

The Queenstown Courier

Published by
Queenstown & District Historical Society (Inc.)
Queenstown

Aims of the Society

- (1) *That we use our power to advise, concerning the saving of historical aspects of the district.*
- (2) *Preservation of and education in all aspects of historical research and interest.*

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Secretary:	Jocelyn Robertson	442 1468
Treasurer:	E C (Peter) Mills	442 7930
"Courier":	Duncan Wilson	442 7385
Trips:	Malcolm Boote	442 0004
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*The Official Publication
of the Queenstown & District
Historical Society*

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Queenstown and District Historical Society

Sixty Sixth Issue - May 2001
Officers of the Society

President:	Rupert Iles	442 1976
	25 Berkshire St, Atown	
Vice President:	Malcolm Boote (trips)	442 0004
Past President:	Rex Austin	
	171 Fernhill Road, Qtown	442 8345
Secretary:	Jocelyn Robertson	442 1468
	45 Cotter Av, Arrowtown	
Treasurer:	E C (Peter) Mills	
	5 Panners Way, Qtown	442 7930

Committee

Ray Clarkson (submissions)	442 3681	Ray Timmins (submissions)	442 8403
Cicely Morrison (trips)	442 1744	Duncan Wilson (Courier)	442 7385
Margaret Templeton	442 8312	Wendy Ellingham	442 0026
Karen Boulay	442 8564	John Heenan	442 1796
Elizabeth McDonald	442 7487	Mike Lynch	442 8812

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Editorial

What Direction?

One cannot but wonder on the direction our Society is presently taking. Are we on the right track and carrying out the Aims of the Society, which we can all read on the back cover of the 'Courier', or is your Committee getting too involved and bogged down with 'political' issues? Most people become members to learn more of the wonderful and colourful history of the region, some simply enjoy a day out with a coach ride to a historic site, but others want your Society officers to follow up on all the applications on district planning, resource consents, developments and so on, all of which take many hours in research, writing submissions and attending hearings. Some of the issues we have recently been involved with are the Williams' Cottage, the Foresters' Lodge building associated with the Cooper's building and in general the heritage precinct of Ballarat Street, the power transformer in Church Street, and developments with historic buildings in the Gibbston Valley to name a few.

On 27 May 1965 a public meeting was held in Queenstown and from that meeting the Queenstown and District Historical Society was formed. The meeting, Chaired by Dr W. A. Anderson, discussed various directions the Society should take, and Mr D. Gavin spoke on the losing of old buildings and that the Society should endeavour to advise against the indiscriminate pulling down of old buildings and as such referred to the old Library on the corner of Stanley and Ballarat Streets.

Subsequently in the first issue of the Queenstown Courier which is undated but presumably published early in 1966, Mrs Marygold Miller reported in considerable detail, the efforts of the Society to 'save' the old stone library. This is well worth reading!

Fortunately with thanks to the original members of our Society, the old library was saved, and on 1 May 1971, the Malaghan 'Wing' to the library was opened at which the President Ian Daniel gave thanks to Society members whose efforts saved the old stone library, and to the Queenstown Borough Council for its consideration of the desires and needs of residents. Mayor Warren Cooper also said, "As residents of Queenstown, we must

always be conscious of its early historical associations, and it is most important to ensure that the more interesting links with the past are preserved." He also congratulated the Historical Society for their unsparing efforts to preserve for posterity these fine links with the early history of the Wakatipu.

Perhaps something HAS changed in thirty years!

And so - What direction? I believe that our Society is still heading in the right direction according to our resources and abilities!



Top: Ballarat Street

Bottom: Original library and the Malaghan Wing, 7 May 2001

Open Letter to QLDC re review of planning process

OPEN LETTER TO THE LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ITS RATE PAYERS.

The Queenstown and District Historical Society wants an urgent review of the council's planning process, particularly the consent granted for the four storey Forester's Lodge development. We question whom this process is serving. The council has pointedly ignored local protests leaving the Society no alternative but to seek intervention at the highest Government level.

