

Queenstown & District Historical Society
2008 Incorporated

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President: Bill Dolan
62 Adamson Drive, Arrowtown. Ph 409 8033 angelabill@xtra.co.nz

Vice President: Ralph Hanan
144L Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Rd. Ph 409 8959 rhanan@starpower.net

Secretary: Jocelyn Robertson
45 Cotter Ave, Arrowtown. Ph 442 1468 jsrob@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer: Gavin Jack
68 Devon St, Arrowtown, Ph 4420854 gdmj@xtra.co.nz

Immediate Past President: Brian Bayley
Hunter Rd, RDI, Queenstown. Ph 4421481 bayleybrpg@xtra.co.nz



COMMITTEE

Malcolm Boote
13 Shaw St, Arrowtown. Ph 442 0004 mandpboote@actrix.co.nz
Marion Borrell
35 Mountain View Rd, R.D.1, Ph 4429319 marionborrell@hotmail.com
Geoff Bradley
Panorama Tee, Ph 4428491, Queenstown. Ph 442 8491 geoff.bradley@xtra.co.nz
Barbara Hamilton
12 Anglesca St, Arrowtown, 4098025 barbhamilton@xtra.co.nz
Danny Knudson
7 Edinburgh Dr, Queenstown. Ph 442 4228 knudson@ihug.co.nz

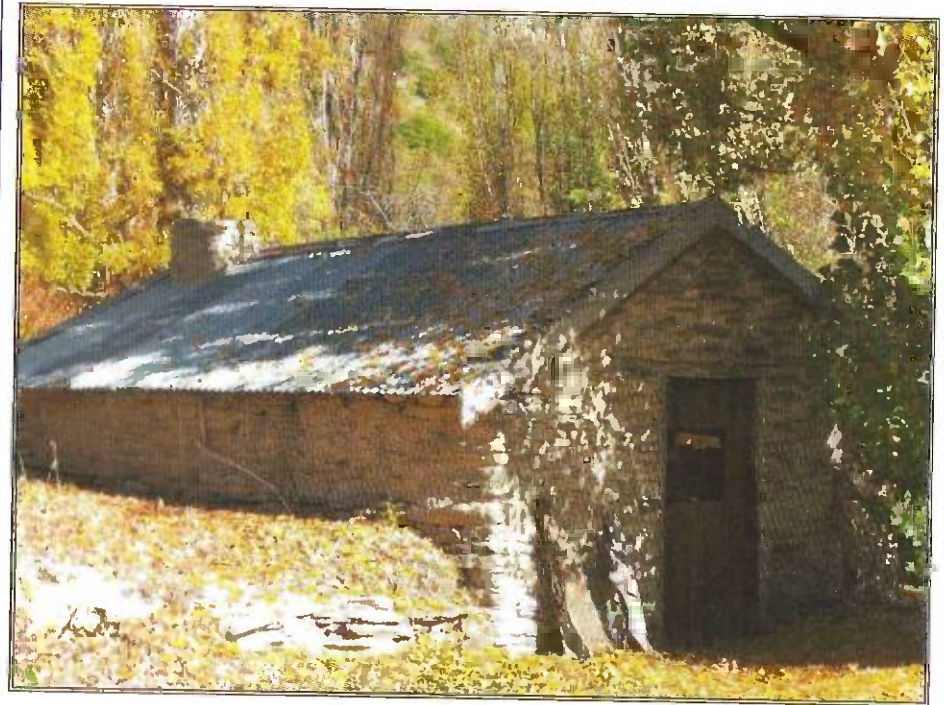
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Autumn at Rum Currie's Hut, Gibbston

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE QUEENSTOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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EDITORS

Marion Borrell

35 Mountainview Rd, RD1, 4429319 marionborrell@hotmail.com

Michael Anderson

8 Delta St., Dunedin Ph 03 4740791 (Dunedin); 4098116 (196 Spearwood Flat Rd)

m.j.anderson@xtra.co.nz

We welcome contributions. Copy should be emailed as plain text, without any formatting, as an attachment. Photos should also be emailed as an attachment.

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ON HERITAGE AND FRAGILITY

By Marion Borrell

The value to be placed on heritage buildings has never been more discussed in the New Zealand media than since the Christchurch earthquakes; we have all been shocked to discover how fragile stone really is.

At 12.51pm on February 22nd, I chanced to be at the Citizens Advice Bureau in the very building over which the infant Queenstown and Districts Historical Society successfully waged its first battle. For details, see the article on Marygold Miller and the Old Stone Library. My thoughts, as the lights

swung, included gratitude for being in a single-storey building with thick, stone walls, though, whether we would have been safe in a large quake, I'm not now sure. I also hoped that the wellingtonia 'trees of justice' outside had become unshakably rooted during their 137 years of life. The article



on the trees at Thurlby contains more ponderings on the fragility of buildings compared to trees. Similarly, the descendant trees, pictured, of the Harveys' old orchard at Gibbston continue to fruit.

In other articles in this issue, we visit the lower Nevis Valley, with its archaeological evidence of former times, researched for submissions by the Historic Places Trust against the proposal to build a dam for hydro electricity. This area remains under threat pending further court action.

However, when it comes to memories, that most elusive form of knowledge, we all have it in our power to preserve them by writing our own, as Joan Cooke has done, and collecting other people's, as Bill McDonald has. I wonder if any members are interested in receiving advice and encouragement from experts to start writing or audio-recording memories? If so, please contact me, as we may be able to organise a workshop. We might think that what we remember is of no great importance but, as Bill has pointed out, in fifty years time, there may be people who want to know.

Gibbston trail signage

GIBBSTON TRAIL SIGNAGE AT:



The Society is proud to have been involved in the restoration of the hut and orchard at the end of Rafter's Road, and the development of this fine trail above the Kawarau, undertaken by the Gibbston Community Association. Members have recently provided person-power in the orchard- see who you can recognise in the photo on the sign.

Now, we have paid for the sign, below, which has been created by Cathy Macfie Heritage Interpretation and Dawn Barry Design, Invercargill.

On the following pages the content of the panel is reproduced .

