

The Queenstown Courier

The Official Publication of the
Queenstown & District Historical Society

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Society Activities

Editorial:

It has been another interesting and busy year for your Society. President Ray Clarkson and other members of the Executive have been deeply involved in issues that directly concern principles of historic interest. They must surely be congratulated for the many hours of voluntary time they have given.

Field trips are always of interest and enjoyment to members and although one trip was cancelled due to owners of properties being away, four other excursions were very well attended and proven most useful in meeting the aims of the Society. On 4 December 1994, the first outing for the summer period was a walk in and around Arrowtown with commentary. The Kingston trip on 30 January included a return journey to Fairlight on the 'Kingston Flyer' and a most sociable barbeque at the Community Ground at Kingston. On 26 February we travelled to Glenorchy, Kinloch and the Greenstone River mouth. And finally on 20 March we travelled to Clyde with visits to Moutere Station, Matakanui, St Bathans, the Golden Progress Goldmine, and Galloway Station (see following article).

Another function which has now become a regular occasion, is the 'Mid-winter Luncheon', not necessarily held mid-winter, and so it was in August last year when we lunched at Remarkables Resort Hotel, with Winky and Gerry Hohneck from Maori Point as guest speakers.

A further donation has been made to Queenstown with another bronze plaque which reads:

ON 3 JULY 1873
THE OTAGO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
SET THIS AREA APART
AS A
RESERVE FOR PLANTATIONS

and will shortly be attached to a prominent rock in the reserve.

Finally the Editor acknowledges the Society's appreciation to the contributors of this issue of the 'Courier', who are, Mr T J (Tommy) Thomson, Mr A J De La Mare, Mr John Newman of Arrowtown, and Aimee McMillan, Wakatipu High School.

Stop Press Stop Press

Members are advised that the 'Winter Luncheon' will be held on Sunday 20th August 1995 at the Holiday Inn, Fernhill, Queenstown - meet at 12.30 pm. The cost per person will be \$15.00 and the guest speaker Mr Frank Haworth.



Galloway Station Homestead

A fine building, practically unmodified except for interior upgrading, since its construction in 1865.

Galloway Station: Alexander Watson Shennan explored the area and took up a block of 100,000 acres in 1859. It included Moutere Station across the valley. The vegetation was scrubby in places but well covered in grasses and described as 'a very land of promise'. It is recorded that wild dogs were a problem and had to be eradicated.

The property was sold to W A Low in 1860. The present homestead was built to Mrs Low's specifications in 1865.

Merino sheep were introduced from Europe in 1862.

The property today is about 20,000 acres having been greatly reduced by subdivision for irrigated farms on the Galloway Flat.

Low relinquished his interest in 1878 and the property passed through a number of owners until the Preston family purchased it in 1929. The present runholder, Andrew Preston is the third generation to farm Galloway.

(Information supplied by Graeme Anderson of Earnsclough)

From a Milk Run in Leith Valley to Earnslaw Station

by T J Thomson

I suppose we have always been pioneering really. First it was turning a piece of Leith Valley into a dairy farm as so many others farmers were. The bush was still being milled in upper Leith Valley. "Come on Tommy, get up quick and get ready." It was 5.30am. My mother had already hand milked at least six cows, so had my father and Stan Donaldson who worked for us. My father would soon come in to dress for the milk delivery run which would take him, my older brother Allan and me round a good part of Dunedin North. We were not just clean, we were scrubbed and polished. How could we expect customers to buy milk from us if we looked unwashed? It was the same with Dolly our half-draught mare. Her harness had been polished, her tail neatly plaited and her mane combed. The milk cart too was neatly painted with the professionally written sign "Rosevale Dairy" prominently displayed on each side and more discreetly on a panel lower down "T. Thomson - Leith Valley".

There were at least four other dairy farms in Leith Valley in those days in the 1920s while other farmers brought milk into Dunedin from Pine Hill, Upper Junction, the Taieri, the Peninsula, in fact from every available surrounding land adjacent to Dunedin. I loved going on the milk run. It took me into town though we were only two miles out. But Dunedin seemed full of life as it prepared for the Exhibition of 1925/26. As we served our customers round Harbour Terrace you could see the massive timber work of the various "courts"- scenic railways and other building being erected on land newly reclaimed from Lake Logan.

I don't suppose I have ever been a town dweller really in spite of many years as a county councillor dealing largely with urban matters. Before I was a year old my parents decided to move out of Dunedin, though only two miles to a ten acre fruit farm in Leith Valley, bought from Sid Maxwell. My father continued to cycle to Dunedin daily to his job as foreman to Mr Gillies' painting and decorating firm while my mother picked and sold gooseberries, raspberries and apples and took the first steps to developing what later became a profitable and much larger dairy farm. She borrowed a cow from lifelong family friend Alf Harbour as a start.

Every penny that was earnable from their combined efforts was earned and immediately reinvested in buying cows and the means to farm and produce from the little property. It was at least no trouble selling the produce for Dunedin in the early 1920s was a hive of activity and industry. By the time I was five years old my father decided that they were producing enough milk to start a milk run of our own. So he gave up his painting trade, bought his own horse and cart, and capitalizing on his wide circle of friends built up in North Dunedin, among associates in the booming building industry and also from his prowess as a left hand spin bowler, an economic business.

All this, of course required more milk production, more horses and implements to grow turnips, swedes, hay and oats and more land, leased if it could not be bought. We were not alone in this sort of growth. All the land round Dunedin seemed to be devoted to feeding Dunedin. There were another half dozen dairy farmers in Leith

Valley alone, mostly with their horses and carts delivering milk direct to town.

I and my three brothers all became involved from a very early age in everything. In the early days going on the milk run was a marvellous thrill though the tough part was heading out before 6 am in all weathers, crouching in the open milk cart as our half-draught horse Dolly trotted along. She was rather slower than most of the other "milkies" horses but, heading into a cold Dunedin drizzle, fast enough.

Our experience in dealing with the milk customers was a valuable education. They were people of all kinds, rich, poor, pleasant, grumpy. Some were fanatically clean including scrubbing things in a steam-filled kitchen. Others were total strangers to soap and water as sticky flies soared about. Some paid every day - some not at all, though milk was then 6d. a quart and cream 2/- a pint. But they were all customers and my father insisted we must always be courteous and always clean with our boots gleaming. If we had run out of cream supplies that was no excuse for not supplying it even if we had to travel half round town to find some and carry it back. There was no profit but we satisfied customers.