The Society seeks ratepayer awareness that:-

- * The Foresters' Lodge development should have been Publicly Notified. It is central to Queenstown's only intact Heritage Precinct. The Society, the Historic Places Trust and a local petition all sought Public Notification and legal opinion suggests that it should.
- * The Council's Planning Committee, without all its members present, pointedly ignored this plea.
- * Council's contracting arm, Civic Corp, an employee of the ratepayers, erred by advising public input was unnecessary.
- * Apart from the desecration of our town's scarce heritage, the proposal makes a mockery of a key urban space. Not least is the winter shading of the Village Green by this development.
- * The Society was instrumental in obtaining the original District Plan protection for the Foresters' Lodge and should have been consulted. It has a duty to see this through, protect the planning process and attempt to save the district's heritage.
- * The Society has explored, assisted by legal opinion, the option of a Judicial Review of the Council's decision. The substantial financial and other commitments that this could entail are beyond the Society's capability.
- * We have petitioned the Ministers of Environment, Local Government and the Prime Minister (in her role as Minister for Arts, Heritage and Culture) to curb what appear to be breaches of the planning procedures by the QLDC and allow public opinion to be heard in Queenstown once again.

Malcolm Boote

Vice President

On behalf of the Committee, 23 April, 2001



Top: Original Council offices, now the Chamber Restaurant.
 Centre: The Foresters' Lodge building.
 Bottom: Ballarat Street Bridge.

S Pauls Anglican Church and Arthur Drysdale Fail - Rupert Iles

**Saint Paul's Anglican Church
 Arrowtown
 and
 Arthur Drysdale Fail
 By Rupert Iles**

There is an old lamp on an iron pole standing in the grounds of St Paul's Church in Arrowtown. The brass plaque on it says:

Erected in
 loving memory of
ARTHUR DRYSDALE FAIL
 who passed to his rest
 July 25 1904
 He lives forever with the Lord.

Who was he and how did the lamp get there? Arthur Fail was the youngest son of William and Eliza Fail of Port Chalmers, and I understand that he came to Arrowtown only two or three years before his death at the age of 28 years, supposedly of tuberculosis - I have not been able to definitely verify that this was the cause of his death.

Wises Directory of 1904 lists him as a commercial agent. He was in fact representing T. Drummond & Company of Dunedin - Indent Merchants and Contractors.

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Obviously he was very active in the church and the minutes of 16 October 1903 record

“Thank Mr Fail for his services so kindly offered during Mr Brookes illness, for acting as Lay Reader. This committee would like Mr Fail to be appointed a permanent Lay Reader for the district.”

Arthur Fail's funeral service was held in the Anglican Church in Port Chalmers and at the graveside the Foresters' ceremony was performed.

The Church minutes of 21 May 1905 record

“That a letter be written from this committee to Mr and Mrs Fail and family for a lamp to be erected at St Pauls Church in Arrowtown in memory of Mr A. D. Fail.”

In those days a picket fence ran right along in front of the Church, and the gate was in an offset position to the left. The lamp was erected on iron hoops over this gate.

Some time in the 1940's the fence was removed and the lamp taken down and put in a shed out the back which housed feed for the Vicar's horse. Again it is not possible to be definitive, but I understand the shed went to the Arrowtown Golf Club in 1946, leaving the lamp lying in the grass. At a later date it was placed in the Museum for safe keeping.

In 1972 the Church minutes record discussions about the re-instatement of the lamp, and this was accomplished forthwith.

The iron pole was donated by the late John Strain of Threepwood, and was one of a line of telegraph poles along the Ladies' Mile.

Acknowledgements:

Dunedin Public Library
Hocken Library
The Late Graham Douglas
The Late Bob Jenkins



Saint Paul's Anglican Church, Arrowtown
By Rupert Iles, September 2000

John Turner Councillor- Builder _ A De La Mare

John Turner

By Allan De La Mare.

John Turner made a great contribution to the early development of Queenstown but is not so well known as some of his contemporaries such as Bendix Hallenstein.

Turner was born in London in 1830, the son of John Turner, a naval architect, and his wife whose maiden name was Dearsley. He was probably articled to his father and learnt the profession of architect and builder from him.

He must have arrived in Queenstown in the early days of the rush probably late in 1862 or 1863 because he is shown as the owner of Section 26A, Block 2 in the first sale of land in Queenstown in early 1864. He paid £20 6s for the section which indicates he had a pre-emptive right by way of occupation.

Everybody who arrived in the town before the survey was completed squatted on the best piece of vacant land they could find and Turner's section, now occupied by the shoe shop in the Mall was prime land and confirmed his early arrival. The early survey plan shows a building or tent on the street frontage and this would probably be business and-living quarters.

It is hard to see any employment for an architect in a gold rush shanty town but no doubt he was able to turn his hand to building for which there was a big demand. Turner still owned the property in the late 1880's and it is not known when he sold it.

