

# THE QUEENSTOWN COURIER

WINTER 2025

Issue No.113



## **Soldiers mainly from Arrowtown in training at Featherston Military Camp in 1917**

Back row: Thomas Edward Thompson, Joseph Nelson Jenkins, unidentified, unidentified,  
Thomas Clarke Reid, unidentified

Front row: David Charles Jones, Charles Graham Forbes, unidentified,  
Richard (Dick) Stephen Cotter, Thomas Beckett, Robert Hunter

*(Lakes District Museum EP5347)*

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Denise Heckler (QDHS) and Rosemary Chalmers (Arrowtown RSA) unveiling the panel at the Arrowtown War Memorial on 6 April 2025



## Arrowtown's World War 1 Casualties



**Richard Stephen Cotter, 1893-1918**  
Sergeant 9/11/16  
Born in Armstrong, son of Thos.  
Worked in a grocery store in I.  
Departed with the 6th Infantry  
Regiment. Fought at Gallipoli  
Injured in a trench war.  
Wounded near Le Quesnoy and  
Buried at Delvaux Farm Cemetery.  
"Such a fine manly fellow of whom"  
(Lake Wakefield Mail)  
Capt. (Hon.) James Brown



**Joseph Nelson Jenkins 1890 - 1917**  
Private 45960  
Son of John and Matilda (nee Bell) who farmed on the Crown Terrace.  
After attending the Crown Terrace School, worked on his brother's farm.  
Enlisted on the Crown Terrace in October 1914.  
Left in March 1917 with the Otago Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, 23rd Reinforcements  
Fought in Belgium and was killed in action at Belleuse Spur in October 1917 aged 27.  
Commemorated on the Roll of Honour at Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery, Belgium.  
"A sterling young fellow" (Lake Wakatipu Mail)



**James Alexander Jopp 1883 - 1918**  
Corporal 75534  
Educated at Arrowtown School and  
a livery and carrying business.  
In 1914 he was awarded the  
Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry in December  
1914 at the Battle of the Somme. He is buried in the  
British Cemetery, France.  
"He was a man of honour and highly  
respected." (Take Wakatipu Mail)  
(From December 1918 issue 1918/19)



**William McKibbin 1894-1918**  
 Trooper 63889  
 Born and educated on the Crown Terrace, son of William and Sarah (née Talbot), and worked on the family farm. Enlisted on the Crown Terrace and joined the 54th Reinforcements, Mounted Service.  
 Fought in Palestine and died of typhoid in October 1918 aged 24. Buried in the Jerusalem War Cemetery, Israel. Commemorated at the Family Plot in the Armistice Cemetery.  
 "A fine young fellow who was held in respect by all who knew him." (Armistice Patriotic Society)



**Herbert James Edwards, 1879-1918**  
Private 1st 9699  
Born in Nelson, educated in Acworthtown. Son of James and Margaret (née Buchanan), brother of Charles, husband of Eva.  
Worked at the Bullenburgh gold mine in St. Kitts.  
Killed in 1917 with the Infantry Brigade, 1st Airborne for France.  
Killed in action during the German offensive on the Western Front.  
In March 1918 aged 39.  
Commemorated at the Tison Road Cemetery, Colincamps, France.  
"A young man of sterling character, he was esteemed by all who knew him."  
(Lisle Warburg 1941)



**George Edward Fletcher 1938 - 1917**  
 Lance Sergeant 12096  
 Born in April 1893 and educated in Arrowtown, the son of William and Mary  
 (nee Trill) Fletcher of Dunedin.  
 Enlisted in 1916 and left with the Otago Infantry, 2nd Battalion, 1st  
 Reinforcements, fighting at the Somme and at Meuse.  
 In October 1917 took part in the attack on Passchendaele Ridge and was  
 named for his gallantry. Died in October 1917 from meningitis aged 24.  
 Posthumously awarded the Military Cross for "devotion to duty under fire".  
 Buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, France.  
 (Source: [www.otagoheritage.co.nz](http://www.otagoheritage.co.nz))



**Soldiers mainly from Arrowtown when in training at Featherston Military Camp** Photo: Stewart MacKenzie 1920s

Back row: Thomas Edward Thompson, Joseph Nelson Jenkins, unidentified, unidentified, Thomas Charles Reid, unidentified  
Front row: Basil Fleming Jones, Charles Lindsay Forbes, unidentified, Richard David Dayman/Gordon Thomas Mackay, Robert Bruce



**James William 2894 - 2926**  
Trooper, N.Z. Field Artillery 94621  
Born at Rutherford, the son of Richard and Ann (née Chalmers). Educated in Arrowtown.  
Employed on Graham's Island Farm as a headcarver, Lake Hayes.  
In August 1914 was one of the first men to enlist in the Wairarapa. Left with the Otago Mounted Rifles for France and fought in the trenches for several months. Became a gunner/evacuee. Killed in action in the Somme in October 1916 aged 22. Buried at Lesbordes, France.



**Thomas Jenkins 1882 - 1917**  
Private 23552  
Son of William and Mary Ann (née Smith) and brother of James. Worked as a grocer in Arrowtown. Left with the Otago Infantry, 4th Company, 1st Battalion in 1916 to fight in France where he died of wounds in October 1917 aged 35. Commemorated on the Roll of Honour at Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery, Belgium.  
(1919 Director "Kaurau Street")



**John Smith 1838-1917**  
Private #62432


Born at Bauxdeurum, son of James and Elizabeth (née Parton). Educated at Tugueen School as his father was the ferryman on the local river.