We never actually got round to installing milking machines. My father saw this as a needless risk and expense. The early machines actually tapped every stall of which we had about 30. They were seen as hard to wash and worst of all he had great doubts the cows were properly "stripped" of the last vestige of milk. Some would-be authorities even insisted that most of the cream was in the strippings!

However the large byre shed was important on our hilly farm. In winter the cattle had to be fed indoors overnight with hay, turnips and brewers' grains bought from Speights' Brewery in Rattray Street three times a week. The farm side of activities kept us completely busy. All the turnips and swedes we grew had to be thinned by hoeing individually round each turnip. Not the best job as a cool south east wind blew over our hill looking down on Otago Harbour and the ocean beyond. The hay had to be carted in by sledge or dray and so this was a slow process down the rough winding track to the home buildings on the valley floor. The hay had first to be stacked into 8 foot high haycocks to protect it from intervening rain.

Harvesting oats may have been more fun if McCormack had invented a binder that would remove the thistles as well as cutting and tying the oat sheaves I was never sure whether I had been blessed or cursed in having been apparently immune from hay fever so there was no excuse at all for not getting stuck in and cleaning up each job as fast as we could in the endless round. Increasingly I wondered how it was that other people seemed to be able to go on holidays and have all the fun. They had no cows to milk at all.

If Dunedin is rich in education facilities today, it seemed even richer then. Our own Leith Valley School, long since closed, was only a few hundred yards from our house and Leonard R. Ellis, the head teacher required us to be informed of everything - even the derivation - mostly Latin, of all our spelling words. We learned Shakespearean plays from Standard III.

The Otago Boys' High School was also within cycling distance of home and in its heyday in the forefront of secondary education in the country. I was there for four

years, usually proceeding on to school directly from the milk run after repolishing my boots or shoes from a Nugget set my father kept under the seat of his International delivery truck which by now had superseded his horse and cart.

When I suddenly discovered an affinity for science - particularly chemistry at High School I gradually conceived the idea that a future of cow milking and all that went with it need not be inevitable after all. Apparently the same thought had occurred to my mother who within a week of my notification of success in passing UE marched me in to see the manager of one of the more imposing banks and demanded he employ me forthwith. But the worthy manager required first an application in my own handwriting, then and now virtually illegible and some testimonials - including one from our minister. As my record of churchgoing was a vast distance from being exemplary any fleeting ambition I had ever entertained of entering the banking world promptly deserted me. I did not apply.

The Otago University School of Mines had a good reputation world-wide. It offered the prospect of an exciting profession with plenty of outdoor work and overseas travel. I wasted no time in deciding to be a mining engineer which required another four years' education. I was to find in succeeding years that the Otago School had indeed earned its high standing, far more so abroad than at home in New Zealand where strangely, the industry and the profession had evolved along parallel lines and had never been integrated except to a minor degree. It was different overseas where mining engineers were widely used and highly regarded. When I was working on the Malay Peninsula for three years before the Japanese occupation I found ex-Otago men in many places. Not only that. I found the thorough Otago grounding had given me a far stronger basis on which to handle all sorts of complex mineral deposits than the training many graduates of overseas universities were equipped with.

New Zealanders were also to be found in the Malayan branch of the British Colonial Service such as in the Ordinance Survey Branch which had completely mapped the country to a detail far greater than has been yet achieved in New Zealand nearly 50 years later. I was later to find that if I wanted surface detail maps to help in mineral evaluation in New Zealand I had to do them myself.

The experience of life in Colonial Malaya was an education in race relations as well as in management of the mining industry. The words "racist" or "racial" had not yet been invented and there was an inter-racial tolerance that seems like a dream in today's world. For instance - drilling for tin ore in Selangor State in 1940 I, a European, had four Chinese gangs each with a drilling rig which they worked mutually, their progress being recorded by Malay or Indian (Tamil) clerks. The fact that these spanned Christian, Buddhist, Moslem and Hindu religions, each with special rules and demands - was never the subject of anything but unquestioning acceptance of everyone. Nobody looked up to or down on anyone else's special ways; they were respected for their difference which to me was an endless fascination. It was there of course that I did, early on, form opinions that peoples of a given race were a bit limited in the extent of their abilities but this attitude suffered severe modification as I became aware that other races all made considerable allowances for me - a

European - a race which they regarded as pretty helpless when it came to doing so many things. Each race regarded itself as superior when it came to the things that mattered to them.

In spite of all these feelings of mutual acceptance there was no doubt that it was the Europeans who were in command and for them life was idyllic - so much so that the whites became more and more removed from the realities of life as the Asians were trained to do anything and ultimately everything. It was not to last, the land was a rich plum the Europeans had developed but had come to take for granted. Suddenly, like the Portuguese and the Dutch before them, the British were flung out - this time by the Japanese.

I had been drilling for tin in the harbour of Phuket Island in Thailand for the Anglo-Oriental Mining Corporation which employed me, had just returned to Malaya to experiment with new ways of drilling alluvials too deep for the hardy manual workers to handle when I was recalled to my Volunteer Unit which had suddenly been mobilized in early December 1941 when the invading Japanese convoy was first observed in the Gulf of Siam.

The invasion and its consequences is a story on its own but the plain facts were that our voluntary force and even the regular army units were a peacetime army with little or no conception of the realities of warfare, whose basic attitude was of defence and retreat, not facing hardened troops fresh from eleven years of victorious combat in China. When the inevitable surrender took place in Singapore on February 16, 1942 I and six other volunteers grabbed a convenient canoe and headed out to sea in the direction of Sumatra.

Our escape is also a separate story; suffice it to say we and hundreds of others were taken from Sumatra by the British and Australian navies and on to Colombo, then picked up by troopships taking Australian troops home from Syria to meet the Japanese threat to Australia. I eventually got home to Dunedin in April 1942.

Shortly afterwards I called at the office in Dunedin of the Inspector of Mines - Tom McMillan to enquire about the state of the industry and was immediately asked if I would go to Glenorchy to assist in a desperate drive to boost scheelite recovery, which the NZ Government was actively pursuing in response to an emergency situation in Britain where production of armaments to face the highly sophisticated German war equipment was limited by the shortage of tungsten metal so vital in making special hard tool steel. Glenorchy scheelite, which was known as a very good quality tungstn ore, had suddenly become extremely important. The more so since the Japanese had overrun the rich tungsten deposits in China and Burma.