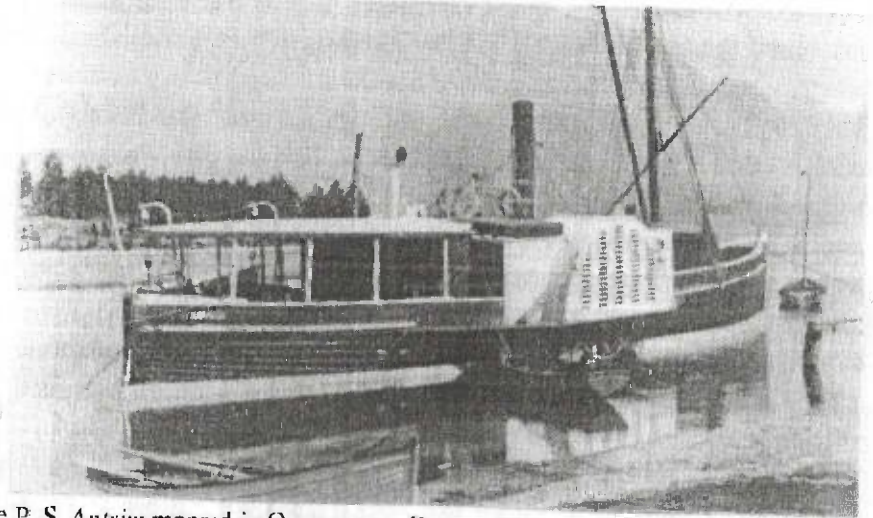
Turner took an active role in the establishment of the Anglican Church in Queenstown together with William Rees, the first settler and Richmond Beetham, the Resident Magistrate. He does not appear to have played an active part in the Queenstown Improvement Committee, the forerunner to the Borough Council, but he was elected a member of the first Borough Council which first met in August 1866. Turner served one term of a year in this office. At the first meeting a notice of motion by Turner that the

attention of the Council be called to the desirability of securing the reserve for public purposes was considered and as a result the Town Clerk was instructed to apply to the Provincial Government for a grant of the peninsula for public purposes. In 1868 the land was vested in the Borough Council and John Turner can be thanked for a far sighted action.

Despite outside competition mostly from Invercargill, Turner was commissioned for a number of projects and probably the most important was the design of the Paddle Steamer *Antrim*. J. W. Robertson and Co. was a syndicate operating a timber mill at the Greenstone River at the Head of the Lake. There was a tremendous demand for timber and the company was prospering.

In 1868 the company decided to build a vessel to carry their products on the lake and to generally venture into the lucrative business of carrying cargo on the lake. They must have been pleasantly surprised to find in their midst one with skills in naval architecture.

Work on the vessel was commenced in March 1868 and it was launched at the mill in October. After being sailed to Queenstown the *Antrim* made its first voyage under steam on 1 January 1869. The *Antrim* was 82 feet in length with a beam of 16.1 feet. It was driven by compounding engines made by Kincaid McQueen of Dunedin and had a speed of 8 knots.



The P. S. *Antrim* moored in Queenstown Bay.

It was originally wood burning and had a tremendous appetite for fire wood and produced a lethal stream of sparks. The vessel was later converted to coal burning. The *Antrim* remained in service till 1920. The vessel was the first big ship on the lake and proved very profitable.

Turner's descendants who farm at Frankton have plans of some of his work including a wharf which is probably the first town pier; a bridge which is probably the first bridge over the Lower Shotover; Hawkshead, a house built at 42 Frankton Road for Wesley Turton, solicitor. Turton represented Grace in the case of Eager versus Grace which involved a claim for gold taken wrongly by Grace from Eager's claim on the Shotover over a twelve month period. It was a difficult case as no one had seen Grace at work and it was impossible to say how much gold had been taken. Eager sued for £12,000 damages and was awarded £8,000 plus costs. Grace appealed the decision.

Both parties were fabulously rich and seemed to delight in litigation. The case was taken as far as the Court of Appeal where the original finding was confirmed. Finally the case was settled by the parties with Grace paying £4,000 to Eager in full settlement.

Turton was the main beneficiary and his home reflected his affluence. The house was a huge building of some 3,000 square feet, incorporating the best imported woods and the latest facilities. It was not long before the locals christened the house Grace's Folly. The house was demolished in 1972.

In 1875 Turner built the first major bridge over the Shotover River at Arthurs Point. It was designed by T. Fergus, the Provincial Council engineer who later took a prominent part in Otago's commercial affairs. Later he was Member of Parliament for the Wakatip electorate for some twelve years and was a Minister of the Crown. The stone mason was Edward McAffery who was the first person to realise the potential of the Bobs Cove sandstone. Some of his work in the form of tombstones remain in the Queenstown cemetery. The bridge had a span of 140 feet and was built of red beech. It was replaced in 1919.