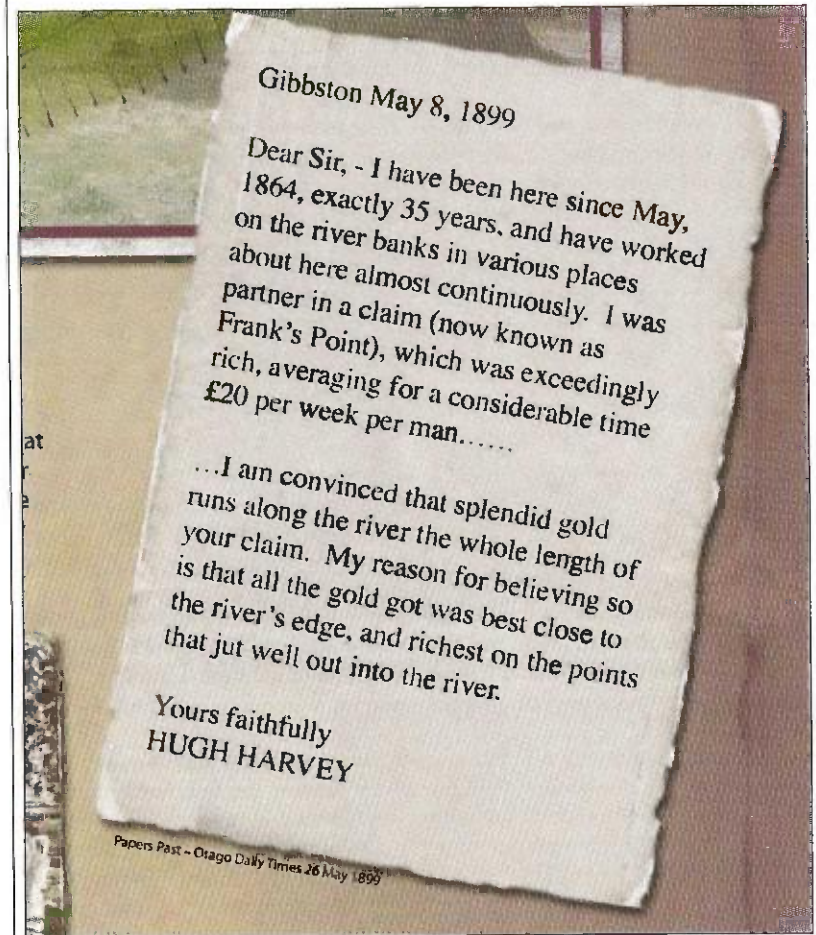


Uncovering Human Heritage reveals a rare glimpse of past lives

Efforts to restore this historic orchard and associated stone buildings are helping us to appreciate what life was like for some of Gibbston's pioneers.

The home of Hugh and Elizabeth Harvey

Hugh Harvey was one of Gibbston's first settlers and a successful miner—as his letter in support of a local dredging proposal explains:



Rum Curries Hut

He and his wife Elizabeth's substantial homestead on this site gave them self-sufficiency at a time when goods and services were few and far between. They used local resources for building materials. Little except the stone chimney is left of their mud-brick house, where cooking would have been done on an open fire. The small stone ruin, built of schist, may well have been used to store Hugh's mining explosives.

The extensive orchard also reflects careful thought and planning, divided in two by poplar trees and bounded on the west by a stone wall. It is easy to imagine that its fruit and preserves were enjoyed by many in the district. Between the orchard and the river, the Harveys grazed sufficient stock for their needs.

Elizabeth Harvey died tragically in 1872, drowned after falling from a cliff into the Kawarau River, near their home. Hugh Harvey stayed on and amused himself from time to time by keeping racehorses. When he died in 1906, his obituary described him as a 'well-known and respected miner of Gibbston'.

Rum Currie's hut

After Harvey's death, two rabbits converted his stables into a hut, using river stones to build the structure around the existing cobbled stone floor and lean-to shed.

During the 1930's Depression, a returned soldier from World War I, nicknamed 'Rum Currie' after his drinking habits, moved into the then empty hut. With an annual miner's right, he was able to live there rent-free. Despite the lack of washing and other facilities, Rum Currie kept himself and the hut clean, helping with harvesting and gold-mining when he was able. Since the 1950s, when he moved to a retirement home, the hut known as 'Rum Currie's' has stood empty.

The hut has since been restored and is one of the best preserved historic buildings in the district, protected by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and Queenstown Lakes District Council for its heritage significance.

A heritage orchard

Hugh Harvey planted cherry, plum, pear, hazelnut and almond trees in his orchard—traditional varieties that European settlers brought with them to New Zealand. In the late 19th century, such orchards were commonplace; today this is one of few that remain. The character and flavour of heritage fruit epitomised by names like 'Ashmead's Kernel' and 'Coe's Golden Drop' are fast disappearing, replaced by more standardised fruit that meets supermarket requirements.

Thanks to community and specialist support, the orchard has been mapped and trees will be propagated so that, when one dies, it can be replaced by the same species in the same place.

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Harvey's homestead

Work in progress

The Gibbston Community Association has rescued the heritage orchard from competing plants like sycamore. Work will continue to conserve the orchard and protect the historic stone structures. Please help us by:

- using the washing lines provided—tying ropes to orchard trees damages the trees.
- Taking care with fire—that has destroyed so many of Gibbston's historic features.



The Harveys' homestead and part of the rescued heritage orchard.

At right, what is thought to be an old explosives' store.



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HISTORY OF THE LOWER NEVIS VALLEY

(From Dr Matt Schmidt and Historic Places Trust Documents)

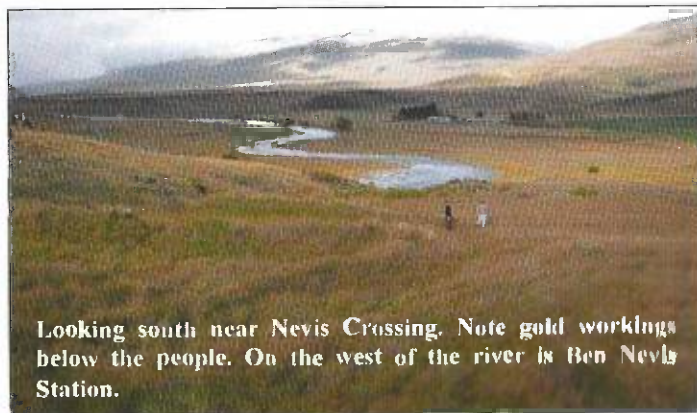
At the Historical Society's AGM in November 2010, Dr Matthew Schmidt, Archaeologist for the Otago/Southland Region of the Historic Places Trust, gave a fascinating address on archaeological sites in our locality, with a PowerPoint of photos. This article consists of a selection of his slides of the Lower Nevis, combined with information quoted from the HPT Registration Report for the Lower Nevis Historic Area.

For more detail, see www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch.

Key Dates for the Nevis Valley

- 14th Century: Maori occupation of Lower Nevis as a moa butchery site
- 1859-60: First pastoral runs taken up
- 1862: Gold discovered in the Lower Nevis
- 1890s: Hydraulic elevating introduced
- Late 1890s: First gold dredge operates on the Nevis River
- 1940: Last dredge working the Lower Nevis Valley stops operations

The windswept isolation of the Lower Nevis Historic Area, located in the Lower Nevis Valley in Central Otago, provides a remarkable opportunity to understand life in the harsh climate and primitive conditions for those hardy souls who chose to live in this desolate place, from the moa hunting people as early as the fourteenth century, to the pastoralists and gold miners of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



Looking south near Nevis Crossing. Note gold workings below the people. On the west of the river is Ben Nevis Station.

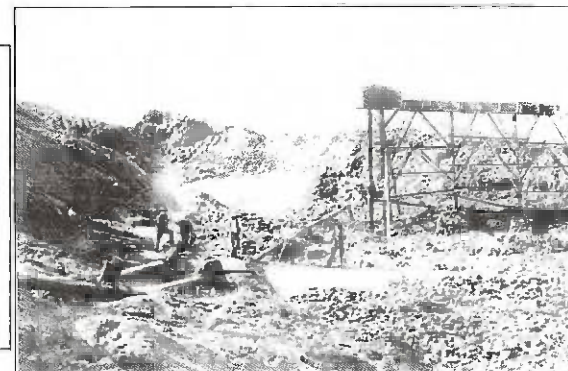
Ngai Tahu people used the Nevis Valley as a path between Murihiku and the inland areas around in Central Otago, and also made use of the resources near Te Papapuni, the Nevis River. The Lower Nevis was on a Maori route from Southland through to the inland lakes. The area was also resource rich, reflected in the significant moa hunting era site located in the vicinity of Schoolhouse Creek. This familiarity into the middle of the nineteenth century was made clear to the early Europeans who accompanied their Maori guides through the region, and through the maps of the inland river systems produced by people like Reko.