Joined as a cabinman employed by George's Coastlines in Ararat, a business owned by the Jopp family.

Joined the Urugu Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion. "His shows an excellent character for trustworthiness and should turn out to be a first-class soldier." (Army training notes)

Fought at Armentières in the Somme and at Mesvins where he died of gunshot wounds to the head in June 1917. Buried in Epaves Cratieres, France.

*Source: The Argonaut*



**Initiated, researched and written by Denise Heckler**

Several years ago, I noticed a memorial panel in front of the Glenorchy Hall that gave an outline of the lives of the soldiers who enlisted World War 1 from the area, and I considered that the panel personalised the men better than just their names on a monument. I decided then that the 18 W.W.1 soldiers from the Arrowtown district whose names are on the Arrowtown monument should be honoured for the sacrifice of their lives and should become more than just names.

I was very determined to research information and access as many photos of them as I could, to personalise them as much as possible.

Many of them had strong Arrowtown family connections, so my first source of information was the obituaries in the *Lake Wakatip Mail*. I acknowledge the assistance and support of Jo Boyd, the archivist at the Lakes District Museum.

My research then expanded to the Auckland War Memorial Museum where I had considerable success in accessing the soldiers' records to the point of their height, weight and what state their teeth were in. I also accessed the websites 'Ancestry' and 'My Heritage' and gradually gained a deepening impression of what the war entailed for both the soldiers and their families, and its impact on the fabric of the district.



## Arrowtown Monument

## Arrowtown's World War 1 Casualties

### **Richard Stephen Cotter, 1893-1918**

#### **Sergeant 9/1161**

Born in Arrowtown, son of Thomas and Jemima (née Hamilton). Worked in a grocery store in Dunedin before enlisting at Arrowtown.

Departed with the 6<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment. Fought at Gallipoli, then the Somme where he became an instructor in barbed wire entanglements.

Wounded near Le Quesnoy and died in October 1918 aged 24. Buried at Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny, France.

“Such a fine manly fellow of whom his parents would be well proud.” (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)



EP5347

### **Charles Thomas Edwards, 1884 – 1918**

#### **Private and Acting Sergeant 7718**

Born in Arrowtown, son of James and Margaret (née Buckham), brother of Herbert. Worked in Pritchard's General Store, then in retail in Sydney where he moved in 1912 and married Kitty.

Departed in 1918 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 26<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements for France. Fought near Amiens in the opening phase of the Allied offensive. In August 1918 received a shell wound to the head and died two days later aged 34. Buried at Daours Cemetery, France.

### **Herbert James Edwards, c1879 - 1918**

#### **Private 41969**

Born in Nelson, educated in Arrowtown. Son of James and Margaret (née Buckham), brother of Charles, husband of Eva. Worked at the Bullendale gold mine at Skippers.

Left in 1917 with the Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion for France.

Killed in action during the German offensive on the Western Front in March 1918 aged 39.

Commemorated at the Euston Road Cemetery, Colincamps, France.

“A young man of sterling character, he was esteemed by all who knew him.” (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)



EP0964





**George Edward Fletcher 1893 - 1917**

**Lance Sergeant 12996**

Born in April 1893 and educated in Arrowtown, the son of William and Mary (née Holt). Worked on the waterfront in Bluff.

Enlisted in 1916 and left with the Otago Infantry, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, fighting at the Somme and at Messines. In October 1917 took part in the attack on Passchendaele Ridge and was noted for his gallantry.

Died in October 1917 from meningitis aged 24. Buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, France.

Posthumously awarded the Military Cross for "devotion to duty under fire."

**John Boyd Hunter 1889 – 1917**

**Private 9/1057**

Son of Robert and Sarah (née Boyd) who farmed at Wharehuanui/ Millers Flat. Worked on the family farm and enlisted at the Wharehuanui Post office. He joined the Otago Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Southland Company.

Fought at Gallipoli then Flanders and was killed in action in December 1917 aged 28. Buried in the Buttes Cemetery, Polygon Wood, Belgium. Commemorated in the Arrowtown Cemetery on the family grave.

"An excellent character and very hard worker." (Army records, 1915)

**James Jenkins 1880 - 1918**

**Private 56931**

Born and educated in Arrowtown. Son of William and Mary Ann (née Smith) and brother of Thomas. Was a grocer in Arrowtown.

Left in July 1917 with the Otago Regiment 8<sup>th</sup> Company. Wounded when fighting in the Somme and died in April 1918 aged 38. Buried at Doullens Communal Cemetery, Somme, France.

**His brother Thomas Jenkins 1882 – 1917**

**Private 23557**

Worked as a grocer in Arrowtown. Left with the Otago Infantry, 4<sup>th</sup> Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in 1916 to fight in France where he died of wounds in October 1917 aged 35. Commemorated on the Roll of Honour at Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery, Belgium.



**Joseph Nelson Jenkins 1890 - 1917**

**Private 40960**

Son of John and Matilda (née Reid) who farmed on the Crown Terrace. After attending the Crown Terrace School, worked on his brother's farm. Enlisted on the Crown Terrace in October 1916 and left in March 1917 with the Otago Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements.

Fought in Belgium and was killed in action at Bellevue Spur in October 1917 aged 27. Commemorated on the Roll of Honour at Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery, Belgium.