Coming up on the lake steamer 'Earnslaw' to Glenorchy in April 1942 my eyes were searching the high mountain sides for signs of ore deposits and other features of geological interest. The mountains' sheep and cattle grazing potential did not figure highly in my thoughts at all.

The Government had taken over the mining leases of the Glenorchy Scheelite Company, the main scheelite producer, and had employed metal miners and was bringing in compressors and other equipment to enable production to be increased

rapidly so Glenorchy had an air of industrial activity about it when I arrived at the newly built office of State Scheelite Mines Glenorchy that day.

"Could I draw a plan?" Ted Collier, the manager asked. I was actually at work within an hour of arriving in Glenorchy. Ted had an ancient theodolite and some survey equipment and had an idea about what was needed but was not really able to do much of the type of surveying needed. However he was doing his best in spite of his miner's lung disease (phthisis) the result of years' underground in Waihi mines' dust-filled air that made breathing an effort.

I found that there were no actual mine plans at all though there were men working in the labyrinth of tunnels that was the main Glenorchy Mine. They were drilling and blasting with only a rudimentary idea of whether they were near or far from each other.

So I became Mine Surveyor with Andy Paulin as the first of my helpers. It was a fascinating job unravelling on paper a picture of workings which up till then existed only as an impression in the mind of each member of the generations of miners that had worked there since about 1884 when the Glenorchy deposit was first found by Wilson and Partners.

Andy proved to be the ideal assistant. Naturally intelligent he picked up the surveying routine quickly and we were able to complete plans of the 3000 feet of workings at Paradise Mine and 8000 feet in Glenorchy mine based on a survey that was accurate in three dimensions within a quarter of an inch. It enabled management to plan prospecting and extraction of ore with confidence on a safe and systematic basis. The Paulins had lived and worked in Glenorchy for generations. They knew the area intimately, having mined every bore including at the top of the 6529 ft Black Peak so it was not long before I found that Andy had a remarkable understanding of the way in which scheelite occurred in the schist rocks that made up the mountains in the area. Later I was to discover that all the successful Glenorchy miners had, through grim experience, mostly in hard times, built up an understanding of scheelite deposits that was rarely equalled even by many supposedly highly qualified people who came to Glenorchy in some instances hoping to expand production using "modern methods". The truth is that the scheelite deposits are scattered throughout the schist rock of the Richardson and Forbes Ranges, Mt Alfred and further north. It occurs at all depths but in such discontinuous patches that nobody had yet found the key to how to locate them. The main aim was to arrive at a conclusion about the ecological origin of the scheelite deposits in the hope this would lead us to a mother lode or main source. Some (including me) thought it came up from molten deposits deep in the earth - others that it came from the schist itself which was once a sediment mashed into the bed from an ancient land. Modern thought is that this ancient land source of this sediment was Antarctica - rather further afield than we were searching.

But once having found an outcrop worth mining people like the Elliots, Wylies, Shaws, Reids, Sharpes, Paulins - Ted Barnett and Laurie Smith and Jimmy Sanders knew all the signs that told them what was worth following and whether they were on the right lode. I was keen to look for parallel reefs by drilling from existing draws at both Glenorchy and Paradise. The Mines Department sent down a pneumatically

driven diamond drill too but the rules were that all drilling had to be done by the Department's Drill Superintendent - who never arrived. As he had the diamond bits I could not do any drilling as I had done in Malaya.

However the Under-Secretary C. H. Benney did encourage the private miners to the utmost. One way being to pay for cutting hill tracks to enable miners to pack food and equipment out to sometimes incredibly precipitous locations where good scheelite could be mined then packed out on horses. On one occasion Jack Wylie, having a complaint, made a private approach to Benney because the mice were tearing into food being packed out to Wylie's tucker box on the Bonnie Jean Road. "What do you want me to do?", said Benney. "Set a bloody mousetrap?"

Benney had grown up in a mining background. I had in fact worked as a student in the gold mine at Waikino near Waihi run by his father and brother. Apart from Benney we had visits from Bert Landreth, the Department's chief Mining Engineer, Dr John Henderson and R. V. (Dick) Willett of the NZ Geological Survey and quite frequently Tom McMillan - Otago Inspector of Mines. The latter, though quite elderly - did not hesitate to visit mines everywhere no matter at what dangerous place - and some were like eagles' nests. I used to accompany the little Northumberland Englishman and many times heard his words of encouragement to all miners "Keep at it Boy- we want the scheelite now, not after the War is over."

I used to do surveys of small privately-owned mines when asked and eventually produced an overall map showing all mined claims around the Bucklerburn and Precipice Basins in the hope that some indication of a mineralized zone connecting them all might emerge. It was helpful but no miraculous discoveries resulted.

One interesting use made of my mine plans of Glenorchy and Paradise mines was in the arbitration hearings which were held to fix the value of these mines which had been "acquired" from the Glenorchy Scheelite Co. However the view expressed at the time was the minor local shareholders received a satisfactory price because the Crown took into account that it could claim back in death duties most of the amount paid to the estate which held a large mortgage or shareholding on these mines!

Taking up mining privileges in the 1940s and earlier was the simplest of procedures requiring little more than pegging the land in a manner which could be so described by reference to known features rather than by the full legal survey required today. Applications were decided by the Warden of Mines, a District Court Judge with special extra powers. The extraordinary changes to the law since seem to have achieved little more than interminable delays, staggering expenses and a loss of basic understanding of all aspects of mining by New Zealanders. Many people who may have been making a living mining have today gone out of the industry altogether. Some are on welfare benefits and the environment has gained nothing.

The scheelite mines required timber, particularly for stopping (removal of payable reef between levels). The red beech timber of the Dart State Forest was ideal for this, its clean grain and great strength making it easy to split 9 or 10ft "laths" needed to confine rock-fill from collapsing into trucking levels. Jim Cornish kept a constant supply of props and laths for both government mines from this bush though the bush

shows little sign of either Jim's activities or those of his son Jimmy and partner Darrol McGregor who, like Bill Barrowsman and his son extracted many thousands of beech posts from the same bush in later years, though looking at the bush today the general public regard it as virgin bush. An indication of the powers of regeneration of this excellent species.