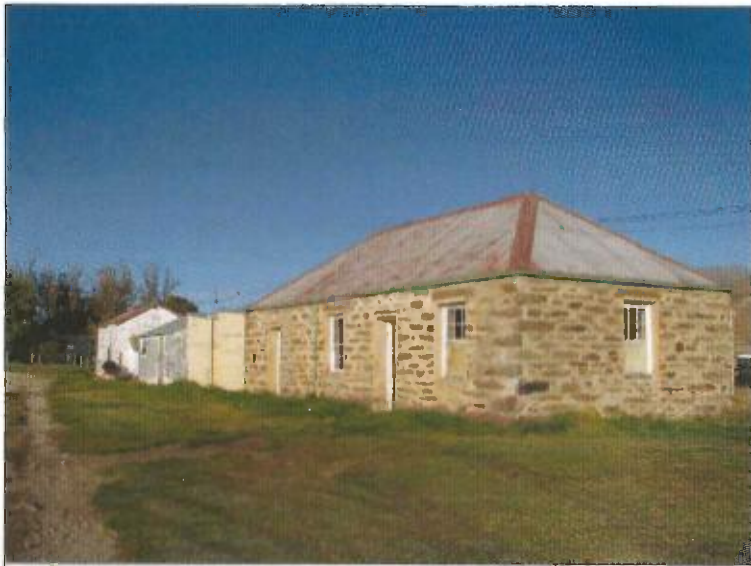
Maori shared their knowledge of the route with early settlers and, by the early 1860s, pastoralists had made their way into the valley and were struggling in the harsh conditions. In the Lower Nevis, this early period of pastoral development is represented by the Ben Nevis Farmstead, relating to the period prior to the break-up of large pastoral runs. The Farmstead is comprised of a homestead, men's quarters, woolshed and other ancillary buildings (see page 23).

The stone men's quarters consist of two rooms, forming a kitchen and a bunk room. There is a fireplace in the small room and no sign of a coal range. The walls are plastered, with tongue and groove ceilings.

With the discovery of gold in the Nevis Valley in October 1862, gold-mining began and continued through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, leaving a remarkable and largely undisturbed record of mining activity from this period: from ground sluicing, to hydraulic sluicing and elevating, through to dredging. These mining remains are complex. Archaeologist, Jill Hamel, for example, describes the workings in and around Lower Nevis Township as a 'tangle of races, sluice pits, shafts and tailings. Hillside workings merge with those on flats where early ground sluicings have been buried beneath gravels from later dredging and hydraulic elevating' (see page 23).

Hydraulic elevating claim at the Nevis (Hocken Library, University of Otago, Photographic collection-Nevis Goldmining, sluicing at Nevis).





Ben Nevis Station buildings



Hydraulic elevator holes at Baileys Hill, Upper Nevis



Dredges operated on the valley floor, running the whole length of the river bed. Those working on rivers left T-shaped moorings in gravel banks, changes in river bed sediment and sometimes side channels. Parts of the dredges themselves also remain, including buckets and tumblers. Paddock dredges left tailings and ponds. One of the more significant is the timbers of the Nevis Crossing dredge, above, that was run by the Lower Nevis Dredge Company from 1906 until 1940, which had the longest working life in Otago and Southland and probably New Zealand.

The lack of development in the Lower Nevis Valley provides a step back in time and a chance to imagine life for the people who made this place their home, and provides insight into the experiences of European and Chinese miners in this harsh locality. The isolation led to the development of a place with particular character and way of life, which were recognised by early residents and officials: making do with local building materials, small buildings and structures and re-use of materials, in a close knit but scattered community with pastoralists providing supplies for miners, coal mines producing fuel for homes and dredges and the gold returns sustaining all activity.

The settlement at Nevis Crossing was located on both banks of the Nevis River. There were at least two hotels operating at the Nevis. By 1869, Charles Korll had a store and hotel. Korll, a Dutch native, was engaged in mining and business. He died in 1888 leaving wife Susan to manage their holding. In 1901, when she applied for a land application, a sketch plan shows a dwelling house, garden and orchard and a barn, and an area that looks to have been fenced. Susan Korll died in 1903.

History of the Lower Nevis Valley



Above, Korlls' residence at Nevis Crossing.



At right, detail at the Korll house.



Hut at Korlls'



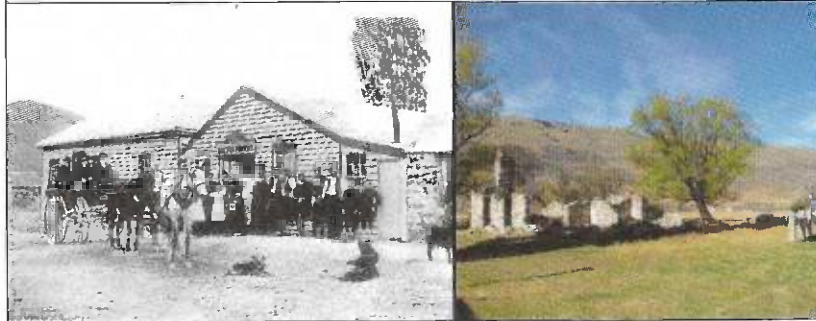
Above left, the end wall of the Nevis Crossing Hotel with cattle yards added on. Right, note the use of old mining hawsers in the fence.

The stone remains of the Nevis Crossing Hotel are on the west bank of the River. Only one wall of the hotel remains standing. This massive stone wall is 38cm thick, 7.25m long and rising to a 4.5m pointed gable. Short stubs of the two side walls remain acting as a buttress for the end wall. Cattle yards have been constructed to the rear (south) of the wall, built with hawsers and dredge timbers.



Nevis Township was spread over a two kilometre stretch of the Nevis Road. Relatively few intact buildings remain. One of the most prominent is the Masters' Homestead (c. 1870), above. It was originally a two-roomed mud-brick cottage (about 9 by 5m), added to across the front and out the back. The additions and the roof are corrugated iron, though some of the iron walls have mud-brick behind them. There appear to be stone foundations under the walls. The chimney was constructed of sod. The windows are small, six-pane double-hung sashes typical of the mid-nineteenth century. The interior is little modified, with original wall coverings present, and stone flagging around the coal range and outside the back door.

Also at Nevis Township are the stone ruins of the Nevis Hotel. The history of hotels in Nevis is difficult to unravel. It is not known when the first licence for the Nevis Hotel was granted, but it was one of at least two premises in the town which called themselves 'hotels' by 1872, although it is common for the name to follow the licence to a number of different buildings, and the 'Nevis Hotel' seems to have existed in at least two locations. The hotel was the centre of the community, providing premises for a doctor's surgery, bank and store.