Later Turner went into partnership with one John Brown in a farm on the Lower Shotover Road. Subsequently the partnership was dissolved and the property divided. Turner carried on his own account but with limited success.

In 1890 he married Elizabeth Ann Fletcher, a niece of Browns, who had been born at Tapcastle, Cockermouth, Cumberland. Although married late in life they brought up a family of six children. Turner died in 1917 having experienced poor health for some time, including blindness. Mrs Turner died in 1930.

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The Queenstown and District Historical Society

A Tour of Local Historical Sites

Historical society tour of local sites May 2001

On two occasions our Society has hosted the annual conference of the N. Z. Federation of Historical Societies. The first was in April 1974 when the President Ian Daniel, compiled a descriptive account of a round trip from Queenstown to Arrowtown for the visitors to the Conference. Most sites are still obvious and a worthwhile time can be spent following Ian Daniel's notes.

- 1 ST. OMER PARK. Frank St. Omer was for many years the baker in Queenstown and was active in civic affairs. The plaque reads "In memory of François (Frank) St. Omer 1862-1950 whose generosity made possible the maintenance of this park for the pleasure of the people."
- 2 SHOTOVER ST. Many old wooden cottages until recently lined this street. The Fire Station, built in 1928 replaced a wooden building which had been on this site since at least 1869, has now itself been replaced. The old wooden building opposite the Mobil garage is an undertaker's yard. **Misery farm**
- 3 MISERY FARM. (First after leaving town). Site of "Jack's Hotel", a shanty hotel in the 1860's.
- 4 VIEW OF SHOTOVER RIVER & CORONET PEAK (known to older locals as "The Cornet"). The Hibernian Beach below has been dredged as has been Big Beach beyond.
- 5 McCHESNEY'S CREEK & ARTHURS POINT HOTEL. In its heyday this area boasted 6 hotels. The present hotel, known for many years as The Junction, is reputed to have been built in 1862 and was for many years run by Jack McChesney, a local character famous for his button holes appropriate to the season.
- 6 EDITH CAVELL BRIDGE. Named after an English nurse executed by the German Army in World War I for helping prisoners escape, this bridge is the third in this area. The first, a wooden bridge for pedestrians and packhorses built in 1862, was at a lower level. It was replaced in 1875 by a wooden structure, the east wing of which forms part of the present ferro-concrete bridge built in 1918.
- 7 THOMAS ARTHUR'S MONUMENT. On the right, just across the bridge, is a monument to Thomas Arthur, a shearer for W. G. Rees,

Racecourse terrace

- who discovered gold here in November 1862. He and three mates won 200oz. of gold in 8 days. During the next two months they won \$8000 dollars worth. On the left as we ascend the hill can be seen the Morning Star Beach, site of the first Sew Hoy dredge floated in 1889. Also note the mouth of the tunnel built by Ned Oxenbridge and party 1906-1910, at a cost of \$20,000. But the bed had already been worked and they recovered gold only worth \$1200.
- 8 RACECOURSE TERRACE. A natural grandstand afforded a perfect setting for sports and horse racing. On the right is the house (built by the Atley family) which is over 100 years old.
 - 9 VIEW OF BIG BEACH. After passing the pine trees on the right, be ready for a quick glimpse of Big Beach and the partly buried remains of the Golden Terrace Electric Dredge (c.1929-1939) which was the fourth to work this beach with little success. On the side of Queenstown Hill beyond it are water races leading to the Sugar Loaf Sluicing claim.
 - 10 PACKERS ARMS RESTAURANT. This building has in recent years been restored from a very ruined state. It was built in the 1860's and was originally known as the "Sportsman's Arms" then as "Gantleys Hotel". Gantley had been Queenstown's Gaoler c. 1864-1870.
 - 11 BORDEAU'S STORE (locally pronounced 'Birdoo'). Built about 1874 by Julian Bordeau who had kept a store at Skippers from 1864. Goods brought from Queenstown by wagon were repacked here for pack horses transportation in to Skippers. Seized by the mortgagee, it was sold to Ben Lomond Station in 1880. Bordeau continued as a packer, then as the mailman till his death in 1916.
 - 12 HALFWAY HOUSE. At the patch of beech trees on the Coronet Peak road stood a shanty hotel run by Dan O'Connell, half way along the pack track between Queenstown and Maori Point. The old pack track can be seen on the left ascending to Skippers Saddle. A short cut for packers from Arrowtown ascended from Coronet Peak Station to this point. Skipper Road was built during the period 1883-1890.
 - 13 LOOKOUT BELOW SKIPPERS SADDLE. Panoramic view of the Wakatipu, in order from right - Bowen Peak, Walter Peak, Cecil Peak, Queenstown Hill, Peninsula Hill, Lake Johnson, Ferry Hill, Remarkables, Slope Hill, Morven Hill, Kawarau Gorge, Crown Peak,

