

*Whakarewarewa Reserve.*

This popular reserve still continues to attract greater numbers, on account of its thermal action and surrounding Maori life. The grounds have been well kept, and as much protection as possible under present conditions has been given to the thermal formations.

Several minor repairs and improvements were effected, such as renovating bridges, erecting gates and fences, and some conveniences were also constructed.

The thermal action was well maintained throughout the year, the Wairoa Geyser still proving a never-failing entertainment for visitors.

The amount of £17 0s. 6d. was spent on maintenance of the Arikikapakapa Reserve, adjoining Whakarewarewa. The young plants which were transferred from the nursery the previous season are doing well in general.

In order to preserve the natural silica formations in this reserve it will be necessary to provide powers of exercising greater control over the sight-seers visiting Whakarewarewa. These silica formations are becoming greatly damaged by being constantly trodden over.

I am of opinion that no one should be allowed to roam over the thermal area without a guide, and that this should be arranged by the Department charging a small fee for admission and providing the guide. By this means only can the Department hope to prevent damage to the silica formations, which form some of the principal attractions at the reserve.

*Round Trip.*

This is still the unique and most popular trip in the district, notwithstanding that Waimangu Geyser has not played since October last. The accommodation-house is naturally not in as great demand as formerly, but during the summer was used as a stopping-place by many round-trippers.

The total number of persons booked was 3,603, and the receipts £1,673 4s. 9d., compared with 3,073 and £1,794 17s. 6d. for the previous year. The fare was reduced from 11s. to 7s. 6d. The increased number carried is also due to the placing on Lakes Tarawera and Rotorua of the two new oil-launches, which commenced running on the 2nd November, 1904. Since the inauguration of this trip the receipts from fares, accommodation-house fees, &c., amounted to £5,602 6s., and the maintenance to £3,820 15s. 10d., leaving a margin of £1,781 10s. 2d., ample to cover any reduction of business in accommodation-house fees.

*Waiotapu.*

The usual maintenance-works were carried out on the Thermal Springs Reserve at Waiotapu.

*ORAKEIKORAKO.*

The Department arranged the appointment of a caretaker at this place to ferry visitors across the river and guide them to the sights, with permission to make a small charge.

This resort contains fine alum caves, silica terraces, &c., and as the number of visitors is steadily increasing, provision for ferrying over the Waikato River and guiding was necessary in order to control the movements of tourists and protect the caves and terraces from vandals. The terraces are now the finest in New Zealand, and later will be visited by a large number of people annually.

*TAUPO.*

The Department's Head Gardener visited the Taupo Domain on two occasions for the purpose of assisting the Domain Board in carrying out a number of necessary improvements.

A report from the Chairman of the Board will be found in the appendices.

*WAITOMO CAVES.*

These fine caves are attracting the attention of tourists in considerable numbers, but there are difficulties in the way of accommodation and transit which do not operate beneficially. During the year the area containing the old caves has been acquired under the Scenery Preservation Act, and a further reservation taking in the newly discovered Ruatoki caves is now in hand. It will be necessary to make some arrangement to properly control the traffic to the caves, and establish authority to prevent disfigurements, &c. I do not think the Government should stop at the reservation of the caves, but should also control the accommodation-house, by which means the Department's officers will be able to insure the preservation of these natural wonders, which, if prompt steps are not taken, will soon cease to have their present value.

*MOKAU RIVER.*

The Department provided a grant of £25 towards the expenses of the River Trust, which has in hand the question of improving for traffic this fine river. Later, when the travel facilities are improved, this river should become an attractive resort.

*TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK.*

During the year a three-mile buggy-road has been formed from the Waioru-Tokaanu Road to the Ngauruhoe Mountain Hut, and the bridle-road from the Rotoairu-Waimarino Road to Tongariro Mountain *via* Ketetahi Springs was repaired. The tracks generally were much damaged early in the season, but were duly repaired, including the construction of an 18 ft. horse-bridge.

It is desirable that this park be stocked with red deer. One stag and two hinds were liberated some time ago, but I believe the stag was destroyed, and the hinds have not since been seen.