

Molesworth access conservationists' aim

By JANE DUNBAR

Foot access by responsible visitors over the whole of Molesworth is one of the hopes the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society has for the future management of the high country station.

A management plan devised by Landcorp, the Department of Conservation and an independent chairman is reportedly complete and due for public release and submissions.

The director of the society, Dr Gerry McSweeney, said that

"there is a minefield of difficulties to traverse in order to get on to this public land, and we're keen to see it doesn't apply for future generations."

Access was not particularly easy for the society on its field trip over the week-end. There is supposedly free public access to the western zone of the station via the New Zealand Electricity Department's road from Jacks Pass following the Clarence River through to the Tarndale lakes.

At the week-end, however, there was a sign

saying "private road, no throughfare" at the first turn-off from Hanmer, and a "road closed" sign at the St James station.

Special permission was required, and obtained, for travelling up the Acheron Gorge.

The society field trip was a "pioneering visit," said Dr McSweeney. It allowed people to learn about management problems and perhaps have some say on the station's future once public submissions on the management plan were called.

It had been disappointing that recreational and

conservationist groups had not been asked for comment while the planning had been done, he said.

"Molesworth is a common heritage, something we all have an interest in. We hope it's managed for farming as well as the conservation of nature, soil and water, and scenery, and is available for recreation."

Molesworth station is a Crown-managed farming enterprise which at 182,000 hectares is New Zealand's biggest farm and carries about 10,000 head of cattle.



Mr Alfred Gollan on one of the horses used to trek through the high country station, Molesworth, as Mr Gollan did himself nearly 60 years ago.

Molesworth

Sir,—Visiting Molesworth Station I discovered that this high country farm is far more than just cattle and has far greater responsibility than just farming. I was impressed by the vast expanse of tussock, shrub lands, and alpine herb fields. The geology and land forms are fascinating and spectacular. I commend the management that has undoubtedly brought about a dramatic recovery of the landscape and improved the farm's economy since the Crown took control 40 years ago. I sincerely hope that Molesworth's new guardians, the Department of Conservation and Land Corp, continue to wisely manage this high country gem. Management must continue to respect the total Molesworth environment and plan ahead for more than just cattle. Examples of each habitat should be reserved, the Government's policy of retiring class 7 and 8 land should be implemented, and immediate attention should address the threat of wilding conifers and pine plantations. Let us ensure that the unique values of this high country environment can be maintained for the future. — Yours, etc.,

JEREMY ANDERSON.
October 29, 1987.

Molesworth

Sir,—I have been privileged to visit Molesworth over Labour week-end. For a long time I have had an absorbing interest in the history and ecology of this vast area. To see at first hand the grandeur of the landscape, the effect of human intervention and the efforts of dedicated people restoring some balance has been inspiring and humbling. Obviously now is the time for decisions to be made to put everything into perspective. The natural environment is fragile, climate extreme and management difficult, but there is a place, I believe, for people who are concerned and responsible to have a part in its future. The enthusiastic amateur would have a glorious time probing, investigating the environment and assisting the professionals to fill the gaps left by years of locked gates. Please let Landcorp, the Department of Conservation and conservationists get around the table to work out what is best for Molesworth. — Yours, etc.,

MICHAEL BEAVEN.
October 27, 1987.

Acquaintance renewed

By JANE DUNBAR

Nearly 60 years after his first trip through Molesworth, Mr Alfred Gollan was back again at the week-end to enjoy the vast grandeur of the 182,000ha high country station.

A member of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society's week-end field trip to the area, Mr Gollan recounted how he had travelled the outskirts of the station in 1929.

On a horse trek organised by Mr Joe Gibbs, of

Nelson, Mr Gollan joined nine others on a 10 day trip which took them from the station's Top House to Lewis Pass and on to Springs Junction.

"When we arrived at the old Top House we were met by a young girl of 19, Joe's niece Gladys, who had brought up the 10 horses with her brother from Nelson," he said. "Gladys was one of the five girls on the trip."

As the group travelled through the station they noticed rabbits had done a lot of damage to the

ground cover. There was no evidence, however, of sheep or people.

At Tarndale there were a few cattle, and near the Ada homestead there were about 100 wild horses.

A near disaster was averted when in the early hours of one morning the trek horses escaped, and were heading back in the direction of the wild ones. An avalanche had fallen through the beech forest, however, flattening trees, and blocking the valley. The horses

stopped there, and were recovered at dawn.

The party eventually reached the Lewis Pass where they saw the beginnings of the pick and shovel work being done to build the Lewis Pass highway.

Since 1929, Mr Gollan has made two return trips to Molesworth. In comparison with his first journey he said the vegetation was looking better, there were weeds, and the beech and tanekaha were the predominant trees and regenerating well.

Top Right: Sub-alpine day trip, Molesworth Photos: Gerry McSweeney

Right: Acheron accommodation house.