“A sterling young fellow.” (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)



EP5347

**James Alexander Jopp 1883 – 1918**

**Corporal 25534**

Son of John Lumsden Jopp and Catherine (née Henderson). Educated at Arrowtown School and Southland Boys High School. Moved to Taranaki where he had a livery and carrying business. Left with the Wellington Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 17<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements. Was a stretcher-bearer at Passchendaele, then joined the infantry. Awarded a Military Medal for gallantry in December 1917. Killed in action in August 1918 aged 35. Buried at Bancourt British Cemetery, France.

James was a son of “the Worthy House of Jopp and he was a man of honour and highly respected.”

(*Lake Wakatip Mail*)



EP8903

**Peter Gray McAllister 1882 - 1917**

**Private 10/2680**

Son of John and Mary (née Gray). Enlisted at Lower Shotover, then joined the Wellington Infantry, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements.

Killed in action in October 1917 in France aged 36. Buried in Belgium in Dochy Farm New British Cemetery. Commemorated on the family plot in Frankton Cemetery.

**William McKibbin 1893 - 1918**

**Trooper 63389**

Born and educated on the Crown Terrace, son of William and Sarah (née Talbot) and worked on the family farm. Enlisted on the Crown Terrace and joined the 34<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, Mounted section.

Fought in Palestine and died of typhoid in October 1918 aged 24. Buried in the Jerusalem War Cemetery. Commemorated at family plot in the Arrowtown Cemetery.

“A fine young fellow who was held in respect by all who knew him.”

(Arrowtown Patriotic Society)

**Daniel David O' Fee 1894 - 1918**

**Trooper 61372**

Son of Charles and Mary Ann (née Mackie). Educated at the Crown Terrace School and worked on the family farm. Enlisted on the Crown Terrace. Left in November 1917 with the Canterbury Mounted Rifles 33<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements bound for Egypt. Died at Gallipoli of pneumonia in December 1918 aged 25. Buried in Chanak Consular Cemetery, Canakkale, Turkey.



**Andrew William "James" Reid c1891-1916**

**Private 211**

Born at Gibbston, son of Andrew Dick and Ann (née Ferguson). Enlisted with the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment, and served under the name of James Reid Andrews. Married to Christina Reid (née Kelly) and had two children. Died of wounds in May 1916 in France. Buried at Bertrancourt Military Cemetery.

**James Sangster Ritchie 1892 - 1917**

**Private 9/1482**

Son of Beresford and Janet (née Sangster). Born and educated in Macetown. A battery manager and goldminer before enlisting at Macetown. In October 1915 embarked with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements bound for Egypt. Later fought at Ypres where he was killed in action in November 1917 aged 23. Buried at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium. "He had a quiet disposition – popular with all who knew him." (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)

**William Ross 1885 -1918**

**Rifleman 51781**

Son of Charles and Margaret (née Reid). Born and educated at Macetown. Worked as a goldminer. Left from Auckland with the 27<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements, N.Z Rifle Brigade 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in June 1917.

Fought in France and was captured. Died of pleurisy in a German Prison of War Camp in November 1918 aged 33, and is commemorated at the Niederzwehren Cemetery, Germany. "A quiet unassuming young man." (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)

**John Smith 1885- 1917**

**Private 8/4222**

Born at Bannockburn, son of James and Elizabeth (née Patton). Educated at Luggate School as his father was the ferryman on the local punt. Worked as a coachman employed by Craig's Coachlines in Arrowtown, a business owned by the Jopp family. "He shows an excellent character for trustworthiness and should turn out to be a first-class soldier." (Army training notes)



Auckland War Museum



Joined the Otago Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Fought at Armentières in the Somme and at Messines where he died of gunshot wounds to the head in June 1917. Buried in Etaples Cemetery, France.

**Alexander Webb 1881 - 1916**

**Corporal 9/1370**

Born and educated in Arrowtown, son of James and Christina (née Cowan). Employed as a blacksmith in Arrowtown.

Joined the Regiment of New Zealand Machine Gun Corp, Unit 1 Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements and departed in August 1915 for Gallipoli. Later fought in France and was killed in action in the Somme in September 1916 aged 35.

Commemorated on the Caterpillar Valley New Zealand Memorial, Longueval, France. "A prominent member of the local band, he was a universal favourite with all he came in contact with." (*Lake Wakatip Mail*)

**James Wilcox 1894 - 1916**

**Trooper, N.Z. Field Artillery 9/402**

Born at Bullendale, the son of Richard and Ann (née Chalmers). Educated in Arrowtown. Employed on Graham Baird's farm at Bendemeer, Lake Hayes.

In August 1914 was one of the first men to enlist in the Wakatipu. Left with the Otago Main Body from Port Chalmers bound for Gallipoli. After being invalided to Egypt, was sent to France and fought in the trenches for several months. Became a gunner/driver. Killed in action in the Somme in October 1916 aged 22. Buried at Lesboeufs, France.