While I was working on the scheelite surveys I did gradually become aware of the nature of local farming and also of the tourists, then mostly being collected from the steamer 'Earnslaw' by Harry Bryant at Kinloch and Dave Knowles at Glenorchy - the first reputedly developing his Routeburn Valley tourist business while the latter continued the Paradise run. Little did I think at the time that I too would, like many other locals do a stint of driving tourists for Harry or even less that I would end up on the mustering beats. Perhaps I should feel downright ashamed when I think how my attitude to the rabbits changed from the days when, on route to Paradise Mines to measure up the footage driven by various pairs of miners working a contract in the different headings, I would take such delight in stopping here and there to shoot rabbits among the thousands that were eating out the stock feed - particularly on Earnslaw. It never seemed to occur to me that the cute rabbit kept a number of places on the verge of bankruptcy. Lewis Groves, later to become my father-in-law, soon brought me to earth however. Coach-builder, hotelier and now farmer he had no illusions about what was a viable way of life in the tough Head of Lake district.

After two years of mine surveying I had done all I could to help the industry and the Mines Department now desperate to get coal mining going wanted me to go to the West Coast to report on areas where they hoped to increase production of bituminous coal by moving into opencast systems which, with the development of earth-moving machinery, were now in vogue.

If I had been a bit surprised at the rough and ready methods of mining without surveys at Glenorchy the situation in the coal mines was "out of this world". There were many reasons for this. One important one being the wide extent of thick deposits of excellent coal here in New Zealand compared with the deep thin hard-to-mine coal in Britain whence the core of our miners came from, bringing not only mining systems but also all the class struggles from impoverished areas at "Home". This, combined with a colonial attitude that the coal was somehow inexhaustible, meant that underground methods were used virtually everywhere, even where the coal was almost sitting uncovered on the surface. Again no preliminary surveys or drilling programmes had been bothered with. The coal was there, outcropping to the surface so it was followed and mined usually with great waste due to unsafe mining or to fires underground which broke out spontaneously from accumulations of fine coal left in the mine reacting to exposure to air and moisture - especially when the coal was sulphur-bearing. Because the need was for a fast increase in coal production the Government wanted to know what could be mined by opencast methods so I had to do surveys which gathered all available information about thickness, type and location of coal - the amount and type of overlying rock or soil and generally all available information short of that only obtainable from drilling which would come

later. It required accurate surveys which also gathered information to enable us to produce closely contoured (5 foot) maps showing outcrops of coal and all other useful information which would make it possible to plan an entire mining operation with full knowledge of the coal deposit at the outset.

Working at Stockton, a mine on the hills above Granity which the Government had bought about 1943, it soon became obvious that much if not all, the coal there could have been opencast mined and that great wastage had been unavoidable. Working with a team some of whom assisted me in the survey while others dug out outcrops of coal to be mapped, a coal survey system was established which went on under engineers there and eventually grew to a maior investigation throughout the country of the nation's coal resources.

Although I found the work fascinating I wanted to get into management at some time but as this could only be done by first qualifying as a first class coal mine manager under the Coal Mines Act which in turn required that experience of actual mining - digging coal and pushing trucks, etc I left the survey and took a job as a miner at Charming Creek, a private mine neighbouring Stockton.

The change was dramatic; the casual dispute-ridden pace of work on the State owned Stockton Mine was replaced by the reality of the private mine in which all of us had to live on what the market would pay - there was no tapping the taxpayer's pocket to make up whatever deficit arose. It was enough to make me realise that before anyone could introduce efficiency in production and resource management into coal mining there was a widespread and deep political entrenchment that would take years maybe a lifetime, to pass before there was any hope of such technological progress. So I decided in 1946 to accept an offer from Anglo-Oriental, my old mining employer in Malaya - to return there and join in the drive to rehabilitate their tin mining empire.

It did not work. I had been married a year when I returned to Malaya and it soon became apparent that despite the horrors of war and military occupation of the country by the Japanese we had learned nothing about how to live as Europeans in this Asian land; we were moving straight back to the idle social existence which had led to our eviction five years before. Here too, the field was wide open for great improvement in management and extraction along with wise resource management but I knew my wife Rata would never be able to tolerate the almost enforced idleness of the social whirl that was "life" in the East. I decided to return to New Zealand and give the coal another go.

Waiting at Routeburn Station for word from the Mines Department, this time at Huntly to rejoin them, we heard from Lewis Groves that Earnslaw Station was on the market. It seemed like the best place in the world to me, rabbits and all. I had cherished a dream that after a career in the mining world I would eventually "retire" to our own farm somewhere in New Zealand. Now that Earnslaw had come up I took no time at all to decide that the time to do that was now.

My knowledge of sheep and high country farming was minimal, but my farming background made me reason that land that could sustain a rabbit population as big as

that at Earnslaw had to be good. I was allowed to take the place over in partnership with my brother Dick provided we employed Lewis Groves as manager. The National Mortgage and Agency Co. had good reason to have such faith in Lewis' sound approach to farming in the Glenorchy district. He had been advising them and their local clients for years. Earnslaw had been a troublesome problem for the firm for a long time and there is no doubt that the rabbits had been the main cause in reducing the place, then owned by the Estate of Charles Sloper, to little more than a liability - in fact less innocent buyers than we may well have taken to their heels rather than grab an opportunity to buy it, especially after the 1943 snow when at least 1000 Earnslaw sheep had been lost.

Before Dan O'Connell - Sloper Estate's manager, left he had given me a job to work for them on the fall muster during the last two months before the ownership passed to us. This enabled me to understand the system followed and to become familiar with characteristics of the run and of half-bred sheep. Dan had planted about 30 acres of barley in the sandy paddock beside the Rees River. It had been a desperate attempt to get some return from the 2000 acres of flats but despite periodic evening visits to the crop to protect the barley by shooting marauding rabbits they had eaten bare a wide area of it right round the crop leaving a modest ten acres in the middle to ripen. When we came to cut it with our binder and stook it we were left with a mere stack about eight feet high, but this grabbed the attention of the dozen or so turkeys we had acquired from the O'Connells. Barley, it seemed, was not the answer.