- Brackens Gully, Arrow Gorge.
- 14 BEN LOMOND STATION. Covered all the land from Skippers Road to Moke Lake. The next half mile of road traverses the terminal moraine of a distributary glacier which moved up the gorge from Queenstown. The Arthurs Point School stood on high ground after amalgamation with Millers Flat School in 1906 until shifted back to near Atleys Road in 1925. It finally closed in 1944 after a chequered history covering 50 years. **Wharehunui**
- 15 WHAREHUANUI. Once a well populated area commonly known as Millers Flat or Malaghan's. The Presbyterian Church stood on the site now occupied by a recently built house before being shifted to Speargrass Flat then to Arrowtown. A stone and wooden cottage on the right amongst poplar trees are the only remaining buildings. The Cairn on the left has three plaques which read "Malaghans. Malaghans Post Office and Hotel once stood near this site. The building was also used as the Millers Flat School building 1873-1906." "Erected by the L. Malaghan family, descendants of Michael John, Thomas and Bernard Malaghan, respected pioneers of the Queenstown and Wakatipu District." "The nearby poplar tree was erected as a flag-pole by school pupils Jack Downey, Bob Hunter, Jack Dagg, Jack Hunter, Harry Dagg, Jack Hamilton - to celebrate the relief of Mafeking, May 1900." (Mr J. B. Hamilton is an active member of the Queenstown & District Historical Society.)
- 16 IRRIGATION PIPE. Constructed during the period 1923-1931, it carries water from the Arrow River about three miles upstream from Arrowtown to irrigate 3230 acres in the Lake Hayes, Lower Shotover, Frankton area.
- 17 MAGAZINE. Used during the Quartz mining era for storing bulk supplies of explosives.
- 18 ARROWTOWN CHURCHES. Religious fervour seems to have hit Arrowtown some ten years after discovery of gold. St. John's Presbyterian (1st on left), St. Paul's Anglican (next, on right with sluicing pipes to hang bell) and the Roman Catholic Church with convent and school were all built c. 1873. A Wesleyan Church also built about this time, was used as a District High School 1906-1913 and since then has been the premises of Shaw's Motors. Opposite this building is a lamp-post erected by the Borough Council "In commemoration of Coronation of Edward VII, Aug. 9 1902."
- 19 ARROWTOWN MAIN STREET. The Borough Council now has control over shop fronts etc. to retain originality as far as possible. We will stop here for a visit to the Lakes District Museum and lunch at the Stone Cottage.
- 20 THE AVENUE. We leave Arrowtown via the avenue of trees planted in 1867; note the row of miners' cottages on left, which are to be preserved by their present owners; past the gaol built in 1875 (look right); Roman Catholic Church (look right at next intersection) on to the terrace and out of town via Kent St. and Caernarfon St.
- 21 View of LAKE HAYES. Originally known as Hay's Lake, it was named after Donald Hay, the first pakeha to sail on Lake Wakatipu, in 1859. It is stocked with brown trout, thought to be the purest stock in New Zealand. The Mill Stream is their only spawning water, where Internal Affairs maintain a fish-trap for recovering ova to be hatched for acclimatization work in southern South Island water. Keep a look out for a tin Threshing Mill (on left) and a Traction Engine (on right) used in this district in the heyday of grain growing, and the ruins of Lake Hayes Hotel (also known as Maynes Hotel) on left after joining the main road.
- 22 WHITE HOUSE & BARN. Built in 1871 and 1880 respectively, Mr Keith Grant, a descendent of the original owner, and Queenstown & District Historical Society member, will relate its history.
- 23 SMOKE HOUSE. Used from 1885 to 1897 to smoke trout netted commercially by the White family. The largest caught is said to have weighed 46lb. The opening day catch on 1st October 1897 was 147 trout, weighing 493lb dressed.
- 24 LADIES MILE. Note houses of Dr. Douglas and the McBrides on left, both well known pioneer families. On right is a horse trough "In memory of Robert Lee 1911. Erected by his friends." It was designed to water all horses of a team with out unhitching. It was supplied with water brought from the Remarkables by Lees private irrigation scheme. Tradition has it that the ladies walked from here to the Lower Shotover Hotel while the men went on the coach to enjoy that establishment's hospitality.
- 25 LOWER SHOTOVER. A punt, then a bridge, served travellers to Queenstown near the site of the new bridge (Piles of the old bridge

were found during preparatory work). Note the old road formation on the far bank. The Lower Shotover Hotel was shifted to its present site when the bridge now in use was built in 1915. The hotel was one of seven wayside hotels between Cromwell and Queenstown serving coaching needs and finally closed in 1971. Note irrigation pipe crossing with the bridge. **Antrim Arms Hotel**