Auckland War Museum

**Credits:**

Initiator and Researcher: Denise Heckler, Queenstown & District Historical Society

Photos: Lakes District Museum and Auckland War Museum

Funding: Arrowtown RSA

Design and print: Print Central



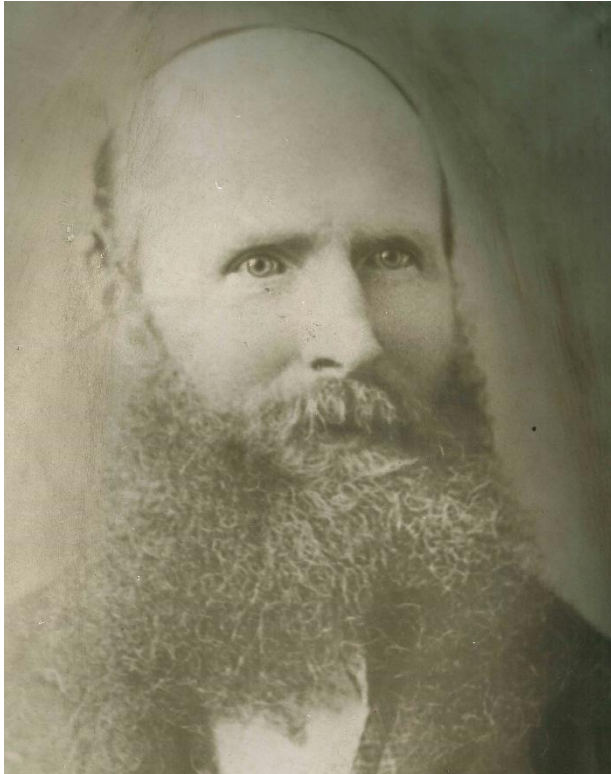
## Charles Low 1828-1922

### Early Arrowtown settler – baker, goldminer, cobbler and farmer

**By Shona Blair, his great-great-granddaughter.**

*Originally written as a monologue for a 'People From Our Past' event in 2015.*

*Later additions from Alan F. McKenzie and local newspapers.*



*Photos: Lakes District Museum EP1659 and EP2660 donated by the family*

Charles Archibald Low came to the Arrow in the early stages of the rush. He soon called for his wife and children from Victoria, and they became one of the early pioneering families. (Charles is not to be confused with Thomas Low, no relation, who claimed to be one of the first discoverers of gold in the Arrow. See article on page 26.)

He was born in Kerriemuir, in Forfarshire, in the Highlands of Scotland in 1828 and left with his brother George in about 1840 to seek his fortune in Australia. He set up a bakery in Melbourne. But the life of a baker didn't agree with him, so he turned his hand to boot-making.

Harriet Lee was born in Redruth, Cornwall in 1830 and came to Sydney in 1849. In 1851 she and Charles were married in St Peter's Anglican Church, Melbourne. As Harriet didn't sign her name, it appears that she was illiterate at that stage. In the following years they had five children: Janet, Harriet, Charles, Samuel and Hector. When gold-mining was at its height, Charles became a carter, transporting supplies between Melbourne and Bendigo.

Looking for more opportunities on the Otago goldfields, Charles left the family behind in Melbourne and came to the Arrow in 1863. The place was buzzing with gold-miners.



Prospects looked very good, so Harriet and the five children sailed to Port Chalmers in the *Hero 2* to join him. Harriet was expecting again, so with all the children to manage, that was quite a journey.



Their final child, Isabella, was first baby girl born in Arrowtown.

*Photo LDM EP2662.* Is she wearing a brooch of Arrow gold?

Charles's boot-making skills were in high demand among the miners, and in 1863 he was briefly in partnership with Archibald Stewart as boot and shoemakers. He set up in business as a cobbler in the main street of Arrowtown. The weatherboard building (here photographed in 2015) was later moved up to Hertford St near the corner with Wiltshire St.



Shona found his cobbler's lasts many years later.

Their first home was a tent then a sod hut in Hertford St. Then they had a house and about half an acre of land next to William Scoles. Charles and Harriet had a fenced garden where they grew vegetables, including that staple, potatoes. They also kept pigs which were well penned in. However, one day Charles came home to find five of Mr Scoles's large pigs rooting in his precious potatoes. This couldn't be tolerated. He took Scoles to court seeking £5 in damages. See the next page for the report in the *Lake Wakatip Mail*, 1 April 1865. Charles won the case - but was awarded only one shilling in damages! Call that justice? Several days later Charles was in court again charged with disturbing the peace on account of an altercation in the main street. His opponent, a butcher, later faced other charges too, which suggests he was the instigator.

Like many early residents of the town, Charles continued to be involved in mining. He had his miner's right and in 1866 he held 20 shares in the Columbian Quartz Mining Company which was operating in the Arrow River.



**THE ANGRY COBBLER AND THE TRUANT PIGS.**  
—Low v Scoles.—This was an action for £5, for damage stated to have been done by defendant's pigs to the crops of plaintiff. Defendant pleaded not indebted, as no damage had been done.

Charles Low, sworn, stated—I am a shoemaker in Arrowtown, and plaintiff in this action. I have a piece of ground, enclosed, at the back of my house, and sown with potatoes. On Wednesday morning I heard a grunting noise, and on going out saw five large pigs rooting amongst the potatoes; they were eating them as fast as they could. I knew they were Scoles' pigs by their peculiar color. I called Mr King to come and see them, and we stood watching them for some time. I went and got a summons out, and on my way back saw Mr Scoles' housekeeper driving the pigs out. I calculate the actual damage at £2.

Cross-examined—I have a miner's right and a registration certificate for the ground enclosed. I do not know whether I have more than half an acre. The pigs had rooted up a large quantity of potatoes. My boy picked up two buckets full, besides what the beasts eat; they were eating for half an hour at least. I claimed £5 damages, as I thought the magistrate might perhaps allow the extra £3 for my trouble. I have pigs of my own; they sometimes get out.

—King, sworn—I am a carpenter, and should like to know who is to pay me for coming here away from my work. On Wednesday plaintiff called me to his garden to see some pigs there. I saw five pigs, which belong to defendant; they were grubbing amongst the potatoes. We stood watching them for some time; they were regularly "blowing themselves out." I told Mrs Painter, and she came at once and turned them out.