Rabbits - of course were worth money - if you could catch them. So discharging the rabbiters, Dick and I started trapping and poisoning.

To this day I feel that it should be possible to control and farm the rabbit. Some means of causing them to leave their burrows so they could be caught, the surplus skinned or sold and the breeding stock retained. Their ability to survive in rough conditions when reduced to very small numbers in winter. Their ability to reproduce in large numbers as feed grows and their excellent meat and fur all make them a winner - if you could catch them at will. Nobody has managed to do this yet.

However, we tried but soon found we were no match for the rabbit at all. They would have multiplied to millions against our puny efforts. I quickly called in the professionals again putting one team on one half of the flats and their rivals on the other. Although they worked unbelievably hard and the rabbits were reduced it was only a short respite. The rabbits were back as thick as ever. In desperation I wrote to the Stock Inspector asking what the Government could do about the pest. The timing was right for once, the Rabbit Destruction Act had just been passed - there was to be nation-wide war on the rabbit.

Each year the Society awards a prize to Wakatipu High School for the best essay on local history contributed by a student. The competition is known as the William Rees Memorial Essay. Following is Aimee MacMillan's winning entry.

Chinese Settlers in Central Otago
With Specific Reference to the Wakatipu Area -
Aimee MacMillan, Wakatipu High School

Origins of the N.Z. Chinese

The New Zealand Chinese mainly migrated from Poon Yve, one of many counties that made up the province of Guandong (Kwongtung) situated in the Canton (Guangzhou) Delta in Southern China. Living in a coastal province, the people of Guangdong had long ago established themselves in fishing and trading as a vital means of survival and this developed more of a seafaring and possibly a more adventurous nature than those who lived in inland China.

Despite Guangdong's importance boasting China's main port and also being the centre for Chinese foreign communications it, similar to the rest of China, was drastically over populated. During the late 19th century 600 people occupied one square kilometre and as this population continued to increase, land prices soared and soon resulted in much poverty and many people being landless.

This however was not the only factor contributing to the large scale emigration of the Chinese during the mid 19th century.

The second and most crucial reason for the dispersion of the Chinese was the breakdown of the Chinese Government and their inability to maintain control.

In 1840-42, China experienced its first Opium war. Sparked off by the very lucrative, yet destructive opium trade and continuing into a vicious battle between the British and the Chinese, the country was soon plunged into economic turmoil resulting in high unemployment and inflation. An on-going drought at the same time obviously expanded the problems dramatically. The Guangzhou River which flowed through Guangdong was the main source of opium distribution and so when the war erupted the province itself was the worst devastated.

Nine years later in 1851 the Taiping Rebellion, a civil war, swept southern China killing an estimated 30 million citizens. Luckily for Guangdong, the rebellion evolved in its northern corner and continued to move into the neighbouring provinces. The war lasted until 1864.

However the Cantonese were not spared for long. In 1854-56 another revolt, led by the Red Turbans, ravaged the land and 1 million people were murdered, "the rivers were clogged with corpses".

The second Opium War, maybe not as destructive as the first, still led to further decline of the Cantonese way of life after another invasion of the British and French during 1856-1860.

The dispersion of the Chinese began in 1840-50 and until 1857 was virtually unrecorded by the preoccupied national government.

From China the immigration waves reached as far as the USA (1850), Canada (1860), and also Australia (1852), New Zealand (1866), South East Asia.

At first it was mainly the males who migrated as the women were responsible for the care of the household. The hardships of travelling, mining and also the difficulties with the customary footbinding meant they remained in China.

The women and the families were also effectively an incentive for the male migrants to work hard overseas and return home. Often marriages were arranged and conducted before one migrated, to provide such an incentive.

The women were also prohibited by law, as were the men, not to venture beyond the country, but for men the penalties, one being death, were rarely enforced. Confucian beliefs also restricted female migration.

In the early days the emigrants travelled by sailing ships and as technology progressed the steamship. These voyages were far from pleasant as the following extract from the log from the sailing ship 'Guiding Star' shows, "As regards her Chinese passengers, no sickness occurred to them until coming into cold weather, the first one dying in long. 123. East, lat. 43. South, and continued a mortality of 27 till arrival, their sickness due to scurvy and dysentery." This also illustrates that the food on board these ships caused problems.

For those bound for New Zealand, the fare was 8-10 pounds and the voyage usually 3 months, but they met with further expenses on arrival. The majority of the migrants were forced to borrow off close family or friends and frequently were forced to resort to the "pig-trade" option where by one would receive funding from merchants or businessmen in exchange for a promise for work, usually on a poor wage, to pay off the debt.

Also, frequently members of the Cantonese mercantile class would provide emigrants with news of opportunities to migrate, facilitate shipping and document requirements. In the later years, when the Chinese settlers began gaining wealth, chain migration, "Li Shung" or "to give life", developed. This way the sponsoring by Chinese settlers of male friends or members of the family allowed them to seek their fortune in the "gold-hills".

During 1865, the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, with the approval of the Otago Provincial Council, proposed to the Chinese goldseekers of the Victorian fields in Australia, a chance to rework the Otago Goldfields. This invitation was prompted due to a drastic slump in Otago's population when in the early 1860s, 4000 miners departed the fields and sought wealth in the newly discovered and prosperous Westland goldfields. Consequently this caused great problems for the economy.

The lawfulness and honesty of the Chinese, their preference for reworking claims and going for small gold deposits that lasted rather than the unrealistic and uncommon 'bonanzas' and also the cheap labour they tended to provide, made the thought of their presence very welcome by the Otago Provincial Council.

The invitation also included a clause stating that the Chinese will "receive the same protection as other residents receive." - This vow of protection was a result of a request from a Chinaman in Victoria and may have been why the NZ Chinese were treated

well in comparison with elsewhere.

By 1868 immigrants were flocking in from the Chinese homeland as well as the Australian fields.

Life for the New Zealand Chinese

Central Otago

Life for the New Zealand Chinese, although better than elsewhere, was generally extremely harsh; much more so than many back home in China could have imagined.