26 **COACHMAN'S HALT.** Beside a large oak tree is the stable (restored to a dwelling) of the Antrim Arms Hotel built in the 1860's to cater for the heavy coach and wagon traffic to the Arrow diggings arriving by boat at the nearby wharf (piles may be seen through the trees after the present boat launching site). With the opening of the road to Queenstown it received ever increasing patronage until the advent of the motor car.

27 **FRANKTON ROAD.** Motor traffic was prohibited in the Wakatipu area until 1912. After this date only Frankton Road between the Antrim Arms and Queenstown, and the Skippers Road beyond Arthurs Point, were closed to cars. It was common, legend has it, for cars to be "towed" along Frankton Road by a horse tied to the front, to overcome the law. Restrictions here were removed in 1915, but it was 1926 before the Skippers Road was opened to traffic during daylight hours.

28 **SLIPWAY.** On the far side of Frankton Arm may be seen the slipway used for overhaul of the *Earnslaw*. The engine of the first paddle steamer on the lake is used to operate the winch.

29 **QUEENSTOWN.** The site of W. G. Rees' homestead, established late 1860 early 1861, it became the centre of trade for the whole Wakatipu area during the boom years 1862-66. Originally known as The Camp, it was formally named Queenstown in Jan. 1863, after public refusal by the miners to shift the seat of local government to Frankton. **Homestead - Rees**

30 **SITES IN QUEENSTOWN.** The main places of interest passed on our return which are listed on the Historical Map are: Transit of Venus, Catholic Church, Library and County Council buildings and the Stone Bridge, and the willow on the water-front said to have been brought from Napoleon's grave.

The Day the Gas Works blew Up - A De La Mare

The Day the Gasworks Blew Up.

By Allan De La Mare.

Ask any long standing resident of Queenstown what they best remember and invariably the answer will be "The day the gasworks blew up".

The June day in 1922 is vividly remembered for a tremendous explosion heard as far away as Frankton, a shock wave which demolished several buildings and shattered windows within a quarter of mile radius but by a miracle injuries were few and not serious.

The gas plant was owned by the Borough Council and was housed in a shed 20 feet by 15 feet in the reserve about the position now occupied by Thomas' Hotel. It had been installed in 1910 at a cost of £1250. Acetylene gas was produced chiefly by combining carbide with water which was reticulated to some 60 consumers. The loan raised to buy the plant still had 12 years to run but its days were numbered as a poll in the previous February had overwhelmingly voted to raise a loan of £7000 to build a hydro-electric scheme on the One Mile Creek to supply electricity to the town. It was ironic that the Mayor A. Simson was in Wellington at the time of the explosion advancing the electricity scheme.

The corrugated iron shed housing the plant was completely demolished and a large motor garage owned by J. Edgar immediately adjoining was seriously damaged. Two houses in the immediate vicinity were badly damaged with exterior cladding torn off, interior doors torn from their hinges and furniture and fittings demolished. One building was blown out of plumb. Other nearby houses suffered but to a less degree.

The shock wave broke windows as far away as Stanley Street, with stone and brick buildings faring worse than wooden ones. Eichardts Hotel in a direct line of fire lost every window on Ballarat Street and Marine Parade, some 80 all told.

Mr Edgar was working in his garage and Mrs W. Stead and her children were in their adjoining home when the explosion almost brought the buildings down about their ears but injuries were confined to cuts and

grazes. Two young girls named Schieb and Macnicol who were just passing the works at the time of the explosion received cuts about their heads but most of the blast went over their heads. It was a miracle that there were no fatalities as the explosion was like a huge bomb with lethal pieces of buildings being showered around like shrapnel.

There was no explanation for the explosion and the Borough Day man who was responsible for the operation of the plant was present about a quarter of an hour before and there was nothing to arouse suspicion.

While there were many counting their losses H. Robins the local glazier was faced with a bonanza in the form of hundreds of windows to replace.

Though the hydro-electric scheme was in the pipeline the residents had to wait until September 1924 before electricity came on stream.



The aftermath of the gasworks explosion.

