



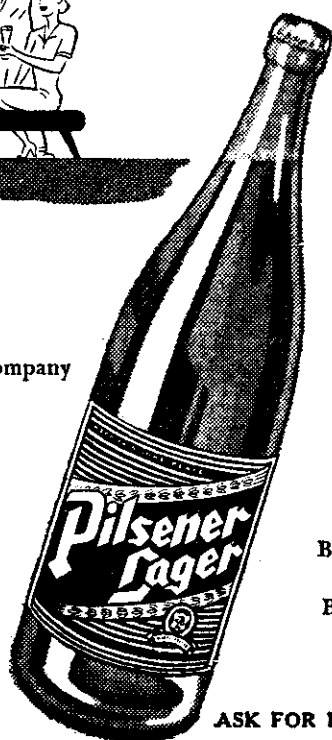
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THE WAIU RIVER—or, more precisely, the Waiau-ua, photographed from the Lewis Pass road

"Listener" Holiday Guide

MOUNTAIN AND RIVER

NEW YEAR is carnival time in Timaru and from all over the Levels County, from the Mackenzie and from points north and south the holiday-makers come to town. And indeed, for those who enjoy, themselves best in company—and not too far from the pavement—Caroline Bay is the south's most popular beach.

But for those who want to see New Zealand rather than New Zealanders, Timaru points the road to the Alps. Swinging first north-west it takes the traveller through some of the most beautiful yet the most desolate country in New Zealand. Not far from Timaru the road runs through Cave, with its picturesque St. David's Church, built of boulders and rough-hewn timbers to the memory of the Mackenzie country pioneers; and its limestone caverns—used, possibly as dwellings, by early tribes in the region and decorated with puzzling wall paintings. Beyond, the road climbs steadily and at Burke's Pass (2200ft.), as one descends toward Lake Tekapo, one catches one's first glimpse of the wide reaches of the Mackenzie country.

This vast tussock plain flanked by high mountains has a unique and desolate grandeur. Bad weather here seems only to emphasise the severe beauty of the scene—the swollen streams, the countless brown miles, the glimpses of the mountains lifting into their pall of rain cloud. But when the sun shines the drab brown of the tussock turns to bronze; the road stretches on; dip and rise, dip and rise again; for a long time all one can see may be tussock, the dustclouds of distant cars on the stretching white ribbon of road, and the blue mountains topped with shining snow.

Tekapo, the first lake we pass, like the other lakes of the area, occupies the bed of an ancient glacier, and from here, where the road swings almost due south

to Lake Pukaki, it traverses the moraine hills that were deposited by that glacier many aeons ago.

The Mackenzie is sheep and cattle country, bleak and often swept by the raging nor-wester; yet even under these severe conditions the high country stations prosper. And what colourful names they have—Braemar, Ferintosh, Glentanner, Rhoboro Downs, Balmoral. It is on the last named, incidentally, that the Hermitage road reaches its highest point.

Round the southern end of Lake Pukaki with its mirrored view of the piled rock and ice of the central Alps the road turns north again along the western shore toward the Hermitage.

A few hundred yards from the Hermitage are the camping grounds, and the hotel has a low tariff annexe—Sealey Cottage. Permission to use the camping grounds must be obtained from the hotel manager.

The traveller is warned that the road to the Ball Hut and Tasman Glacier is better traversed in the daily bus. Unless, of course, one views possible stripped gears and broken axles as all in the day's work.

On the way back from the Hermitage, the turn east at Fairlie takes one to Geraldine, and Geraldine, situated below the Raukapuka Downs, near the Waihi River, is the county town of one of the most beautiful counties in New Zealand. Three of the five South Canterbury runs held by descendants of the first holders are in Geraldine County (Orari, Mt. Peel, Orari Gorge). Peel Forest at the foot of Mt. Peel is about fourteen miles from the town. Here there are two camp sites, one at Blandwood and the other on the banks of the Rangitata. It was at the headwaters of this river, on hill country, that he called "Mesopo-