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This was plaintiff's case. For the defence

W. Scoles, sworn, stated—I am the defendant in this action. I was absent on Wednesday, and on returning home at night found a summons for £5, damages on account of my pigs. I went to plaintiff's garden at daylight next morning, but could see no damage at all. There was not a single potato above ground. I keep my pigs in a carefully fenced yard; but Richmond's boar broke down the fence in one place, which accounts for their getting out. Plaintiff's pigs are constantly straying into my garden, and last Sunday did a great deal of damage.

Farming was Charles's next and most long-lasting venture. In 1868 he bought land at Arrow Junction. The farm stretched from the Arrow Junction turn-off and along both sides of the road as far as the Hogan Gully Road turnoff, and across towards Bendemeer station. The house was small but solid – meant to withstand the ravages of time. It had thick stone walls which made it cool in summer, and it kept its heat well in the winter. Here it is, with some odd wires attached to it, showing its age, yet still standing in 2015.

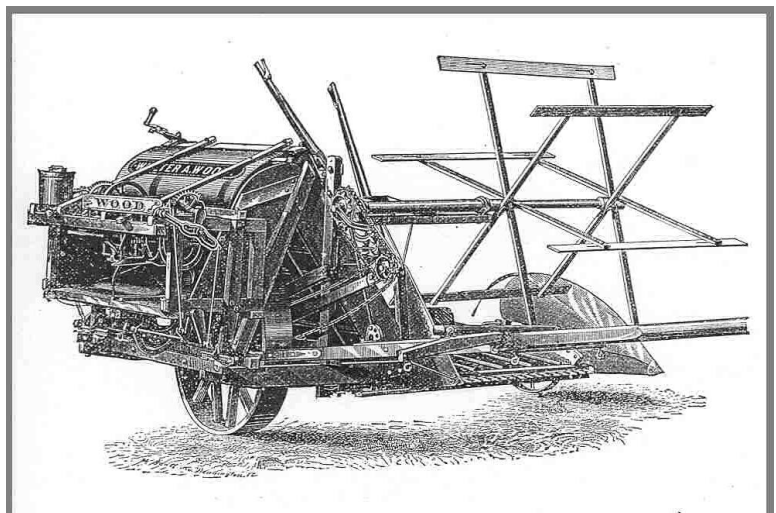


Charles worked the farm with two of his sons, Samuel and Hector, growing crops, wheat, and chaff for horses.

Fires caused some spots of bother. Once in autumn 1881 when one of the sons was ploughing-in a paddock of stubble, he decided to burn it off instead. The fire spread very rapidly and burnt at least 200 acres of stubble land and native grass pasture. Two stacks of wheat were destroyed - about 900 bushels. If it had not been for quick thinking by two Council roadmen, more stacks and other property on two adjoining farms would have been burnt too. The fire caused very serious loss to the family. There was further trouble some years later when a mysterious fire burnt three stacks of wheat, but not a glimmer of light was ever shed on the cause.

As they grew up, the grandsons helped at harvest time, and one day young Victor, known as Pompey, lost the top of his right index finger in the chaffcutter. Such mishaps were very common, but Charles himself had no serious farming accidents.

In 1884 he imported a new Woods reaper and binder – a great advance in harvesting. Taken all-in-all, in the long run the farm did well.





## **Charles and Harriet's Children**

Janet (1852 – 1880), attended Arrowtown School where she received prizes for writing and arithmetic. She was an officer in the Arrow Gold Lodge in the late 1870s, but in 1880 the *Lake County Press* reported that she had died in Sydney aged 28.



Harriet Baker née Low  
LDM EP0190

Harriet (1855-1940) In 1870 aged 16 she married John William Baker, a carrier, and lived at 11 Anglesea Street in Arrowtown. She had a family of 5 daughters and 7 sons. Shona Blair is her great-granddaughter.

Charles (1856-1925) went to Otago Boys' High School where he was Dux. He won a scholarship and went to Edinburgh to train as a doctor. Subsequently he became the Medical Superintendent of Dee St Hospital in Invercargill. Later he had a practice in Huntly.

Samuel (1860-1933) and Hector (1862-1943) spent most of their lives working on the family farm.

Isabella (1864-1948) lived her entire life in Arrowtown where she became a dressmaker and lived at 15 Denbigh Street. She and Hector are buried near their parents.

Charles and Harriet lived out their final years on the farm, with Samuel, Hector, daughter Harriet and Isabella nearby. Harriet died in 1915 aged 83. Charles lived nine more years and was 95 when he died.

### **Shona's Comments:**

When I look back over my great-great-grandfather's long life, I see that he was certainly an adventurer, a risk-taker, a hard worker and a jack-of-many-trades - a baker, a carter, a good horseman, a gold-miner, a cobbler and finally a farmer. My great-great-grandmother showed courage in emigrating when very young, and capability in raising her children in the earliest days of the Arrow settlement.

I was raised with my grandparents, and learned a lot about my ancestors from an early age. Only later in life have I valued that rich grounding and wished I had asked to know more.

Our ancestors through hard work, risk-taking and hardship, endured and survived. May we forever be grateful and remember their achievements in a world so very different from what we know today.





## **Mount Aurum Station by Colin Macnicol**

When the Mount Aurum homestead was burnt down on New Year's Eve 2019, I was appalled and very upset not only because it had been lost by an act of stupidity, but because the perpetrators, even though they owned up to the offence, were not charged.