When they first arrived the Chinese trekked for many miles to reach the goldfields and once there they resided in housing, which due to their sojourners' outlook, was very rudimentary and temporary in construction. The Chinese used many local materials to their best advantage and houses were constructed of a wide range of material such as timber, mud brick, stone and iron. One Arrowtown resident 'Tin-Pan' used several flattened kerosene tins on a roof and thus he acquired his unusual title. Many Chinese also saw Otago's natural environment to their advantage and constructed dwellings under rock overlays or simply lived in Otago's abundance of natural caves.

Unlike many European goldmining settlers the Chinese "like a home of finer stuff than calico." Their dwellings, although quite small were often occupied by several members, not only for companionship but also for the protection the close knit groups provided against frequent European bigotry.

This system of grouping was a further extension of the family life which was central in any Chinese Community. Because of their lack of family in New Zealand the Chinese fell back in these close knit groups for support. The groups consisted of members of a common Chinese county and rarely did the different county groups mix.

The discipline of the Chinese; their frugality, industriousness, and honorable living can be seen as a direct result of this grouping system as the collective memory and purpose they provided reminded individuals of their responsibilities to their families and friends, to return home with wealth. The group also supported members in times of financial hardships and provided well needed companionship. A virtual total male Chinese population in New Zealand was another contributor to the difficulties of life in the new land. By 1907 there were still only 32 Chinese females of any age. Because of this lack of Chinese women some young Chinese males began socialising with European females and in some cases even married them. This caused objections from the European community and many gatherings and petitions were organised to prevent such acts. "In the interests of racial purity and to preserve the European type in New Zealand this meeting of Dunedin citizens is of the opinion that inter-marriages between Europeans and Chinese, or other asiatics, should be absolutely prohibited by law." The New Zealand Chinese were also aware of homosexuality and in some cases indecently assaulted European children.

With the large influx of Chinese migrants the European community in New Zealand began to fear that they would introduce diseases including the dreaded leprosy. Although only one Chinese case of leprosy was reported in New Zealand the

New Zealand Chinese were soon labelled as carriers of the disease. This quote from a Wakatipu Goldfields doctor demonstrates the falseness of these claims .

"Chinese in Wakatipu District were remarkably healthy; no infectious diseases have come under my notice. I do not think that their introduction is likely to have prejudicial moral effects. Europeans never associate with them."

Similarly the crime levels in their communities were also exaggerated. The New Zealand Chinese were accused of crimes ranging from theft through to murder but in truth the Chinese were very lawful and passive. In fact violent crimes amongst the Chinese were very unusual and the most frequently committed crime was failing to gain mining rights. An example of one of the very rare violent disputes was between Ah Mhow and Ching Hoy, both Arrowtown residents, where one intentionally wounded the other with a cleaver. "Since I have been connected with the police force, I may safely say that less crime has been committed by the Chinese than by the European population in proportion to their respective members". This remark by the Dunstan Inspector of Police illustrates the minimal crime rate in the Chinese community.

To the Chinese, their two vices were major parts of their lives. Although there may have been more, the two main vices were gambling, usually fantan, lotteries or dominoes and opium smoking. Small dens were often set up, often in the back of stores or in people's houses, where Chinese passed lonely hours or celebrated by smoking the opium pipe or gambling.

Both opium and gambling however greatly diminished savings and as a result was frequently frowned upon by the Chinese as undutiful. As a result of their frugal nature and the disciplinary county grouping system many were discouraged from participating, and in 1890 "not more than perhaps two in ten Otago Chinese being confirmed opium smokers." As for gambling, in my childhood I saw far more persons looking than actively playing." In 1901 a petition instigated by a large group of Chinese and later supported by European ministers led to the passing of the Opium Prohibition Act which effectively banned the drug from usage.

Later, in 1927 the Dangerous Drugs Act permitted police to freely search any Chinese premises for the drug. Gambling was also illegal but the ban on this was rarely enforced.

Both vices however continued to be regular activities, with feasting and fireworks during the Chinese New Year celebrated around February. "For the past week, Arrowtown has been the centre of attraction for about 200 Chinese, who have made the night hideous with their exploding crackers, and their disgusting presence felt in more ways than one. On Sunday night last, even Europeans, and, we believe females at that, were to be seen playing 'fan-tan', while every night for a week the Chinese stores have been scenes of indescribable vice and repulsive practices. The opium smoke,been freely disposed, even to little boys."

While in New Zealand the Chinese were continually harrassed in efforts by the Europeans to convert them to Christianity. For many New Zealanders the presence of thousands of idolators in the province would soon become an evil "chilling and

tainting the religious lives of the community.”

Only few Chinese were successfully converted with the majority being unco-operative as they saw Jesus as inferior to their own gods because he lived later, the dread of what the spirits and demons would do if they abandoned their beliefs and also they were unlikely to accept the religion of those who treated them so badly.

Undoubtedly European attitudes towards the New Zealand Chinese and their treatment of them was by far the biggest contributor to the harshness of life in New Zealand. “I say “NZ for NZers”. I have perfect horror of the Chinese: their conduct I detest. They are not capable of understanding our laws, or obeying them, they should be kept under; and the best way to keep them under is to refuse them admittance to our shores.”

Such prejudices and discrimination towards the New Zealand Chinese peaked in 1881 following the first anti-Chinese legislation, 1888 and 1896 where China was at her lowest international status and in the 1920s after a relatively settled period during WWI when China was an ally.

During the years of antagonism the Chinese acquired many derogatory names such as ‘Mongolian filth’, ‘yellow agony’, ‘yellow lepers’, and ‘these animals’.

Even during the heights of anti-Chinese antagonism “God-parents” emerged. These ‘god-parents’ were European folk who tended to the Chinese and in some cases even gained their naturalisation. In 1870 the New Zealand Government also did its part for the Chinese when 4 Ministers of Parliament stood up for the Chinese over issues and 2 supported inter-marriages between Chinese and Europeans.

The Wakatipu

Arrowtown, the main Chinese settlement in the Wakatipu District, was settled in the late 1860s, but it was not until 1869 when large numbers of Chinese immigrants first began residing in the area.

By late that year two Chinese stores were already established and the characteristic Chinese huts were fast accumulating on the river flats, adjacent to the stores. The placement of the small settlement was not only due to that of the stores but also the distance from the bigoted Europeans. These huts were often used as winter retreats for the many Chinese goldseekers who led a mobile life, working many claims all over the Wakatipu district. “The Chinese element is beginning to be largely predominant here and a stranger entering the town during the usual dinner hour at noon, or at “knock-off time” in the evening, would almost imagine that he was in a sort of miniature Hong Kong”. Obviously the population of the Chinese was slightly exaggerated, but this quote illustrates well the growth of their community.