Cutting Totara Posts - Darrell Mc Gregor

Cutting Totara Posts was no Picnic

By Darrell McGregor

Back in the 'late '40s and early '50s there was not that much going on at the head of the lake except for Harry Bryant's tours to the Routeburn and Diamond Lake. And a call in at the Glenorchy wharf when the Earnslaw and Ben Lomond were the only contact with the outside world.

Of course there was 'Popeye' Lucas and the boys of Southern Scenic Airways poling around the area and landing on the occasional paddock. But that was small-time compared with the amount of visitors using the road access in later years.

Darrell and his brother, Lew, completed a stint of shooting deer up on the left branch of the Caples through to the Rockburn via Emily Pass and the North Branch of the Routeburn.

It was the days of the 'foot-slogger' during which time cullers shot for skins and tails. Thirty bob for a skin and ten bob for a tail. No helicopters or fixed wing planes. Just a couple of blokes working the bush-line and the high basins - often months at a time and no contact with civilisation.

Darrell and Lew, having completed the trip, headed for Glenorchy with Harry Bryant where they met up with a West Coast bushman, one Bill Barrowman, who had set up a post-cutting camp on Mount Alfred.

As Darrell puts it: "We were offered a job and started almost immediately, at 15 shillings a day.

"There was a winch driven by a 'Chev Four' engine about 400 feet (120 metres) up Mount Alfred with a 'flying fox' (overhead rope) for hauling tree butts to the skids."

Once there they were cut into lengths and rolled down the hill-side to be split into posts of various sizes and lengths to order.

The late Laurie Smith of 'Glenorchy Motors' carted the logs to the wharf at

Glenorchy for shipment to Kingston, where the mercantile firms of J. G. Wards, Donald Reids' National Mortgage and Wright Stevensons (now Wrightson NMA) purchased the posts for their farmer customers.

Says Darrell: "My brother went and cut his leg open with an axe prior to Christmas 1948 and never returned after the break.

"One of our tasks was to cut 20 foot (6m) poles for the first Glenorchy power supply. And these had to be virtually man-handled down the face for fear of breaking them. Operating the winch was quite an art. Working totally in the blind at times, directions were given by hitting the (wire) rope by the breaker-out.

"Often we had a log attached to haul to the main rope by several ropes and snatch blocks I would show some reservations about its success. 'Old Bill', as we called him, as I headed to the winch, would say 'she'll be right when the strain comes on."

"After 18 months, and with the demand for posts increasing, and the prospects of having to shift the winch, we moved camp to a spot under Turret Head (under Mount Earnslaw) up river from Paradise. Here production went up four-fold even though the bush had been milled previously.

"Some very large red beech had been left because they were too big for the mills to handle."

Darrell says that the only problem with the new site was the winter.

"The only thing that did not improve from the Mount Alfred site was the lack of sun reduced to about one and a half hours to two hours in the middle of the winter."

However: "The demand for posts was so great that the whole area around the Glenorchy wharf was stacked about ten feet (3m) high and the Earnslaw had to make special trips to clear the area."

Darrell can recall that the biggest number of posts he had cut from one beech

tree was 436 posts measuring 1.6m by 100 by 125mm. "The first length was hollow except for the outside ring which produced 80 posts."

"At one stage we had quite a variation with the price of scheelite increasing. It meant filling orders for props and lathes for the mines."

And then came the Rees River bridge, when they cut 72 6m by 300mm by 200mm bridge stringers with the broad axe.

Says Darrell: "About this stage the cross cut saw was replaced by the mechanical 60kg chain saw; the horse by the Ransome Crawler tractor, and a new Bedford truck.

"The track into the bush was always a problem so it was decided to get gravel from the Dart river beach. Bill tried to devise a method of loading the truck with a scoop pulling material up onto a ramp and then tipping the gravel onto the truck.

"After two weeks I had had enough and said lets grab a shovel each. 'Never say die 'till a dead horse kicks you' says old Bill. I exploded with 'It's bloody well kicked us into the middle of last week.' A flood came down the following night and buried the lot."

And that was the start of Darrell McGregor contracting.

Since then Darrell bought an old truck with which he surfaced the Glenorchy 'aerodrome' and was later to complete the existing Glenorchy road.

But it was about four years after Darrell's post cutting scene (1956) that he almost met his match with a giant beech tree near the woolshed of Routeburn Station, then owned by Wattie Watson.

Having volunteered to fell the monster to allow a bit more light for the woolshed, Darrell proceeded to scarf and backcut the tree in the normal bushmen's fashion. But in this case the tree split in half with each falling both ways. The problem was Darrell took the weight of one half full on top

of his skull.