DOC staff and volunteers had done a remarkable job of restoring the homestead and the school beside it, much of it in their own time and after hours, simply because they loved the place and its history.

For these reasons I made a move through the Historical Society to have this rectified and I must say that we have received full co-operation from DOC, with materials and manpower being provided free of charge. Staff members Jim Croawell and Stew Hardie recently erected the information panels at the site and have done a fine job.

### **Panel at the Site of the Mount Aurum Station Homestead**

Part of what later became Mount Aurum homestead was built and occupied by shepherds around 1867. Like many homesteads on high country sheep stations it started as a very basic hut and was added to as wives and families came along.

Restoration of this homestead was undertaken by the Department of Conservation staff, starting in 1994 and completed in 2000. A lot of the work was done voluntarily by DOC staff after hours and others who just had a love of the place. On completion DOC invited locals and former residents back to see the fruits of their careful labour. What they found was a relatively comfortable house, as it was when occupied by families, including the Lambies, Macnicols and Sarginsons, who farmed and raised their families here. Sadly, this valuable and admired asset was burnt down on New Year's Eve 2019.

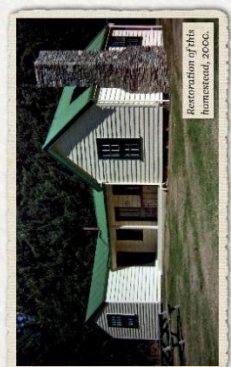


The restored homestead

**So enjoy this unique place and contemplate the families who called this home, and the hundreds of others who lived ‘up the Shotover’ and its tributaries.**



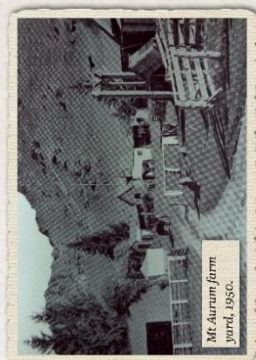
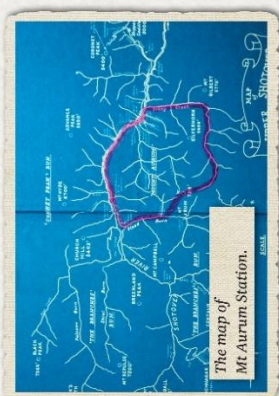
# This was the site of the Mount Aurum Station homestead.



Part of what later became Mount Aurum homestead was built and occupied by shepherds around 1867. Like many homesteads on high country sheep stations it started as a very basic hut and was added to as wives and families came along.

Restoration of this homestead was undertaken by the Department of Conservation staff, starting in 1994 and completed in 2000. A lot of the work was done voluntarily by DOC staff after hours, and others who just had a love of the place. On completion DOC invited locals and former residents back to see the fruits of their careful labour. What they found was a relatively comfortable house, as it was when occupied by families, including the Lambies, Macnicols and Sarginsons, who farmed and raised their families here. Sadly this valuable and admired asset was burnt down on New Year's Eve 2019.

**So enjoy this unique place and contemplate the families who called this home, and the hundreds of others who lived 'up the Shotover' and its tributaries.**



It is hard to believe now that this rugged land was farmed and provided a living for several families who farmed Mount Aurum Station in the past.

Merino sheep were farmed for their valuable fine wool and had the resilience to survive the extreme conditions of heat and cold and thrive on the native grasses on these mountains.

In 1880 the Waste Land Board designated a holding of 60,000 acres as Mount Aurum Station and it was leased by David and Euphemia (nee Coburn) McKinlay. From then lease holders were, Thomas Davidson (1886), Henry Augusta Evans (1888), Findlay McMillan (1890), Andrew Lambie (1899), R.M. Paterson (1917), Archie Macnicol (1940), Mick and Myrna Sarginson & Bill Jelley (1957), Mick & Myrna Sarginson (1958), Ted Phipps (1972), the Department of Lands and Survey (1985) later to become the Department of Conservation.

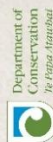
In 1902 Andrew Lambie lost 21,000 acres to the McKinlays of neighbouring Ben Lomond Station when they won an auction for the lease of that part of the property. It was a severe blow because he lost most of the best land on Mt Aurum. Lambie sold Mt Aurum after the death of his wife in 1917 to R.M. Paterson of Ayrburn at Arrowtown.

Duncan Macnicol had been managing the station for Andrew Lambie from the age of 17. R.M. Paterson kept him on as manager until Colin, Duncan's younger brother, took over as manager. At age 21 Duncan went to Mossburn to manage another of "R.M.'s" properties, 'The West Dome'.

