

REPORT ON QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOUND SCENIC RESERVES.

As regards these reserves, the year just ended has, taken on the whole, been an exceptionally quiet one; visitors were not nearly so numerous as in former years, and campers being conspicuous by their absence, one small party camping in Kumutoto Bay and two in Ship Cove making the sum total for the year.

The conduct of the visiting public in general shows a marked tendency towards carefulness and to the safeguarding of the reserves; though in some instances a spirit of wanton mischief and destruction is shown, particularly in regard to the tearing-down of the notices. On several occasions I have warned visitors against the unsuitable places selected for lighting their fires, and to the reprehensible practice of leaving them burning on their departure. Lady members of parties, too, cause a considerable degree of trouble in their persistent efforts to secure roots of ferns and shrubs.

Owing to the past exceptionally wet season, the reserves have to date escaped any destruction from fires spreading from adjoining holdings.

On the 14th December last I arrived at Ship Cove some fifteen minutes after a small coastal steamer had anchored there for shelter, and found a dozen of the crew and passengers ashore, several of whom were evidently bent on mischief. As the cherries in the bay were ripe, the native pigeons were particularly numerous and very confident, and could be easily killed with stones. I had every reason to believe one member of the crew was carrying a revolver, but could not secure proof to that effect. I am convinced that had I not arrived so opportunely tremendous destruction would have been wrought amongst the birds. On another occasion I received outside information to the effect that people were coming in from the back on Sunday afternoons and shooting over the reserve. Acting on this information, for two successive Sundays I anchored the launch in the adjoining bay and walked to the top of the dividing range between the Kenepuru Sound and Kumutoto Bay. On the second Sunday, after climbing the 1,000 ft. to top of the range, I was resting in a cleared space when two lads with dogs and guns dropped on to me before I had time to get out of sight; had I had time to secrete myself and allowed them to cross the boundary-line I could have secured a conviction. However, to date I have heard no further complaints of shooting in that locality.

Cattle trespassing.—During the past winter cattle trespassed to a more or less extent on all the reserves. Not a great amount of damage is done while the animals confine themselves to the upper country, but when the foreshore and bays are reached they are rendered very unsightly by the broken shrubbery, and very objectionable by droppings and the puddled nature of the ground. Apart from these objections, visitors to the reserves strongly object to wandering cattle. This question is rather a difficult one to deal with, as when adjoining settlers are approached on the matter they generally repudiate ownership of the cattle. Driving out and impounding is under the circumstances practically impossible; the only solution of the question appears to be the secure fencing of the reserves.

Fencing Boundary-lines.—During the year just past several settlers adjoining the reserves have approached the Department on the question of fencing boundary-lines, but in every case the price asked per chain was prohibitive and could not be met. As it is very necessary in some cases that these fences be erected, I would advise the Department to undertake the work, letting them by contract, and recovering the half-cost from the adjoining occupiers, who, I may state, in several instances are prepared to pay the half-cost, whatever it may amount to within reason.

Pig-hunting at Ship Cove.—Complaints are frequently made by adjoining settlers of wild pigs breeding in the reserve coming out destroying the pasture and killing the lambs. To meet this difficulty, when indications point to the fact that pigs are about, a general pig-hunt is organized, in which the settlers join. The results are, as a rule, not encouraging.

Native Pigeons.—These birds during the past year have been unusually numerous on the Ship Cove Reserve, evidently proving that the policy of complete protection is beginning to show results.

Landing-stage at Ship Cove.—Owing to the rough nature of the beach and generally difficult landing at the above-named reserve, suggestions are frequently made to me of the necessity of landing-accommodation there. This, of course, would be a great convenience, but as yet hardly warranted on the basis of the number of visitors who visit the reserve yearly.

In conclusion, I would like to point out the advisability of taking and adding to the Edgecombe Point Reserve a small bay lying between the boundary of that reserve and R. Ewing's holding, and locally known as Baker's Bay. At present it is intact, a perfect beauty-spot, beautifully sheltered, and would give a landing to the Edgecombe Point Reserve, which at present has none. I believe it is one of the prettiest spots now left in this Sound, and should not be allowed to be destroyed.

HARVEY TURNER,
Ranger, Scenic Reserves, Queen Charlotte Sound.

APPENDIX C.

REPORT OF THE SCENERY PRESERVATION BOARD.

DURING the year ended the 31st March, 1914, the Board held the following meetings in Wellington, at the office of the Surveyor-General: On the 12th April, 1913, to deal with Marlborough lands; on the 18th April, 1913, to deal with Wellington lands; on the 19th June, 1913, to deal with Hawke's Bay lands; on the 17th October, 1913, to deal with Auckland lands; on the 14th January, 1914, to deal with Wellington lands; on the 6th February, 1914, to deal with Canterbury lands; on the 17th February, 1914, to deal with Canterbury lands; on the 31st March, 1914, to deal with Marlborough lands.