

New Plymouth Scenic Reserves Board.

Only one meeting of the Board was held during the year, on the 15th August, 1922, when the annual report and balance-sheet were adopted. Members have, however, kept in touch with the various reserves under the control of the Board, and these are in a satisfactory condition.

Mr. Follett Carrington was appointed to the Board in July to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. S. Percy Smith, F.R.G.S. At the annual meeting the chairman and other members eulogized the work of Mr. Smith in connection with all matters in regard to scenery-preservation.

Dr. Leatham resigned from the Board at the end of the year, and steps are being taken to appoint a successor in the person of Mr. W. W. Smith, who has had long experience in work of this nature.

The lease held by Mr. H. J. Major over Ratapihipihi Reserve was determined during the year, as Mr. Walsh, a proposed transferee, was not complying with the conditions and allowed his cattle to damage the bush. A lease for five years at a nominal rental has been granted to Mr. A. R. Gudopp, and he has ploughed the open portion, on which the blackberry would soon have taken charge, and now has it in crop. On the edge of the bush where it is not possible to plough he has chained goats to eat the weeds down.

It was intended to undertake protective works at the Meeting of the Waters Reserve to prevent erosion by the river, but it was found that this would prove to be beyond our means; fortunately no further erosion has taken place. Additional fencing on this reserve has been put in hand, and the clearing of the blackberry has been attended to. Royalty on gravel and boulders amounting to £60 6s. 6d. has been received from the Taranaki County Council during the year.

The High Schools Board have greatly improved the area in their lease of Puketi Pa, which they hold at a peppercorn rental. They have cleared the gorse and blackberry which prevented access to the pa, and have also erected fencing as arranged with the members of the Board, the site of the old pa being now protected.

Pukerangiora Pa has not been inspected recently, but it is in the hands of a capable farmer, who will attend to the clearing of the gorse and blackberry without damaging the old sap leading up to the redoubt.

Pukemiro and Onaero Reserves will require some expenditure during this year on the clearing of ragwort and gorse around the edge of the bush. The fences on this reserve are in good condition.

During the year the Okoki Pa was brought under the control of the Board. The top of the pa is now overgrown with bush, and part has been used as a burial-ground. This is probably the oldest pa on the Taranaki coast, and is a splendid monument of a Maori fortress. One hundred years ago it was the stronghold of Te Rauparaha when he fought and vanquished the Waikatos on the plain to the seaward of the pa. The titoki-tree on which the bodies of the Waikato chiefs were hung prior to the cannibal feast is included in the reserve, and is in a good state of preservation, although the branch which was used as a gallows is broken off. The battlefield is now under cultivation, and Maoris were working a reaper-and-binder at the date of the last visit of inspection. The afternoon tea and fruit-cake served by the wahines to the toilers would have done credit to any city tea-room. The grazing of the pa is let to Mr. Bleakley on condition that he keeps it clear of gorse, and he is achieving this very effectively.

Although the Huatoki Scenic Reserve is not under the control of the Board, members have been interested in the work carried out there by the local committee during the year. This reserve is within easy walking-distance of the town, and a portion has been cleared and grassed, walks have been cut through the bush, swimming-pools formed, &c. It is proposed to add a further area of Crown land to this reserve. A grant of £15 was made by the Department for fencing. This reserve will eventually be one of the most popular of our scenic resorts. I have seen more tuis in this piece of bush than in any similar area in the Taranaki District.

H. J. LOWE, Chairman.

APPENDIX C.

KAPITI ISLAND.

As a result of the visit of the Advisory Board to Kapiti last year certain work was undertaken that is expected to assist in the regeneration of the forest and the protection of the native birds. A substantial sheep-proof fence has been erected on portion of the boundary between the land owned by the Crown and that owned by the Natives, with the object of excluding all stock from the sanctuary. The new fence must be extended or the old one substantially repaired, and it is hoped that this will be done during the coming year.

Two hundred and seventy-nine goats were killed during the year. It is estimated that the surviving ones do not exceed eighty in number. They have taken refuge on the steep faces at the south-west end of the island and at the mouth of Taepiro Creek. They are not now present in such numbers as to do serious damage, but the work of extermination is an obvious necessity and must be continued.