Researched & written  
by Colin Macnicol

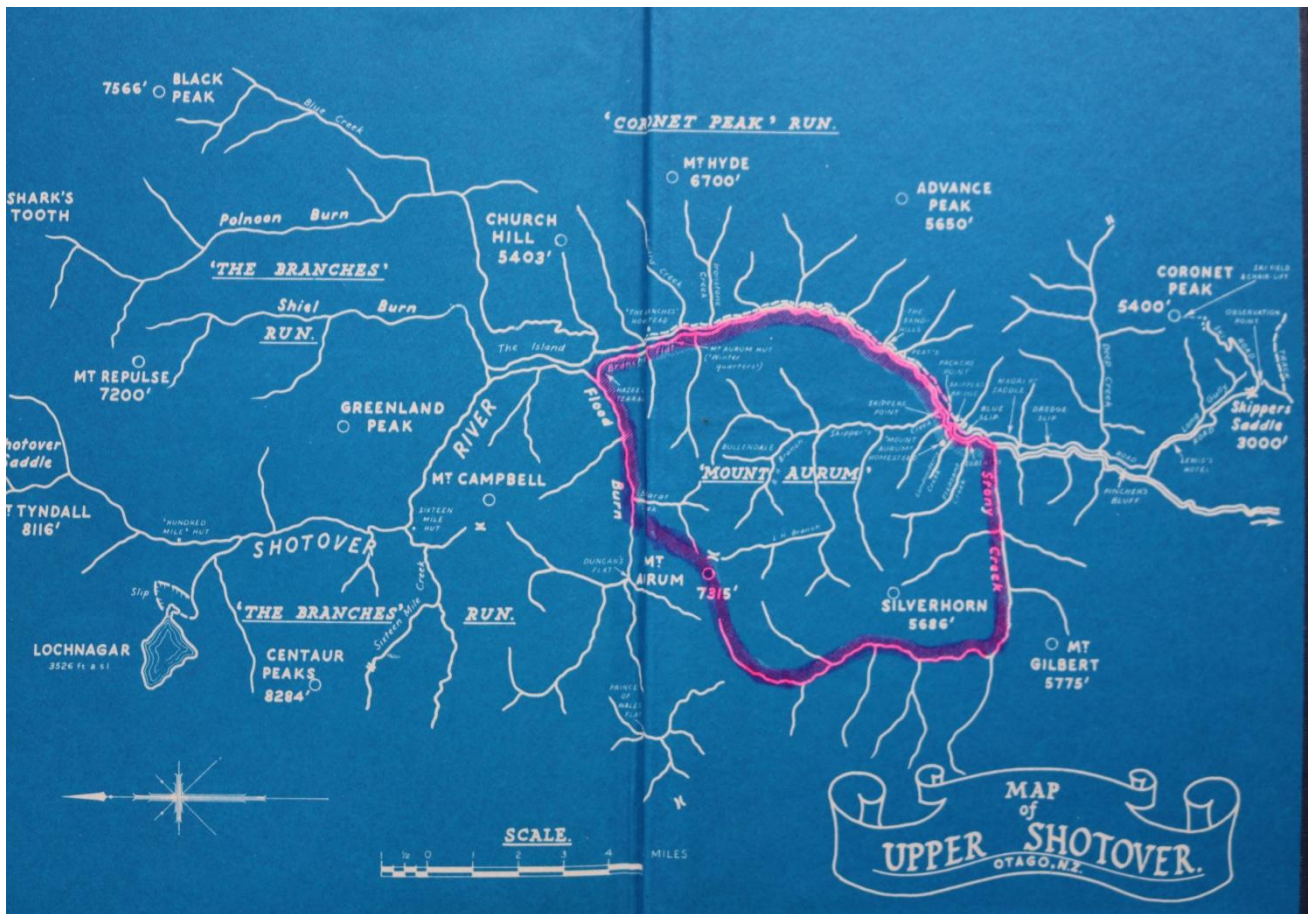


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Historical Society  
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## Farming Mount Aukum Station



Map showing Mt Aukum Station

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# Farming Mount Aurum Station

In 1941 Archie Macnicol, a younger brother of Duncan and Colin, bought the Mt Aurum lease. He and his wife Mona farmed it until 1957. There was no electricity here and an unreliable telephone service. Lighting was provided by kerosene lamps and candles. Their radio was run off a car battery which had to be recharged in Queenstown. Their washing machine



Archie Macnicol and three of his children (Max, John and Vivienne) loading the wool truck.

was run with a small petrol motor as were the shearing machines. There was no woolshed for shearing (previously sheep were driven to Ayrburn for shearing) so Archie converted the old school into a shearing shed. They raised their four children here and educated them through the Correspondence School.

In their early days, because it was very cold here with short daylight hours in the winter, the family would move 20 kms to the upper boundary with the Branches Station. They took their necessary provisions by packhorse. Even the cow was pressed into service, Archie fitting her with a pack saddle. They lived in a small hut there for the duration of the winter. Later they bought a house at Frankton and would move down there for the winter and the children attended Queenstown Primary School.



Macnicol house, 1940s.

Archie made extra money trapping thousands of rabbits for their skins, shooting deer for their tails (there was bounty on deer tails). Later there was good money to be made from deer skins. He also did a small amount of gold mining. Mona made extra money by providing morning and afternoon teas for the tourists who arrived via the Mount Cook Tourist Co.'s twice daily bus trips to Skippers.

In 1957 Mick and Myrna Sarginson bought the Mount Aurum lease in partnership with Bill Jelley. Within a year they realised the run would not sustain more than one family so Mick bought out Bill's share.

Myrna (née McLeod) was raised in Wanaka. In 2012 she wrote about her life at Skippers for Danny Knudson's book *Skippers, Triumph and Tragedy*. She began by describing her first visit to the area in 1956: "Mick drove his mother and me into Skippers to check out the sheep run he wanted to buy, up in the mountains, no neighbours and living alongside a cemetery. No way! The view from Skippers Saddle was breath-taking, with the distant mountains and the long narrow road winding its way along the hillsides down to the valley. We drove through Hell's Gate and Heaven's Gate, Mick pointing out Lighthouse and Castle Rocks as we passed by. His mother had complete confidence in her son's driving ability. I wasn't going to let the team down, although I did hold my breath in one or two places."

