being laid down and a children's playground is also being constructed. Appropriate recreational buildings will be built on the area at a later date.
- Tikitapu Domain*, area 9 acres, is adjacent to the Blue Lake near Rotorua and is under development for a camping area.
- Turakina Domain*, area $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is situated 24 miles south from Wanganui. This area is suitable for development for general recreation. It adjoins an area of land recently purchased for the settlement of ex-servicemen.

Additions to existing domains were made as follows:—

Land District.			Domain.		Area Added.		
					A.	B.	P.
North Auckland	..	..	Broadwood	..	7	3	17
			Pahi	..	0	2	12
			Laingholm	..	0	1	16.8
South Auckland	..	..	Hamilton	..	0	1	8.8
			Katikati	..	100	2	10
Gisborne	..	..	Opotiki	..	3	0	0
Taranaki	..	..	Rotokare	..	6	2	26.67
			Mania	..	5	2	0
Wellington	..	..	Bulls	..	10	2	37
			Newman	..	0	2	0
Nelson	..	..	Kaiteriteri	..	0	0	3.2
			Pohara	..	8	3	10
			Mapua	..	2	0	0
			Hector	..	0	3	15
Canterbury	..	..	Mackenzie	..	27	3	15
			Fendalton	..	0	0	19
			Upper Riccarton	..	1	1	10.3
Westland	..	..	Harihari	..	3	3	12
Otago	..	..	Waikouaiti	..	24	3	7
Southland	..	..	Seaward Downs	..	1	1	37
Total area added to twenty domains			..		207	0	16.77

During the year portion of the Mayfield Domain of $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres was set apart as a site for a public hall for the district. The reservation over about $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of the Kaikoura Domain was changed to a reserve for county buildings, as county offices were erected on this area some years ago. The reservation of slightly over $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of the Featherston Domain was revoked as this small area had been held under lease for many years and is used for an automobile-servicing station. It was not required for recreation and had never been so used. The reservation for recreation purposes over Lauder Domain, Otago Land District, was cancelled. This domain, constituted in 1884, is in Central Otago about 120 miles from Dunedin, and originally contained 200 acres. Some years ago 105 acres was sold to the Vincent Jockey Club, which has used the area as a race-course. Owing to the general topography of the balance, the greater part is not suitable for recreation, and most of it will be sold as farming-land.

PART II—NATIONAL PARKS

The various controlling Boards report considerable progress in overtaking arrears of maintenance and development work held over during the war years. Some necessary projects are still incomplete due to shortages of essential materials.

The Egmont National Park is becoming increasingly popular with alpinists, tourists, and local visitors, so much so that difficulty is now being experienced in catering for the large number who patronize this resort. The roads giving access to the hostels are called upon to carry very heavy traffic throughout the year, and the Works Department is at present busily engaged on enlarging and improving the road up to Dawson Falls. There is only a one-way road to the North Egmont Hostel and all traffic has to be checked in and out. It would be very difficult indeed to form a two-way road.

The Board has been concerned for some time past with the damage and destruction caused by opossums and to a lesser extent by goats. There are only two rangers on the park area to give attention to these matters, and although various blocks have been let to trappers, there appears to be no appreciable decrease in the number of opossums. One result of the presence of goats and opossums has been an increase in the amount of erosion, and this aspect of the problem is being examined by a special committee appointed for that purpose. Increased Government assistance was made available to the Board during the year to enable urgent improvements to be carried out.

Excellent results have been achieved by deer-control parties in the Tongariro National Park, and this pest has now been practically eliminated from the park area. Various clubs operating within the park are erecting huts, which will be of high-standard construction. They are intended primarily for the use of club members, but will be available to any one in the case of an emergency. The erection of these huts will prove a great boon to skiing and tramping enthusiasts, and will provide a means for the fuller use and enjoyment of park lands. Further repair work to tracks and bridges on the park was carried out during the year.

The purchase from Mr. J. S. Cameron of some 2,085 acres at Totaranui for addition to the Abel Tasman National Park was completed during the year. This area contains some very fine native bush, and in addition it will enable access to be obtained to the northern part of the park by a fair motor road. The foreshore of the property along Totaranui Bay has been set aside for camp sites and for the use of visitors generally. Included in the area purchased from Mr. Cameron is 125 acres of farm land, and this area, together with the dwelling, cow-shed, and other buildings, has been leased for a term of fourteen years.

The Arthur Pass National Park Board was granted Government assistance during the year to carry out improvements on the park and to assist in the payment of a full-time caretaker. Further roading and other improvements have also become necessary in the Arthur Pass Township. The Board has this work in hand and is also arranging more suitable accommodation for the caretaker.

The Fiordland National Park continues to enjoy great popularity as a tourist attraction. During the past season the number of people who visited Milford Sound, including day visitors via the Homer Tunnel, campers and trampers via the Milford Track, and those who stayed at the hostel, was estimated at 2,000. Approximately 1,000 visitors travelled via the Milford Track. It is also estimated that 5,000 people toured the Eglinton Valley and that about 300 did the trip from Manapouri to Doubtful Sound. Arrangements were made during the year for an officer of the Department of Internal Affairs to act as a ranger and patrolman in the Eglinton Valley area, so that it will now be possible to provide increased supervision in this locality.

Proposals for the establishment by the Southland Automobile Association of a motor camp near Milford Sound Hostel are at present being investigated.

The Caswell and George Sounds area was visited by a combined scientific expedition representative of the United States and New Zealand. This expedition was concerned with surveying, geology, botany, forestry, entomology, ornithology, and fauna, and an intensive study was made of the habits of wapiti introduced some years ago from the United States of America. The expedition comprised about twenty-four scientists and camp personnel, and spent four and a half months in the area. This Department was represented by a party of four, and attention was given to the fixing by survey of various positions and height-control points for aerial photographs, to enable compilation of a detailed topographical map. The Department's officers also connected up two trigonometrical surveys between Caswell and George Sounds.

Another event of particular interest was the rediscovery of the notornis in the Fiordland area by Dr. G. B. Orbell and party. This discovery was followed by a further investigation by Dr. R. A. Falla. Special legislation designed to protect the notornis colonies was passed as section 38 of the Reserves and Other Lands Disposal Act, 1948. This legislation provides for the issue of special permits to any person who desires to enter or remain in the area in which the notornis was rediscovered.

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