For the Wakatipu Chinese, as with Chinese throughout Otago and other populated areas in New Zealand the community’s stores provided not only a vast array of imported Chinese and European products, such as rice, ginger, medicines and cloth, but they also provided gambling and opium smoking accessories, mail and letter writing facilities, lodging, links with the European community, information from abroad and within New Zealand and also (unofficial) banking services. In the case

of Su Sing’s Store the hut was also used as a restaurant, social and meeting hall.

Thus it is not hard to see why the store, and consequently the storekeepers, were very central to the Chinese way of life.

Although there were three different stores established in Arrowtown, there may have been a fourth: Ah Lum’s, Su Sing’s and Wong Yow’s being confirmed and Ah Wak’s being the 4th. These storekeepers were held in high regard by both the Chinese and the European community, as they were all well versed in both English and Chinese, and especially Ah Lum who was viewed as the spokesman or “head man” for the Chinese.

Their ability to speak and write both English and Chinese, and also the letter writing facilities some of the stores provided were greatly valued by the Chinese who were usually either fully or partly illiterate. This problem of illiteracy was common among a great percentage of the Chinese population. In 1901, after 35 years of contact in New Zealand, 13.5% were able to read and write English, 14% could read English, 29% were able to read and write Chinese, 29.5% could read Chinese and the remaining 14% unable to read or write in English or Chinese.

For the Wakatipu Chinese, European antagonism was often very loud, and sometimes more so than elsewhere in Otago. In 1870, T.L. Shepard, in a speech to the Arrowtown district proposed a poll tax of 50 pounds on the Chinese and a heavy duty on rice to discourage further immigration. A year later a petition was launched by the Arrow District Miners’ Association and was later passed on to government officials.

However a local newspaper report had different opinions of the Chinese: “I consider the Chinese population are a great benefit to the district. They exhibit an amount of energy and perseverance most credible to themselves and benefit to the community of which they form a portion. Their business transactions as a rule are upright and straightforward, while they are most orderly and sober in their general habits.”

Problems the Chinese Faced

The New Zealand Chinese faced many problems while residing in the country but perhaps the major of these were the attitudes and prejudicial feelings held towards them by the European population in New Zealand and the restrictions and laws passed as a result of this anti-Chinese agitation.

By the 1870s cries were raised for restrictions on Chinese immigration and after much pressure on the government, many meetings and petitions, the first Chinese Immigration Restrictions Act was passed in 1881.

This act imposed a 10 pound poll tax and only one Chinese arrival per 10 ship’s tonnage. Also during that year a Gaming and Lotteries Act was passed which outlawed chance games like fantan and pakapoo.

In 1882 a .. 1 fee for Chinese and a 2 pound and sixpence fee for others in naturalisation was imposed by the Aliens Act. Six years later the second Chinese Immigration Restriction Act was finalised which decreased Chinese arrivals to one

per 100 tons. There was also an increased duty placed on rice, tea and opium.

1894 saw the passing of the Shops and Office Act which prohibited ownership to anyone who was not British by birth or who was not in naturalisation.

This naturalisation of the Chinese was tightened in 1895 and the following year their Immigration Restriction Act was again raised to a 100 pound poll-tax and one arrival per 200 tons. In 1898 the Chinese were excluded in the Old Age Pension Act.

1901 saw the Opium Prohibition Act and also further tightening of the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act. Lastly there was the Dangerous Drugs Act which gave police rights to search all Chinese premises. During this time there were also many unsuccessful bills such as the 1894 Bill against Chinese.

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The Steamer Victoria - A De La Mare

The Steamer "Victoria"

by Allan De La Mare

An obituary has thrown some further light on the 'Victoria' one of the very early steam vessels on Lake Wakatipu.

It records the death of David Curle in Dunedin on 15 July 1899 aged 80. Curle was born in Troon, Scotland and emigrated to Melbourne in 1852. After some time at the diggings he took up ship building at Melbourne and was also engaged in a ferry service on the Yarra. In 1859 he decided to come to Otago and sailed his own Dutch galliot of 100 tons. As deck cargo he carried the iron hull of the 25 ton steamer 'Victoria'. The Victoria was 75 foot long and had such a narrow beam it looked out of proportion. Although it is not known if Curle owned the vessel or a Mr Douglas as indicated in *All Aboard* it was employed in carrying freight and passengers on Otago Harbour. It was one of the first steam vessels on the Otago Harbour, the first being James McAndrew's 'Queen' which arrived in 1858.

When gold was discovered in the Wakatipu the main route for supplies was from the south by waggon to Kingston and thence by boat to Queenstown. Carriage on the Lake was lucrative and gave a better return than most mining claims. The vagaries of the wind and the danger of sudden squalls made sailing difficult and it was soon recognised steam vessels were essential. Despite the difficulties several small steamers were soon on the lake including the 'Victoria' which was cut up, transported

to Kingston and re assembled. It arrived in March 1863.

While the rush lasted there would have been work in plenty but the boom was short and when the 'Antrim' came into service in 1878 no doubt the smaller vessels had difficulty in finding cargoes. About 1870 the 'Victoria' was owned by a Dick Haworth who had a Chinaman as crew. Haworth grew wheat on his farm at Halfway Bay which he took to Robertson and Hallenstein's Mill at Frankton for grinding into flour. On one occasion his Chinese crewman not understanding Haworth's broad Lancashire dialect failed to make the vessel fast to the mooring post at the mill and the 'Victoria' went over The Falls. The Falls were a one way traffic for a vessel of this size and Haworth had a problem. He solved it by a deal with some bridge builders working in the area who undertook to transport the 'Victoria' overland back above The Falls for £50. This was duly carried out.

After the Transit of Venus Expedition in 1874 to Queenstown the 'Victoria' was renamed the 'Venus'. Its full history is not known but for a period it lay on the beach immediately below Eichardts Hotel. According to Fred Miller's Golden Days of Lake County the 'Venus' was towed by the 'Antrim' to the island off Cecil Peak and sunk. The date of its end is not known.