Left, [Elliott's?] Nevis Hotel, undated image (Hocken Library, University of Otago, Photography Collection, S04-1971). And, right, the hotel today.

Historically, the Lower Nevis represents the establishment of pastoralism, and the relationship between pastoralism and the gold rushes of the 1860s. It shows a continuity of mining history from the 1860s through into the twentieth century in a largely undeveloped setting.



Above, tailings from hydraulic sluicing, just south of Nevis township.

THE TREES OF THURLBY DOMAIN

By Marion Borrell

In the early days of European settlement, Thurlby Domain on Speargrass Flat Road 'for magnificence outclassed everything else in the district' (Note 1). The estate was founded by Bendix Hallenstein, a businessman, second Mayor of Queenstown, Representative on the Provincial Council and Member of Parliament. Hallenstein established a fine farm and lived 'like a squire' for just two or three years before selling to an associate, Herman Arndt, and moving to Dunedin to further his business and political interests.

Now, Thurlby is notable for the ruins of the house, and the restored stable, cattle-shed, arched gateway and other outbuildings. But also of note are the long-lived trees which have been quietly thriving, many for over 130 years, while the buildings have been at best ageing or at worst decaying. When Charles Brasch, Hallenstein's great-grandson and the founder of *Landfall* literary magazine, wrote his well-known poem, 'Letter from Thurlby Domain' (Note 2), he pondered on the contrasting fortunes of the house and the trees.

... dumb and dead

In this quick summer stir the old house decays,
Hollow, unroofed, with staring window-bays
And boards torn up; from fallen foundations the stone
Walls lean outward; garrulous starlings own
It as home now, but after ninety years
No man anymore'.

However, he revels in 'my great-grandfather's trees' with references to a great variety, many of which remain: 'poplar-fountains soaring', pine, pear, apricot, walnut, gum, ash, acacia, lime, and 'tall towers of wellingtonia' – the splendid specimen is now 40 metres high. He could also have added a double-trunked apple tree which fruits profusively in the shelter of the wall between the stable and cattleshed. Hallenstein was also one of the prime movers during his time as councillor and Mayor in having the Queenstown Gardens set aside as a reserve to be planted with similarly stately exotic trees, and Brasch sees these various plantings as his major legacy in the district.

The most notable of the trees at Thurlby, pictured opposite, is the cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) situated between the house and the road; it was described in *Great Trees of New Zealand* (Note 3) as 'the tallest of the cedars of Lebanon in New Zealand' and, by 1984, was 33.8 metres tall with a diameter of 156cm. Since then, it has suffered damage in a heavy snowfall in 1999 but, thanks to the care of its present owners, Revell and Vicki Buckham, it has received surgery, evident in the photo, and has had



the forest of sycamores around it cleared to reveal its majesty. The origin of the tree has been the subject of a disagreement. According to Miller, its seed was provided by Hallenstein. As Brasch puts it, 'he in Lebanon plucked the cone/From which that masterful cedar sprang alone.' The well-travelled Hallenstein is said to have sent the seeds to Mrs Arndt in 1878. However, the family of John Allan, who bought the property in 1893, maintains that the tree was planted by him. His grandson, Jack, formerly of Cloverdale farm and now living in Domain Road, asserts that the family has always believed this. John was apparently a great traveller too, and could also have brought back seed from Palestine, as the family says.

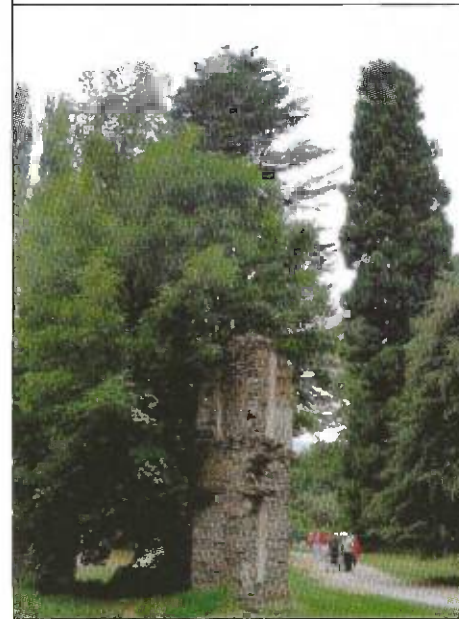
A possible solution to this disagreement lies in the existence of a smaller cedar, pictured next page, 35 metres away from the first, to the left of the driveway beyond the house. The larger tree is now 38 metres high and has a diameter of 2.25m, whereas the smaller is 29m high, with a diameter of 1.46 metres. We know from R. Burstall (Note 4) that the taller tree was 31m high in 1968 when aged about 90 years; from this we can confidently

suppose that the smaller tree is almost that old now. So it must have been planted during the Allans' tenure, and both families' memories can be satisfied. Members of the Historical Society, seen in the photo strolling among the ruins and the trees during the Christmas Barbecue last December, can, like Charles Brasch, ponder on the

Dead house and living trees and we that live
To make our peace on earth and become native
In place and time, in life and death...

Notes on sources

1. F.W.G Miller, *Golden Days of Lake County*, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1949, p.128
2. Charles Brasch, *The Estate and Other Poems*, Caxton 1957
3. S.W. Burstall and E.V. Sale, *Great Trees of New Zealand*, Reed, 1984
4. R. Burstall, in a report on Historic and Notable Trees of New Zealand for the Forest Research Institute (1970 unpublished) quoted by Bruce Hamilton 'Historic Trees in the Wakatipu Basin', The Queenstown Courier Issue 55, November 1995



Society Members are positively Lilliputian in comparison to the massive cedar and wellingtonia trees at Thurlby.

'EVER AND ANON...'

OTAGO GIRLS' 1894 ROUTEBURN EXCURSION

Below is an account, in breathless purple prose, from the Otago Girls' High School magazine of 1894. It recounts the experience of girls from the school going 'up the Routeburn' on horseback. Otago Girls' is the oldest public girls' school in New Zealand and the Southern Hemisphere.

UP THE ROUTEBURN



On a beautiful morning in early January, we left Diamond Lake to go a much talked-of trip up the Routeburn Valley. We had heard that the scenery was glorious, that all along the route waterfalls, with no visible origin, sparkled into being, and disappeared as mysteriously as they had taken birth; that fresh views of mighty glaciers could ever and anon be seen through intervening masses of foliage, and that from the flagstaff, the highest point on our trip, we should be able to see lakes without number dotted about among the mountains around us, rivers winding like silver threads-so said the guide book-in the valley 5000 or 6000 feet beneath, and far away in the distance the blue waters and white crested rollers of the Pacific, as they broke upon our tiny gem-like home. Yet one thing had power, for some time, to deter us from being off and away to feast our eyes and souls on all the glorious panorama awaiting us. Some of us could not ride, and this excursion could not possibly be made without riding. Some days we hesitated, distracted between cowardice-which we called prudence-and an ever growing desire to see the beauty whose description had fired our imagination. At length our longing conquered our cowardice, and at

8 o'clock on Friday morning, we stood waiting until the horses were got ready, wondering whether a horse that stamped its foot now and then was necessarily vicious, and whether one that seemed to fall asleep while being saddled was warranted safe.

