

HISTORY IN TRUST

RECENTLY two young art teachers stood in a shelter at Waipapa on the Waikato River, photographing rock-paintings that hydro-electric power construction would soon unavoidably destroy. Their camera rested on planks in the mud, and every time a truck passed it threatened to topple over. Under this and other greater difficulties a full recording of the paintings was made.

This valuable work was made possible by the co-operation of the Ministry of Works project engineer and staff, also by the promise of an immediate grant from the National Historic Places Trust.

Later, the most important parts of the paintings were removed by a skilled underground miner, and the pieces of rock now rest in the Auckland Museum awaiting re-assembly.

This is one example of the function of the National Historic Places Trust, which was formed last year under the chairmanship of the Hon. Charles M.

Bowden, M.P. *The Listener*, interested to see what other problems the Trust may be facing, and to get a general statement on progress, called the other day on John Pascoe, the Secretary of the Trust.

Mr. Pascoe admitted that they were in no way short of problems. "For instance, we may be asked to mark as a historic site some important whaling station. But no one knows exactly where it was, so we are plunged up to our ears in exhaustive local research. Or take some old Maori War redoubts that may be recognisable for what they are only by careful examination of aerial photographs.

On Mr. Pascoe's desk was an index of just under 800 places and sites that will come under the consideration of the Trust and its Regional Committees. This list, he explained, was compiled from many sources: from suggestions put to various departments over a period of years, items clipped from the Dominion's newspapers, or speeches in

Hansard on the Historic Places Bill—what individual members said about their districts. Some of the material is a continuation of work done for the New Zealand Centennial by E. H. McCormick and the present Secretary of the Trust.

Looking at this list one can see that the work of the Trust has plenty of scope. All the aspects of New Zealand's picturesque past are represented here: historic houses, churches, missions; Maori pas and kaingas; cave drawings and paintings; redoubts of the Maori War and frontier period; battle sites and war graves; landing sites and birth-places; sealing and whaling stations; historic tracks—the catalogue grows as the work goes on.

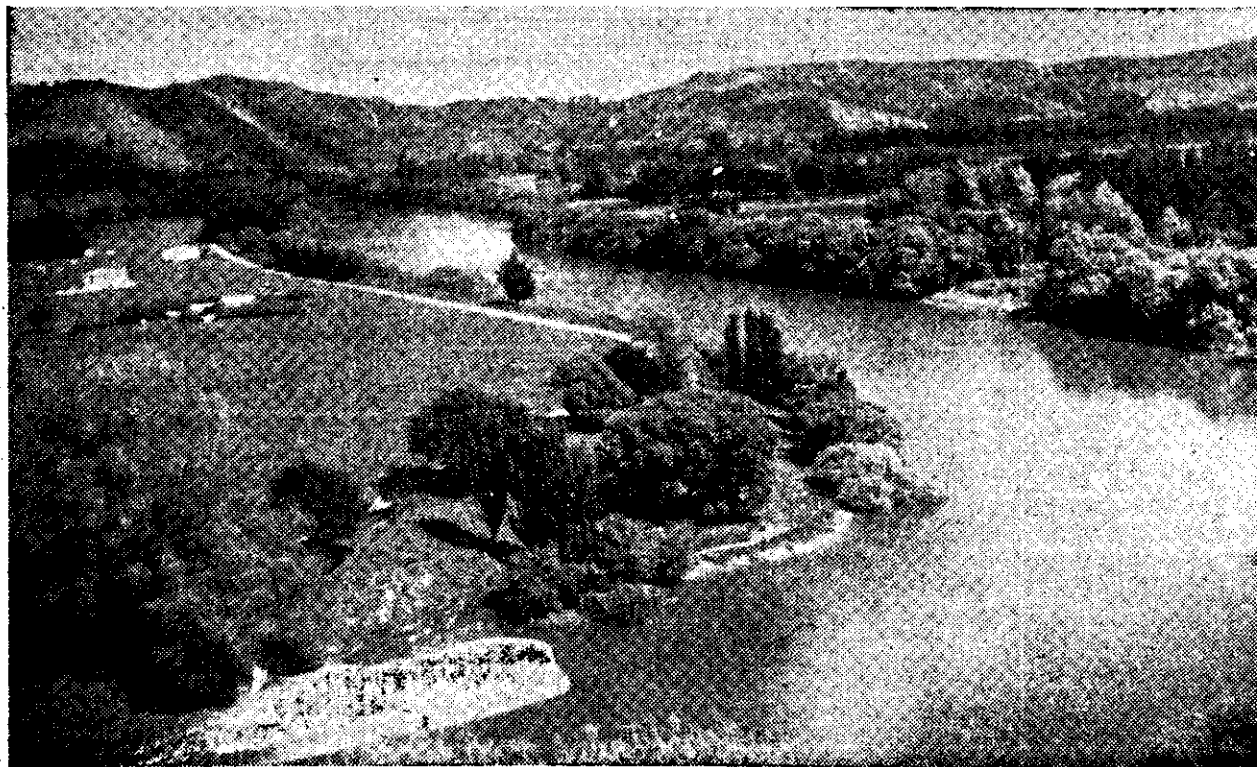
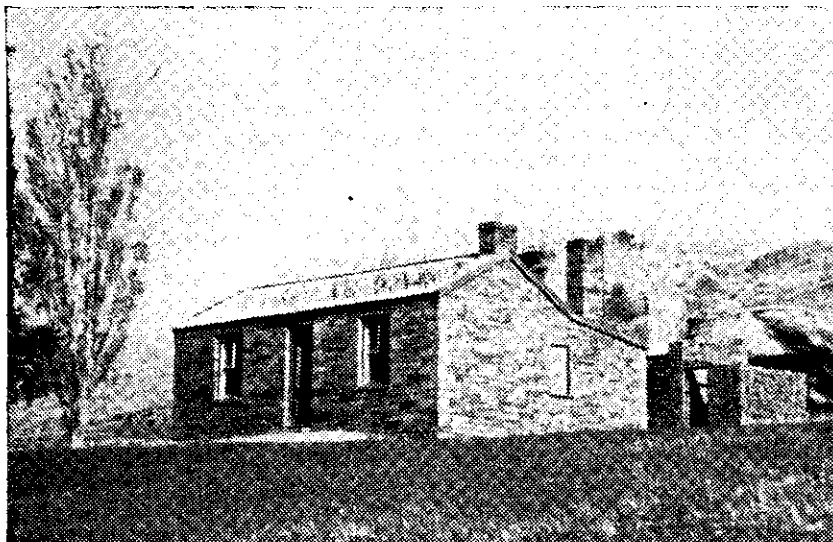
Mr. Pascoe lifted a card out at random, and we were told that the supplejack and mud house it mentioned was the only one now remaining in the Otaki area, and that this house was occupied about the time of Te Rauparaha by a whaler named Jenkins and his Maori wife.

