

Westland Land District.—Nearly 700 acres surrounding picturesque Lady Lake, six miles from the Rotomana Railway-station, were proclaimed. The country along the shores of the lake is mostly undrainable swamp land covered with scrub, flax, &c., but the drier parts have rimu, kamahi, kahikatea, and native shrubs growing thereon, and the land, eminently suitable for scenery-preservation, was of little value from any point of view. Besides this, the Marsden limestone cave was also proclaimed. The land on which it is situated adjoins the tract to Limestone Diggings and Card's Creek, about two miles and a half from Marsden. It comprises a bush-clad spur, on which is a limestone cave containing stalactites and stalagnites. This cave has only recently been discovered, and the formation is as yet undamaged.

Southland Land District.—An area of 155 acres on the upper reaches of the beautiful Pourakino River was also reserved, and completes the reservation of the bush-clad land on the banks of this river, which is situated a few miles above Riverton, and is a very attractive resort of the residents in the district.

Revocations. The reservation over portions of several scenic areas was revoked during the year, through the lands being no longer suitable for scenic purposes.

The total area now set aside under the Act is 306,888 acres, including over five hundred different reservations, whilst reserves previously set aside under the Land Act and not yet brought under the Scenery Preservation Act amount to a large area, and these two classes of reserves contain a large portion of the beautiful scenery of the Dominion. Every care will be taken to preserve these lands in their pristine beauty.

It may also be mentioned that the national parks of New Zealand, which are practically scenic reserves, cover an area of 2,771,202 acres.

FUTURE RESERVATIONS.

Although such good results have been achieved so far much still remains to be done. Here and there throughout the Dominion small scattered areas containing scenery of outstanding beauty will from time to time be inspected with a view to their acquisition and reservation, and when blocks of virgin land are being opened for settlement—as, for instance, in the Urewera country—certain picked beauty-spots will be set aside under the Act. In addition there are well-known resorts, such as the Wanganui River, Marlborough Sounds, the Hot Lakes district, &c., where scenic reservation is not yet complete, and further action is necessary to safeguard the unique attractions of these localities. As opportunity offers these matters will be attended to, and every endeavour will be made, compatible with the funds at the disposal of the Government, to adequately retain and preserve for all time the scenic attractions of New Zealand.

HISTORIC MONUMENTS.

With reference to the remarks on the above subject in last year's report, it is only fair to state that the attention of the Government was first drawn to the matter by a valuable report by Mr. W. H. Skinner, the Commissioner of Crown Lands for Canterbury, who has always taken a keen interest in the preservation of scenic and historic places. Mr. Skinner drew particular attention to a number of rock and cave shelters in the limestone hills near Pleasant Point. These shelters, which have been used as camping-grounds by the old-time Maori fishers and bird-hunters, have the roofs and sides profusely decorated with ancient paintings in black and red of representations of human beings, birds, fish, and reptiles, and other figures difficult to decipher, but all Maori or Polynesian in their configuration. Many of these are decidedly archaic in design and execution. The paintings appeared to be of Ngati-Mamohe design or construction, but they may possibly be of Waitaha workmanship. (Note.—Waitaha were the first of the Maori peoples to occupy the South Island, and are akin to the Moriori people of the Chathams.) The existence of these paintings have been known, of course, for years past to the owners of the land and a few others who take a special interest in the Polynesian races, but not to the general public. Attention had been more especially directed to them by the visit of a Mr. Ellmore, an American, who made a speciality of tracing the rock-shelter paintings in various parts of the world, and drew the attention of the scientific portion of the community to their existence by lectures given to the various branches of the New Zealand Institute, depicting, amongst others that he had collected, copies of these Maori ones.

Arising out of Mr. Skinner's suggestions the matter was brought under the notice of the Director of the Dominion Museum, who made further valuable suggestions. Various Commissioners of Crown Lands have also supplied interesting reports on the "monuments" in their districts. Owing, however, to the great and increasing pressure of work in the Department caused by land-settlement it has not yet been practicable to hold a meeting in Wellington at which the many proposals can be considered and dealt with, but it is hoped that during the current year it may be possible for the Scenery-preservation Board to hold a general meeting at which the Commissioner of Crown Lands for each district can be present together with other gentlemen interested in the subject, and the result of the joint conference should be of much interest and value.

LOCAL SCENIC BOARDS.

During the year local authorities were appointed to control scenic reserves as follows: Hawera Borough Council (Turuturumokai Pa); Dunedin City Council (Kaikorai Valley Scenic Reserve).

The term of the appointment of the Cape Kidnapper Bird Sanctuary Board expired during the year, and as the members were willing to accept further office the term of appointment was extended for another three years.

Similar action was taken in regard to the Northcote Scenic Board.