With much inward fear and trembling we mounted (to save myself from the indignant remonstrances of the other girls, I hasten to remark that this inward frame of mind *may* have belonged only to one; though, when I remember the kindly light in which the quietest horse was regarded by the others, as well as by myself, I feel inclined to disregard that indignation and those remonstrances [sic].) Our party were eight in all, four of us being girls. Two of the girls had already had some little practice in riding, and most unkindly started off in a canter. Immediately, all the other horses must needs be filled with emulation, and followed with what speed they might. Knowing my inexperience, the animal to whom I was a prey insisted on trotting, and I regretted that I had not had the wisdom to make my will before facing such perils. However, after a time, these earthquakes and convulsions stopped, and we went more quietly over the river bed.

The Dart, like all the snow-fed rivers, is a treacherous stream, and requires some skill and care in fording it; and as our guide was young and rather inexperienced, the proprietor of the house at which we were staying found the ford for us, and saw us safely over. After crossing the river, we kept along the river bed for some distance before entering the bush. We found the Routeburn track without much difficulty, and began to follow it along woodland paths, noting with admiration the mosses and lichens, which clothed the trees with verdure and beauty. From time to time, through the trees, we caught the promised glimpses of waterfalls, and found that the reality surpassed the description. The road crossed the stream two or three times, led along narrow and precipitous ways, where we kept our horses well to the right, and at one place it wound up a step and slippery zigzag, where we dismounted and walked, sending our horses before us.

At about 2 o'clock we reached the hut where we were to put up the tents and spend the night. Thoroughly tired and exhausted with the heat and our 15 miles ride, we had luncheon, and then, making couches of the blankets, rugs, and coats, enjoyed peaceful repose, while dreamily admiring the activity of our guide, who bustled about, getting the tents up and putting things in order for the night. By this thoughtful procedure, we had recovered our energies by the time that the heat of the day was over.

Leaving the hut among its trees, we wandered down to the valley to see what might be seen. We found ourselves on a plain, surrounded on every side by mighty mountains. It was evening, and away in the distance Mt Earnslaw was flushed to rosy beauty with the departing sun. Turning from its delicate loveliness to a snow clad summit, whose cold purity was



The Routeburn Flats' Hut (arrowed), circa 1900

unwarmed by the passionate glances of Phoebus as he went, we could not help noting how strangely dull and dark the snow lay there. On another side was a break between the hills, from which the Routeburn came by leaps and bounds, rushing down into the valley and dashing through it as if in haste to reach the mighty ocean. As we watched, trying to learn by heart the beauty and majestic silence of the scene, that so we might add another to our gallery of those pictures "that flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude," the rosy flush had passed away from Earnslaw, the clouds had "cooled into ashy wan," and, even as we stood, the stars were beginning to shine out here and there. B

The article ends there, seemingly unfinished, and with 'to be continued' its last words. The OGHs magazine it was first published in came out in June 1894 and was not the end of year magazine we are now familiar with. Sadly, the next magazine, from 1895, does not continue B's story of the girls' intrepid journey. How did they endure the night under canvas? Did they go further-to what is now the Fall's Hut area? Phoebus alone knows.

Thanks to Jane Smallfield, librarian OGHs, for the girls' story. (Ed.)

MEMORIES OF THE KINGSTON ROAD

By Joan Cooke

This is a personal addition to 'Bluff, Sweat and Tears' by Danny Knudson which was published in The Courier Issue No.84, Summer 2010, and an expansion of 'Kingston Memories' by Joan published in Issue No 83, Winter 2010.



Adam McLeod, Joan Cooke's father, at work on a grader.
(From *The Kingston Story* by Alister Fraser, 2000)

The Kingston Road played a significant part in our lives. My first memory of the road being built between Kingston and Queenstown was seeing the Teraki family coming with all their little children to get milk. I remember, too, my mother and my older sister Jean going out early in the morning to milk the cows and then again about four in the afternoon, filling the cans and putting them on our old sledge, pulled by Dolly, the first horse my parents had, for my brothers Ian and Alex to drag down the track to what was called the Bottom Camp, a mile or so from Kingston. When they arrived, there would be a flurry of activity as billies were filled (at twopence a pint, or fourpence a quart) and each transaction recorded in a notebook for settlement at the end of the month. Then, when more camps were established towards the Staircase, the cans were carried on our spring cart. Doug Baxter used to do this for us. He was a man who

had had a kick in the head at some time, and he had some sort of sleeping sickness. Dolly and he would set out with the milk and Doug was supposed to be in charge, but Doug would go off to sleep, and Dolly, good old faithful Dolly, who always knew where to stop, would do so; the women would come out and get their milk off the cart, whereupon Doug would wake up and be as bright as anything until sleep overcame him again. It was very hard work for my mother to keep the milk supply up and less rewarding than it might have been, since a few of the people just wanted the milk but did not pay for it. Nevertheless, they always got their milk because sometimes there were large families and they needed it, and Mother never wanted the children to go without. It was unprofitable, too, if anyone left the camp without paying, but most settled their accounts on time.

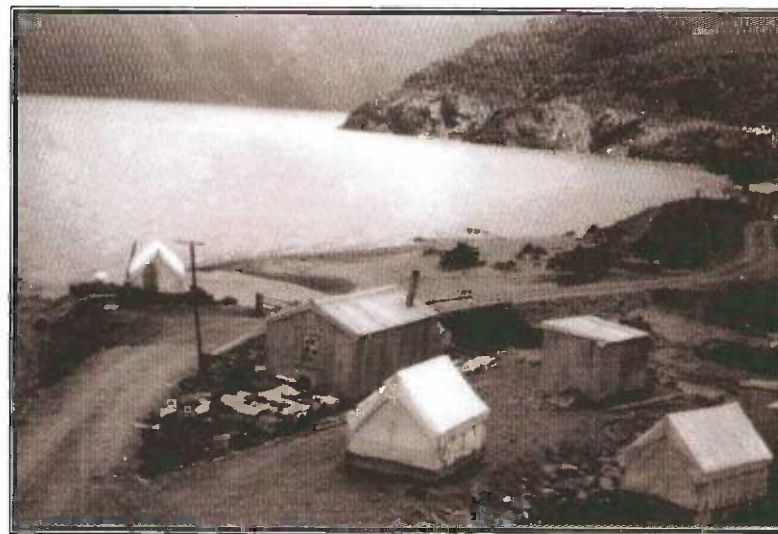
While the road was going through a doctor used to make occasional visits to the camps. Word would soon go round, and people with toothache, earache, boils, whatever, would line up and take their turn to tell the doctor their complaints and be diagnosed or prescribed for. Goodness knows what he could do for them in those days but, I suppose, even having been to the doctor would make them feel better. There must have been a lot of asthma and complaints that people just had to suffer because the medications that we know today certainly weren't around in the 1930s. He wouldn't really have got a lot of payment for his trips to Kingston.

