

PERCY'S SCENIC RESERVE, PETONE.

There can be few spots so admirably suited to outdoor country dancing as Percy's Scenic Reserve, Petone, and few public bodies with as sympathetic and helpful an attitude as the Petone Borough Council.

The Reserve was once the site of a flour mill. The lake, now the home of friendly ducks, and a small stream running from it, were the dam and mill race which supplied power to the mill. When the land was given to the Petone Borough, it was held as a public reserve and converted to a beauty spot of glass houses, lawns, flower beds and bush walks.

One lawn is a long strip, with the stream on one side hidden by shrubs and flower beds, and on the other side a hill terraced with paths. The whole is set in a valley sheltered from even the lightest breeze. On this lawn the Scottish Country Dance Clubs of the Wellington district were invited to stage a demonstration on a Sunday afternoon in March, 1955. It was a great success, with nearly 100 dancers and 700 onlookers.

But that was only a beginning, a trial run so to speak. The Petone Borough Council were impressed by the potentialities for evening outdoor entertainment and offered to equip the Reserve with flood lights and a gramophone pick-up with loud speakers. They also offered the Reserve free for one night each week to Scottish Country Dancers and hoped to encourage other similar activities on other nights.

It was in this way that Wallaceville, Lower Hutt, and Wellington Clubs were able to have a combined dance each week of the summer months in such beautiful surroundings. Each club in turn took the responsibility of organising a programme and supplying recordings, but dancers from all three clubs turned out in force every week for the enjoyment of dancing on the green in this pleasant sheltered spot. There were sometimes visitors from as far as Featherston and once even from Canada!

The season was in two parts with a Christmas recess between. The first part ran from 21st November to December 14th, 1955. The second part opened on January 11th with a full attendance of members of the Summer School, and ended on February 22nd, 1956, just in time for clubs to take up again their indoor sessions. No nights were missed through adverse weather, itself perhaps a remarkable occurrence in this district.

The Petone Borough Council is to be congratulated on its vision and enterprise in making the Reserve available and in spending quite large amounts of money on the necessary equipment. All this was truly appreciated by the dancers who came each Wednesday night and by the many regular watchers who occupied valued vantage points on the lawn or on the hill paths. With facilities and help such as this we need no longer regret the warm nights that make an indoor dance something of a burden. Let us hope that a Percy Scenic Reserve Summer Club will function for many years to come.