Snow Storm of 1939- John Newman

The Snow Storm of 1939

by John Newman of Arrowtown

From the earliest days of settlement in this district, high country settlers have been very weather conscious. Some winters have been notable for their severity, and some inland districts by virtue of their location receive more snow than others.

Snowstorms of note to affect the Wakatipu, Central Otago and Northern Southland occurred in 1863, 1878, 1908, 1923 and 1939 but in other years heavy but less damaging snowfalls were experienced.

Details of snowfalls of last century have been described in several historical publications, but in more recent times little has been written of the winters of 1923 and 1939. According to high country farmers who experienced the winter of 1923 it was the hardest winter experienced to that time this century. Snow and freezing temperatures commenced in May and continued throughout the winter, the depth of snow was not unusual but the prolonged severe cold following a dry autumn created a serious shortage of stock food. This situation proved the fallacy of the old saying that nature always provides. By 1939 farmers were relying more on modern road transport for supplies and according to the late Mr Bill Gordon of Garston in earlier years when heavy snowfalls occurred, settlers relied less on transport for frequent deliveries of supplies. Country people made their own bread and were self-sufficient in meat, vegetables, butter, etc.

Extreme weather conditions always provide interest and with the passage of time,

such conditions are difficult to recall with accuracy and can at times be exaggerated as many details and records have been irretrievably lost. In 1939 snow lay in the Kingston-Garston districts for about six weeks, according to the late David Kerr (son of the legendary Captain John Black Kerr, owner and skipper of early sailing ships on Lake Wakatipu) snow to the depth of six feet lay in Kingston during the '39 snow. He had twelve cows, his cowshed only had six stalls, and he would bail up six cows at a time and feed them, and when the snow was at its greatest depth he could only see the tips of the cows' horns above the snow. The train took several days to reach Kingston during the '39 snow, but David Kerr told the writer of this article that his mother (who survived her husband by several years) told him that one winter there was no train to Kingston for six weeks, but unfortunately the year is unknown.

Apparently from a farmer's point of view the winter of 1939 was a good winter for the regions of Northern Southland and the southern area of the Lake Wakatipu. The real winter came late. The big snow in those areas commenced on July 24th and records from The Southland Times state that snow fell on July 24th, continued on July 25th, with one foot at Garston and on that day the Garston bus (which ran a weekday service to Invercargill) took about four hours to reach Parawa (approx. 11 miles).

Snow also fell in Canterbury and some North Island districts and Dunedin received the heaviest fall for 50 years, starting on the 24th July. By July 26th 2 feet of snow lay in Garston and on this day a special passenger train was sent to Kingston to collect passengers from the steamer as the road from Queenstown was impassable. The special train came from Invercargill and connected with a train from Gore at Lumsden and then left for Kingston where the steamer was waiting, the train however became snowbound at Eyre Creek. Consequently the steamer spent the night at Kingston. There were only two passengers on this northbound train, Major and Mrs McKenzie of Walter Peak and the train crew consisted of J McCarthur (Guard), T Bulman (Engine Driver), A D C McMurtrie (Fireman), who spent the night at Eyre Creek in a steam heated carriage and helped themselves to some of the freight that contained foodstuffs. Steam was kept up in the engine and all the occupants spent a reasonable comfortable night.

Next day a relief train with two engines arrived from Lumsden. The stranded train was dug out, apparently by a work crew who had come with the relief train, one of these engines then returned to Lumsden. The train then, with two engines, carried on towards Kingston. However the snow became too deep, being four feet at Nokomai and workmen travelling with the train had a busy time digging out. Garston was reached about 4 pm and here the front engine became partly buried in a twelve foot snowdrift. After much shunting back and forth the second engine managed to free it. By this time the crew considered it impracticable to continue that night and decided to return to Lumsden. Major and Mrs McKenzie spent the night at the Garston Hotel.

On the third day of the journey Kingston was reached after dark and there was another gang of forty workmen from Lumsden with a relief train. These men dug out up to eight very big drifts. The worst drift, about six miles from Kingston, covered the line to a depth of about twelve feet for a distance of 200 yards. A short distance

away was another drift about 100 yards long, and in other cuttings the snow was piled too high for the combined power of the two engines to force a passage through. The only successful method of clearing the line was digging by hand.

The weather in the Kingston district was clear during the day, but rain began to fall during the early evening (this was July 28th). On Saturday July 29th the thaw had stopped and further snow fell in many areas. One foot fell at Garston on Monday 31st and Kingston had a layer of four feet of snow when the Railways Dept reported a bulldozer had arrived at Kingston from Queenstown after clearing the lake road. Owing to a shortage of supplies for people living on the Lumsden-Kingston highway a special train was scheduled to leave Invercargill at mid-day and arrive at Kingston at 4 pm. From there passengers and goods would be transported by bus. However, owing to fresh snow falling, the train could not negotiate drifts at Fairlight. Intending passengers from Queenstown and other points had been taken to Kingston by road but as the train could not get through, the bus after a very difficult journey carried its passengers on to Fairlight. At this point the passengers were transported from the bus to the train, and passengers from Invercargill joined the bus. The train began the return journey at 11.20 pm powered by two engines, one at each end. The engines were facing opposite directions so that when the train moved forward the rear engine shunted backwards. The engines were placed in this way so that if the front engine was held in a drift the rear engine could pull the train backwards out of the drift.

Over this time Queenstown received only four inches of snow while at Frankton and Arthurs Point snow lay to a depth of 10-16 inches.

How many times a steamer spent the night at Kingston is unknown, but about the 26th July 1945 the 'Earnslaw', after loading was completed, left Kingston at approximately 9 pm. Snow had been falling since mid-morning delaying the arrival of the goods train. It was the custom in those days for the steamers ('Earnslaw' and 'Ben Lomond') to load all freight that had arrived by train irrespective of the departure time. Sometimes the train would be late due to floods or have large loads and loading was done at night with the aid of wharf lights (on poles like street lights) and as Kingston had no power until the late 1950s power for the lights was supplied by the steamers' generators.

On the night in question the 'Earnslaw' sailed into the darkness in a blinding snowstorm and after a short distance it was decided to return to the wharf. The crew spent the night at the Kingston Hotel. The majority of them eventually went to bed, the odd few spent the night in the bar. By morning snow had stopped falling and the ship was away at first light.

The Courier *Acknowledgement*

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