One day, my mother took me with her to have afternoon tea with one of the wives in the Bottom Camp. The tent had a wooden floor, and a sparse framework for the canvas sides and roof, all there was to keep out the elements. Other tents were more like huts, with wooden sides and a canvas roof tied down to near floor level. I was very young at the time and I can't remember what furniture there was, but I do particularly remember the delicious baking that had been done on the small camp stove shielded by tin from the end of the tent. It was a cosy place, in spite of the canvas walls and roof.

A lot of the road workers were single men, but not a few were married, and many were well-educated people working on the road, as one of the few opportunities they had during the Depression. A school was built for the children at the top of the rise on the Kingston side of the Staircase Creek, and remained open for two years. When it closed, the few remaining children-and a welcome number of library books-transferred to the Kingston School.

One December, it must have been 1934 or 1935, Father Christmas managed a visit to the Staircase School-evidence of its support by the Camp community. There is now a plaque commemorating the school on the lake side of the present road, near where it stood.

Opening the Road: Saturday April 4th, 1936



Devil's Staircase Camp, 1930's

But, finally, the road was completed. I remember well one autumn day when I was four, seeing dozens of cars, travelling close together, cars of all shapes and sizes: canvas-sided black ones, square-built grey ones, and a particularly memorable vivid orange tourer. Dust rose and drifted across the roadside bracken as the convoy chattered past, fifty metres below my vantage-point among the tussocks on the hillside, perhaps a mile from where they had started. It was the opening day of the Kingston-Queenstown road on April 4th, 1936.

There had been some sort of ceremony in Kingston, near the road intersection, but we didn't have enough good clothes to go there. So, there we were, on the hillside above where the Bottom Camp had been, watching the cars go by. Soon, they would be crossing the Devil's Staircase Creek bridge for the first time, but I didn't want to go with them. I'd already been over it in Jimmy McLean's grey truck, the first vehicle to do so.



The Devils' Staircase

MARYGOLD MILLER

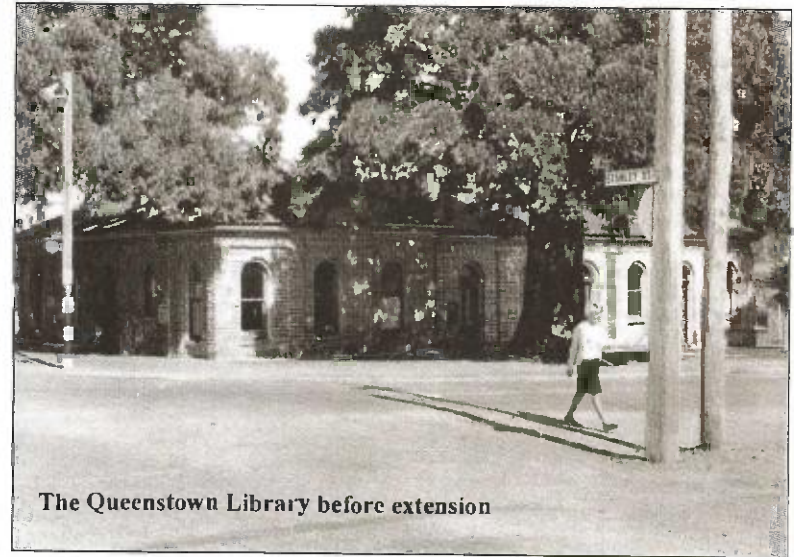
A Fighter For Queenstown's Heritage

In our last Courier, we announced that Marygold Miller was made an Honorary Life Member, as she was a founder of the Society and Secretary or President from 1965-72. Marygold has also recently been the subject of an article by Sue Fea in *The Southland Times* (21.2.11), 'Saving the Lady of the Lake,' about the time when the 'Earnslaw' was going to be taken out of service and sunk. The article can be found on www.stuff.co.nz. Marygold's response to this attention is: 'All this is fascinating to me. It seems that I am suddenly being noticed at the age of ninety!! At the time that I took up the challenge, I was not popular with plenty of the locals, far from it!!'



Marygold, with a painting by Alan Cooke, entitled *Queenstown as Marygold would have wanted*.

On receiving the Summer 2010 Courier, she wrote: 'Having, spent so much time energy and effort in the past trying to stop the locals from knocking down their amazing historical buildings, reading of the latest efforts was so heartening to say the least. It's so good that people are prepared to put all that effort into carrying out moving and restoration.' We continue our tribute to her by reprinting (slightly abbreviated) her article in *The Queenstown Courier* Issue 6, May 1971, regarding the Library which had been opened in 1877, and now houses the Citizens Advice Bureau. At that time, she was Secretary of the Historical Society and, having been elected to the Borough Council after the battle for the Library, was Chairman of the Library and Hall Committee.



The Queenstown Library before extension

The Battle for the Queenstown Library 1965-1971 by Marygold Miller

In 1965, the Queenstown Borough Council made the decision to replace the Queenstown Library. The Library building was one of the early stone buildings of the gold rush age and, as there had been a shortage of finance at the time, the building had been abutted onto the Justice Department building [now the Guilty Bar] for economy's sake. ... Little was done to the building as the years rolled on, and only the charm of the outside remained, and that somewhat tarnished for lack of care. Inside it became hopelessly out of date, and was so neglected as to be almost sordid, cracks showing in the dirty walls, and the dim lighting, high ceiling, grimy windows and shabby furniture made it a depressing and inadequate place to read or work in. The Borough Council decided that renovation was out of the question and the building must go. A vacant section beside the library, which had been known as Athenaeum Reserve, was rezoned, and it was decided to build new Council offices combined with the new library. ... However, people were not happy with this decision or the plans. The beauty of the corner, with the sunlight filtering through the huge Wellingtonia trees, throwing sunlight and shadow on the stonework of the characteristic old building had won the hearts of people from all over the world.

VOICES BEGAN TO BE RAISED IN PROTEST!

[The first letter addressed to the Council was virtually ignored.] However, individual citizens became more and more alarmed ... and formed a group called 'the Friends of the Old Stone Library'. Once a lead was given, many more people joined the protest, all forces merged to form a strong body to follow up the Historical Society's original protest. A systematic plan was developed.

Library Fighting Fund

The Treasurer has submitted the following Statement of Receipts and Expenditure during the campaign to save the Old Stone Library.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Donations	£160.12. -.	Public Notices and	
Sale of Pottery	10. 6. -.	Advertising	7.13. 9.
Raffles		Toll Calls, tele-	
(continuing)	2.13. -.	grams etc.	79.12. 6.
		Legal Expenses	72.12. 6.
		Stationery	3. 9. 3.
		Stamps	15. -. -.
		Architects Fees	21. 6. -.
	<u>£173.11. -.</u>		<u>£199.14. -.</u>

Nett Loss on battle -- £26. 3. -.

Nett Gain - One significant step towards preservation of worthwhile stone buildings and retention of the unique charm of Queenstown.

The first thing was to prove that the library was structurally sound and there was no urgent need to demolish it.

Then alternative plans for a new library and offices had to be drawn and alternative sites found for these buildings. A financial proposition had to be prepared and put to the Council, so that it could be proved that their needs could still be met without the demolition of the old buildings. Positive proof had to be offered that the majority of ratepayers were in favour of the retention of the old building, for the Council made it clear that it was not interested in the attitude of overseas tourists, visitors, or locals who did not pay rates.

