

Chief Guide Graham reports as follows on the mountain and glacier work for the season :—

“Immediately on arrival at the Hermitage I made a visit of inspection to the Glacier Huts and tracks in the Tasman Valley. The Ball and Malte Brun Huts I found to be in perfect condition, no damage whatever having been done to them during the winter. The Tasman and Hooker tracks, however, had suffered to some extent from washouts and slips, which needed a lot of repairing.

“Though there was a decrease in the number of visitors to Mount Cook this summer, the guiding staff was kept very busy during the season, showing a decided increase in returns against that of last year. A much larger number of visitors took advantage of the Tasman trip, 196 visiting the Ball Hut and 134 going through to the Malte Brun Hut, against 162 and 100 respectively for last season. Twelve parties were also conducted to the summit of the Hochstetter Dome, 9,250 ft. high. This trip is becoming more popular every year; it is one of the finest minor ascents of the district, affording a wonderful view of the surrounding high mountains; on a clear day Westland with the silvery line of breakers of the Tasman Sea beyond can be distinctly seen. Three ascents of Mount Wakefield were also made during the season, one of Mount Kinsey, four crossings of the Ball Pass, and three of the Copeland Pass. The Muller and Hooker Glaciers, and all other day excursions, attracted a large number of visitors.

“The first successful ascent of the ‘Nun’s Veil,’ 8,975 ft., was made on the 4th December by Dr. Mackay, of the ‘Nimrod’ expedition, accompanied by Guide Collett and myself. Leaving the Hermitage on the morning of the 3rd, we camped that night at the head of Guarilla Creek, a small stream from the Liebig Range which flows into the Tasman at the junction of the Hooker and Tasman Rivers. Starting out from here at 3 a.m. next morning we proceeded to the head of the valley to the foot of the Nun’s Veil Glacier, which descends from the southern face of the mountain. Skirting around to the left to avoid a hard-ice slope, we made a traverse out into the centre of the ice-field. The glacier here descends very rapidly in a series of ice terraces much broken by crevasses, which had to be carefully negotiated, entailing much step-cutting. After carefully climbing for some hours we crossed cautiously over many half-covered crevasses; then, turning slightly to the left, we ascended slowly the first snow-slopes, reaching the summit at 9 a.m. Being favoured with fine weather, the view from the top was wonderfully grand. In front of us rose the lofty summits of Mount Cook, and to the north and west the ice-clad peaks of the dividing range could be followed for miles on either hand. After taking a number of photographs we commenced the descent, retracing our steps by which we came. We soon reached the foot of the climb without any serious difficulty, and after a short rest for refreshments we started for the Hermitage, arriving in the evening.

“A most interesting trip was also accomplished to the West Coast glaciers *via* Graham Saddle in January by Professor Spencer, Mr. Lindon, Rev. — Fisher, and myself. Leaving the Hermitage on the 8th we went through to the Malte Brun Hut, and made an attempt to cross the pass on the 10th, but were caught in bad weather when nearing the top of the saddle, and had to retrace our steps, causing a delay of several days. On the 13th, however, we made another start, and we were successful in crossing the pass and reaching the accommodation-house at Waiho Gorge in nineteen hours. The next day was spent in visiting the Franz Josef Glacier. The following morning we started for Scott’s accommodation-house at Karangarua, a ride of thirty miles, and started on our return journey by the Copland Valley, which occupied three days. As prearranged, we were joined by Mrs. Lindon, with Guide Collett, on the summit of the Copland Pass, and the party then returned in company to the Hermitage.

“The only accident which happened during the season, and which it is my painful duty to record, was the disappearance of Porter Napier, who, it is feared, fell from his horse and was drowned while crossing the Hooker River when returning with horses from the Ball Hut on the 29th December. Though a thorough search and every endeavour possible were made to recover the body, no trace of him was found, save for his hat, which was picked up some distance below the ford. As the river was low at the time, I am unable to account for the cause of the accident.

“With the increased number of visitors to the Tasman Valley the accommodation at the huts is becoming insufficient to meet requirements. It will be necessary to enlarge the huts or to erect new buildings to supply the extra accommodation needed for this trip.

“Though the guiding staff was kept very busy during the season, the extra assistance rendered this summer was of considerable advantage, enabling us to carry out extensive improvements to the glacier and to construct a light suspension bridge over the Blue Lake Stream, also forming a new horse-track two miles in extent connecting the Hooker and Ball Hut tracks. This was a much-needed improvement, and is of great benefit to riders and pedestrians, cutting off numerous streams and a long stretch of the Tasman River bed.

“Horses were also in great demand during the season. The two extra ones purchased by the Department for this work were of great assistance in conveying provisions to the Ball Hut and for the use of visitors.”

Lake Wakatipu.

The traffic to Lake Wakatipu and the surrounding neighbourhood during the past year was very much larger than hitherto. In fact, so great was the influx of pleasure-seekers during the Christmas and New Year holidays that the public accommodation proved inadequate. The week-end excursions from Dunedin to Queenstown have proved a very popular feature, and have been well patronised.

The improvements at the Queenstown Park have been continued, and the grounds are now in very fair order, and the park is a favourite resort for visitors.

The receipts from the playing-greens this season were very satisfactory, and amounted to £44 16s. 3d., an increase of £30 4s. 3d. over last year’s figures.

Improved steamer accommodation on Lake Wakatipu is an urgent necessity.