It meant a six-week session in Dunedin hospital's intensive care unit to get Darrell's cranium back in a working order, and he is still unable to figure out how he survived. "I was kicking like a shot rabbit when they found me. If it wasn't for a good headful of hair I should have been dead," Darrell does not argue with trees any more.



A MESSAGE FOR MEMBERS WITH E-MAIL FACILITY

Many of our members, with e-mail facilities, are indicating their preference to accept the information, previously communicated by telephone, regarding trips and meetings, to be delivered by e-mail.

Will all members wishing to be included, please send a message to my e-mail address and you will automatically be included in the next round robin.

Malcolm Boote

Send a message to mandpboote@actrix.gen.nz

A Memorable Occasion

The unveiling of the bronze sculpture of Queenstown's founder, William Gilbert Rees.

On Monday 14 May 2001, Stefan Haworth, great-great-great-grandson of W. G. Rees drew the ribbon to unveil the fine 2.4m statue. Speakers at ceremony, attended by some 200 people, were Alan Brady (Chairman Aspiring Arts and Culture Trust), Minhal Al-Halabi (the Sculptor), Frank Haworth (great-grandson of Rees) who's speech is here recorded and Malcolm Boote representing the Historical Society, who said Rees was a great, wonderful character.



Speech delivered at the unveiling of the statue of William Gilbert Rees, by his great-grandson Frank Marsden Haworth on 14 May 2001.

Your Worship the Mayor and Lady Mayoress, Minhal (sculptor), guests, ladies and gentlemen, (girls and boys).

It is an honour to be asked to speak at this gathering for the unveiling of this statue of my great grandfather William Gilbert Rees.

In his time, Rees was regarded as a man of great stature, of high integrity and, above all, a compassion for his fellow men.

Born in Wales in 1827, he emigrated first to Australia then on to New Zealand. With his companion, Nicholas Von Tunzelmann, he explored this virtually unknown hinterland, and obtained Pastoral Leases to establish a runholding for sheep.

While Von Tunzelmann settled across the lake at Mt. Nicholas, Rees' lease was for all the vast area of the Wakatipu basin. That included the site of this town. The young people of today tend to regard "early settlers" as old folk, probably because of their style of dress and the beards of the men. This was far from the case. They were invariably quite young men and women.

When he was about 30, Rees laboriously drove his flock of more than three thousand sheep, from Oamaru overland to the Wakatipu Basin and to the head of the lake. Within a year he and his staff had built a home a little way from this very spot on the shore of this bay.

He brought his young wife Frances, and their child, Rosemary, to live in this home in what he believed was one of the most beautiful spots in the world.

Can you imagine how their lives were shattered when their privacy and solitude was invaded by the arrival of goldminers. At first just a few, then by the hundreds and thousands. These miners swarmed all over Rees' runholding, constantly stealing his sheep for a meal. The plight of many of

these fortune seekers, ill-equipped and lacking proper provisions was often desperate.

Instead of turning them away, Rees made some of his year's food supplies available. Then he brought in further large quantities of supplies to meet the needs of the ever increasing number of gold seekers.

This was a slow process since many things were brought in by horse transport, or by combined horse and boat transport. This took days, even weeks to traverse the rough tracks not just a matter of picking up a cell phone, and ordering from Rattrays in Dunedin, for delivery tomorrow!

Here in the bay, the ever expanding settlement of calico and wooden buildings was first known as "Rees' Camp". It was the headquarters for all the goldclaims spread over the whole goldfield area. As more diggers and traders arrived the settlement was officially named 'Queenstown' in 1863.

By Northern Hemisphere standards this is a very young country, and we have been too busy to worry too much about our history. The time has now come to recognise our past and establish the historical identity of Queenstown. The Western world has many statues and memorials. We identify Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square with London, the Statue of Liberty with New York, and Robbie Burns' statue in the Octagon with the city of Dunedin, I don't see what Robbie Burns had to do with the settlement of Dunedin, but the Scotts were very proud of their poet. It is a central focal point in that city. What would Dunedin be without Robbie Burns gracing the Octagon.

I hope that this statue of the town's founder will become identified with Queenstown in the same way, and become a focal place for locals and visitors. I would also hope that the presence of the statue will prompt the local schools to do projects about the life of this man. Projects that will establish in children's minds a sense of identity, a realisation that they live in and belong to a town with a rich history. I hope they will be proud of that history. No other town in all New Zealand, a town sprung from a farm and a goldfield, has become the focus that Queenstown is today in this country.

On behalf of the descendants of William Gilbert and Frances Rebecca Rees,

may I thank all the organisations that made the finance available, and the many people who made this memorial statue a reality.