All this was a formidable task for the new and struggling Historical Society, and a lot of midnight oil was burnt. However, once the plan of the campaign became clear to the public, magnificent support was forthcoming from all sides. The newspapers from all over New Zealand took up the cry for preservation, of their own free will, with the exception of the Southland Times which maintained a dignified silence throughout the campaign, except for some fascinating letters to the editor, both signed

and unsigned. The New Zealand Herald, the Auckland Weekly News, the Listener, and many others took up cudgels for the preservation enthusiastically. During the parliamentary elections week, it rated the front page of the Otago Daily Times three days running! All this and more for a tiny stone building of three walls!!!

Professional assistance was sought by the society, who employed an architect, a solicitor and an engineer, all of whom did yeoman service. All this, of course, cost a great deal of money, and the Evening Star in Dunedin ... launched a financial campaign to help the society, which by this time was pitifully short of funds.

The most significant event, at this critical stage, was that two Councillors and the Borough Architect were won over ... and these people played a vital part in the eventual result.

The Historic Places Trust ... had been constantly bombarded with letters from the society, but had remained noncommittal. Suddenly, out of the blue, the Society received news that the Trust was prepared to donate £500. ... However, the Council remained unmoved. The news that the Trust was giving this money, which had the approval of the Minister of Internal Affairs, did not influence it one bit and it was still determined on demolition! So much for diplomacy and a correct formal approach! ...

Help came from the most unexpected places, and usually just when all seemed lost. The greatest moment of all was when a telegram was received from the Maori people in Dunedin, offering to support this move to preserve culture in Central Otago. The chief said (jokingly) that Maori would send a war party from Dunedin to fix things if necessary. In a more serious vein, he said that Europeans had helped to defend his culture and it was only right that the Maoris should reciprocate: 'Those of us who are fighting to retain and defend our cultural integrity need to back each other up.' A delightful picture appeared on the front page of the Otago Daily Times of this gentleman in war regalia with a mere in hand ... This humorous approach ... did give us great moral uplift—there hadn't been much to laugh about—and it raised our spirits tremendously. ...

On November 15, 1966 a Special meeting of the Council was held, and those in favour of retention fought manfully and achieved an equal vote, but the Mayor dashed all hopes when he used his casting vote in favour of demolition. ... At the same meeting, the Council reaffirmed tenders which had already been let, which included the demolition of the old building.

In spite of this seemingly crushing blow the Society refused to admit defeat, the newspapers continued their support, and they battled on.

A councillor had made arrangements (unofficial) with the Borough Architect to produce a sketch plan showing that the old library building could be blended with a new one successfully, which would mean that the best of both worlds could be had, but it failed to move the others. Then,

our two Councillor allies instigated some brilliant manoeuvres and a referendum on the matter was sought and agreed to by the Council.

It had been a long hard battle and both sides were exhausted. There had been some very dramatic moments, perhaps the most notable being the time when a well-known and highly qualified engineer had been called to meet the Council to explain the structural position. He had the motors of his private plane warmed up while he waited at Momona Airport, Dunedin, for word that the Council had finally agreed to meet him. Meanwhile, the Historical Society was asked if IT would pay for the visit if the Council decided not to. The poor demented secretary hadn't a clue where fees like that were coming from but, basing her answer on faith, agreed.

The engineer immediately flew from Dunedin and some members of the Historical Society were allowed to be present at the interview. (After all, it was the society that was paying!) It was not the most genial of conferences; one member of the Council kept his back to the speaker, while others muttered opinions they considered to be superior. However, in spite of these attitudes, this competent and highly professional opinion had its effect, and this meeting proved to be a turning point. (And no account for this professional service was ever presented.)

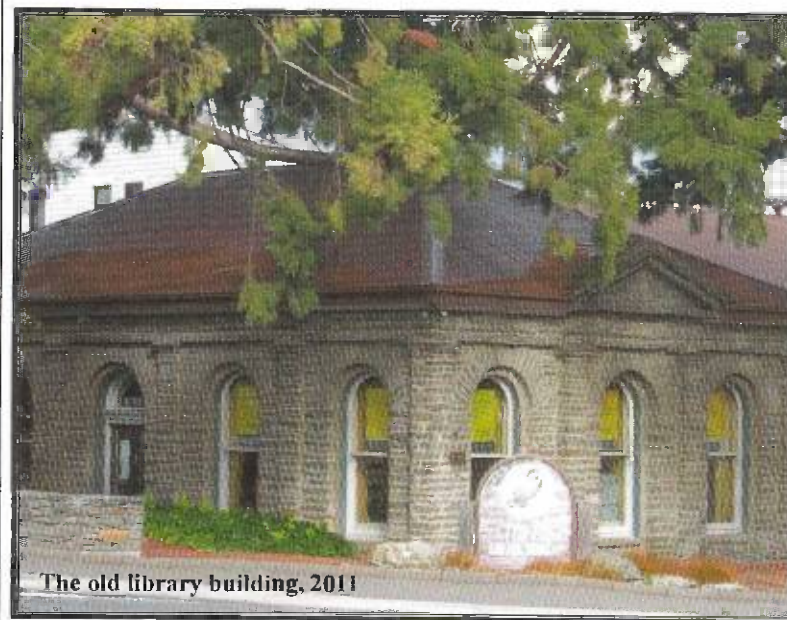
The Referendum was set for Saturday, February 11, 1967, and the Society was granted the right to be a referee at the vote count. As more than half the ratepayers lived outside the town, it depended very much on whether that sector of voters took the trouble to cast postal votes or come specially to record their opinion. The day seemed endless to the organisers of the fight for preservation. They sat despondently around, drinking coffee and bolstering each other up with optimism when they could think of anything which would give them the slightest hope that they would win. They hung around the Borough Office until the town Clerk came out and announced the result, which was at an hour described in the newspapers as '0.15am' – a dead hour indeed! The proposal was to demolish the building; 120 voted for this proposal and 156 people voted against i.e. to preserve the building. Still to be counted were 286 special votes which ... could easily reverse the decision.

The suspense was long and very wearying. But victory was at hand: the final result showed an overwhelming opinion in favour of preservation. In fact, 175 voted for destruction and 343 for preservation.

THE BUILDING WOULD REMAIN.

Mrs Miller here appends a personal footnote:

I have been personally involved in this fight for what I have always believed is one of the most valuable possessions of this town—the Library Corner. This little complex of buildings, combined with the trees and the bridge, make an area of simple charm in what will one day be a highly sophisticated tourist town. So many people of note have enjoyed it, as well as the rest of us who love it, not only because it is part of the past, but for its unique textures and beauties which can never be achieved with modern construction and planting.



The old library building, 2011

Many people played a part in the battle to save the Library, and it was my job to stream their efforts into one channel to create an effective force for preservation, so I feel a personal gratitude towards everyone who so loyally made their contribution to what I believe to be a pleasing result for all concerned.

SNIPPETS

- To all members: we are currently completing a full update of our membership list-names, addresses, phone numbers and emails. Please contact the secretary, Jocelyn Robertson (03 4421468 or email jrobb@xtra.co.nz) with any changes that you are aware of.

- Congratulations to Pat Paulin, right, who has completed a family history, centring around his father, who was one of Glenorchy's early scheelite miners.