Another choice, another glimpse: this time a reminder of the pioneers of the gold rush days in Otago—Mitchell's, an old stone house in Fruitlands, Central Otago. One of the brothers Mitchell, after whom the house was named, was responsible for the discovery of White's Reef on the Old Man Range near by.

LEFT: "Mitchell's"—an old stone house at Fruitlands, Central Otago.
BELOW: The Wanganui River from the site of Buckthought's Redoubt



PLAQUE designed for the National Historic Places Trust by E. Mervyn Taylor, of Wellington



Many a miner trekked past here to the Lakes, the glint of gold in his eye, swag up and head down.

One last look in this fascinating list took us to Wanganui. In the 1860's a chain of redoubts was erected around Wanganui by the garrison, militia and volunteers, Buckthought's Redoubt overlooking the Upokongaro district, being one of them. Buckthought's is on the list of places worth considering for preservation.

Eight hundred places seemed to call for a lot of preserving, but Mr. Pascoe explained that the Trust was concerned with three types of recognition of historic worth: outright preservation, marking and recording. Preservation, or more strictly, recommendation for preservation, will always need to be considered in the light of the Trust's resources and commitments. After that, it is a question whether a place is important enough to preserve, and whether preservation is practicable. Generally speaking, marking would be done on sites of minor importance, or where preservation is impracticable for one reason or another. A good instance of recording, said Mr. Pascoe, is that of the Waipapa rock paintings. It is also a case of part-preservation.

"And how will the Trust go about marking a place?" he was asked. "We have an emblem designed by E. Mervyn Taylor. As you see, it's a drawing of an early type of New Zealand house, with a Maori motif underneath. The house might be considered a bit unaesthetic these days—but this design is particularly suited for the relief work on a medallion. And a medallion with this design, together with some suitable inscription, will appear on a plaque marking such historic spots."

Discussing the question of priorities, Mr. Pascoe said that an indication of urgency would often be the amount of material on any one place. If people had been writing in to departments over a period of years requesting action on a certain place, then it would be fairly safe to say the matter was urgent. But before priorities were assessed detailed investigations would have to be completed. This was where the Historic Trust's Regional Committees came in. There are to be seventeen of these committees, and local investigation and recommendation on priorities will be two of their main functions. The composi-

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