- Danny Knudson is conducting research into Skippers and Upper Shotover. If anyone has old photographs or accounts of life in earlier days, please contact Danny at 79 Centennial Avenue, Dunedin, telephone 03 476 2276 or e-mail knudson@ihug.co.nz

- Former long time Society treasurer and life member Peter Mills and wife, Margaret, have left town to live in Nelson. We wish them well in their new home and lifestyle.

- We note the progress made by two other local historical groups: The Wakatipu Community Maritime Preservation Society Inc has been granted a 33 year lease and has so far raised about \$465, 000 for the restoration of the old boatshed, ticket office and wharf at Frankton. The Wakatipu First Settlers and Descendants Society has become an incorporated society and is beginning to gain members here, elsewhere in New Zealand and overseas.

• Summer Events 2010-2011

The Spring Luncheon at the end of September launched our season of activities, and also the 2011 Calendar, with various members giving informative and entertaining presentations on the photos for each month.

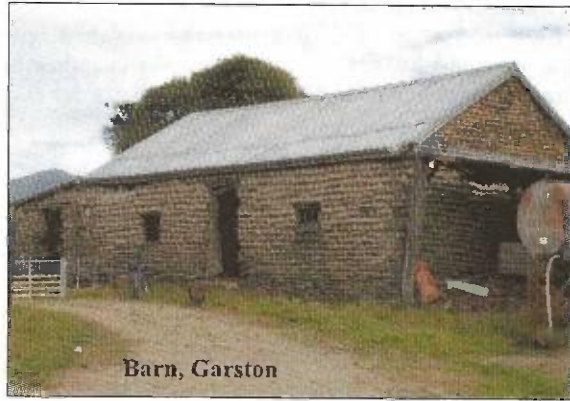
Our AGM was held in November, with a fascinating slide show and commentary from Dr Matthew Schmidt, the Southern Region's archaeologist with the Historic Places Trust, showing us many significant sites around our district.

The Christmas Barbecue took place at Thurlby Domain, and included a tour around the house ruins, and the restored stables, cattle shed and smithy. We thank Revell and Vicki Buckham for allowing us to use their historic property for this gathering.



St Paul's Anglican Church (1871)

January saw a meander around the churches of Arrowtown, with informative speakers, starting with Margaret Hyland at the Catholic Church, which included the story of Mary McKillop. On to the old Methodist Church, now the garage, and the Anglican Church, with commentary by Rupert Iles and Rita Teele. The afternoon was completed by Russell Styles at the Presbyterian Church and the viewing of the splendid new church hall.



Barn, Garston

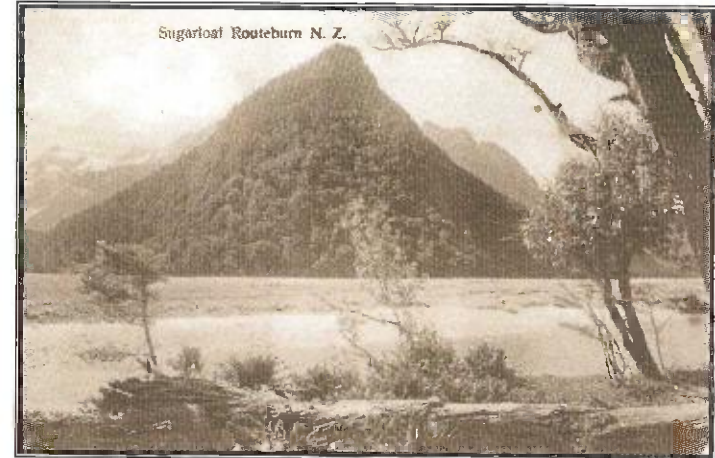
In February, members visited the Kingston and Garston area; first, Russell Glendinning talked about the early days of Kingston, followed by the history of the railway, the demise of the Kingston Flyer and the hope that it would be back on the rails in time for the 100th anniversary of the launching of the Earnslaw.



On to Garston, where, guided by Noel McMillan, visits were made to the restored Naylor's cottage and farm, above. After a superb lunch at the Garston pub, we had a tour of the cemetery and the Garston back road, with visits to see the treasures of the McMillan farms.

Due to insufficient bookings to fill a bus, we had to cancel our April trip to Lawrence for the 150th celebrations of the discovery of gold at Gabriel's Gully.

FROM THE MUSEUM ARCHIVES



Above, up the Routeburn and, below, Arrowtown, with, at right, the original Lakes District Centennial Museum.

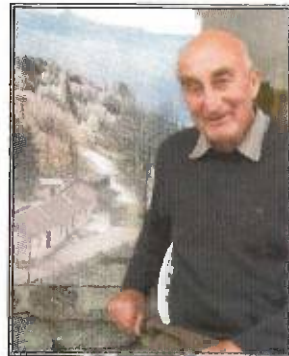
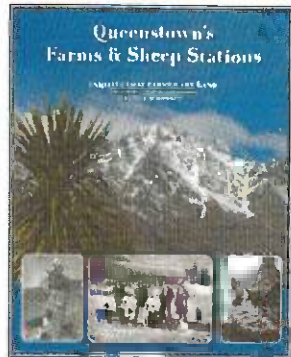


QUEENSTOWN'S FARMS AND SHEEP STATIONS

Families That Farmed The Land

Written and published by Bill McDonald (2010)

Interview and review by Marion Borrell



Bill, above right, spent the first eighteen years of his life at Ben Lomond Station and has returned in his retirement to compile this handsome, 160 page compendium of Queenstown's farms and sheep stations. It contains a wealth of facts, recollections, photographs and maps.

He recalls that during the Depression farming was very difficult for the farmers, run-holders and workers. Fine wool fetched only 4d per pound and rabbits ravaged the land. 'The only thing that saved the farmers was the dairy factory at the top end of Lake Hayes, beside the flour mill. Every farm had some cows and these provided the only regular income.' People had to work very hard and make their own entertainment. His family rarely travelled from the station homestead at the foot of the Coronet Peak Road as far as Frankton.

Bill says that he found the records of the schools, sprinkled around the district, particularly valuable for his research. The comings and goings of families can be traced to the school rolls which are printed in the book.

A message Bill has for our members is the importance of recording memories of the past and the present. What we know may not seem important to us because we think that so many other people know it too, but, in fifty years, that won't be true, so we should write it down.

The Historical Society was grateful when Bill adopted this major project about two years ago; he has devoted many hours, great care and expertise in order to create this comprehensive record of our district's agricultural past. The Society covered the cost of the printing and Bill has chosen to donate the profits equally to the Society and the Museum.

Bill's book can be purchased for \$26 at the Museum.

LAKES DISTRICT MUSEUM ARROWTOWN



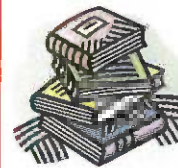
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EXHIBITIONS COMING UP IN THE GALLERY

- Until May 29: Locations Autumn Festival Art Exhibition
- June 4-19: Wearable Arts Entries on Display
- June 30-September 12: Anne Frank: A History For Today-World Touring Exhibition. Public Lecture July 17, 2pm. \$5pp. For more information, ring 03 4421824



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