On finally reaching Skippers Cemetery, snowdrops and daffodils were flowering through the short green grass surrounding the headstones. It was a very peaceful setting. Driving down the hill we checked out the homestead. Macnicols had a large vegetable garden. There was no doubt in my mind. I was just as keen as Mick to make Mount Aurum Station our first home."

Mick and Myrna raised their four children here with the aid of the Correspondence School. Myrna appreciated Mick's homestead improvements. He built an outside wash-house, shower, store-room, a fly-proof meat safe and most important of all, a flush toilet. But the greatest achievement of all was installing a hydro-electric power plant for the homestead. This was a massive achievement done with the help of neighbours Lin Herron, Joe Schelb, and Alan MacPherson and Max Macnicol. Used mining pipes 3.6 mtrs long by 230 mls in diameter were transported by pack horses (two per horse) 4 kms down through the very narrow Skippers Creek gorge to the Skippers Creek dam. From there they were erected above the Skippers Creek bluffs for 300 metres to carry water to a Pelton wheel which drove the generator. Then 2.5 kms of No. 8 fencing wire carried the electricity to the homestead.



Myrna Sarginson with children in the front garden of Mount Aurum homestead, 1960s.

This allowed electric appliances in the homestead which made life a whole lot easier for Myrna. She was catering for up to four Mount Cook Co. mini-bus loads of tourists who arrived twice a day for morning and afternoon teas with pikelets and scones. These buses also brought in their groceries, mail and papers.

Mick had a Fordson tractor fitted with a bulldozer blade. He used it to clear the Blue Slip when it came down, and to push tracks up Skippers Creek and into some of the back country huts. Mick was issued with a traffic ticket when caught by a traffic officer driving this unlicensed tractor on the Skippers Road!

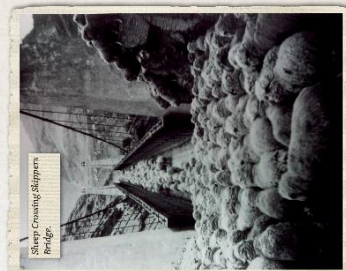
## Problems farming Mt Aurum

The road was often impassable due to flooding, ice, and slips (no four wheel drive vehicles in those days.)

Stock losses could be high due to snow. Sheep could slip over bluffs in the early spring due to ground still being frozen.

Kea attacks on sheep were devastating.

It was very difficult country to access, muster and fence. The property at 28,000 acres (11,330 hectares) was barely financially viable. It could only run about 4000 merino sheep. Mount Aurum Station has returned to the Crown and is managed by the Department of Conservation as a high country recreation reserve.



Sheep crowding Skippers bridge.



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Mount Aurum farmyard in 1950

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Archie and three of his children - Max, John and Vivienne - loading the wool press



Mt Cook Tourist Company buses in 1950



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Myrna and children in the front garden in 1961

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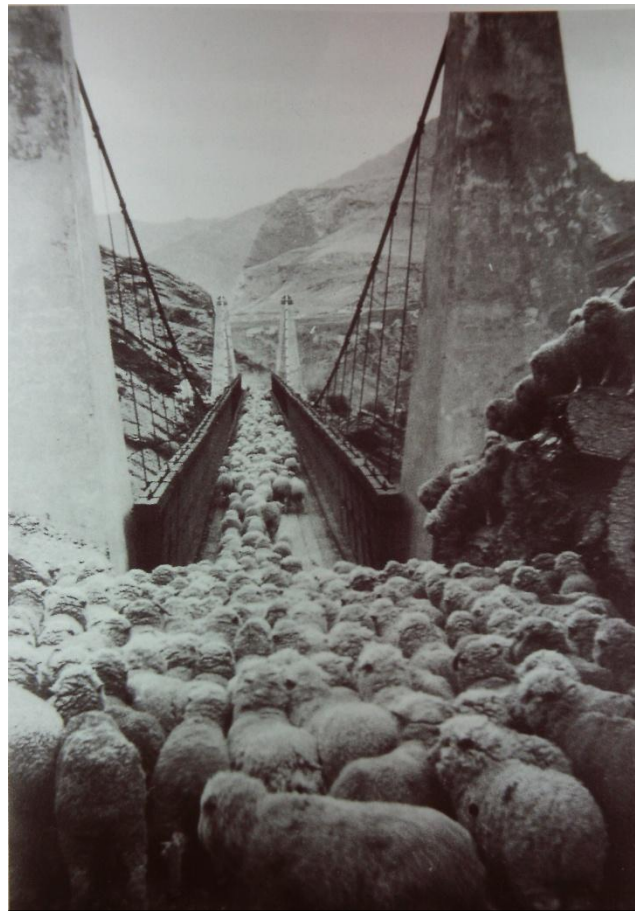
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### **Problems Farming Mount Aurum**

- The road was often impassable due to flooding, ice and slips. (No four-wheel drive vehicles in those days.)
- Stock losses could be high due to snow. Sheep could slip over bluffs in the early spring due to ground still being frozen.
- Kea attacks on sheep were devastating.
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Sheep crossing Skippers Bridge



## The Site of the Macnicol Family Home by Colin Macnicol

Several years ago, I was driving my Hilux ute down the road from the Branches when I spotted tracks going down the hill off the road. I thought, why would anyone drive down there? Being one of those people who just has to see what's round the next bend or what's over the top of the next hill, I drove downhill and found a plaque mounted on a short post about a foot above the ground. I worked out that it was mounted low to avoid being knocked over by Coronet Peak Station cattle that grazed that area.

The plaque had a couple of pictures and a story about the people who lived there, what they did and where they had gone when they left. The picture showed the property complete with the house, fences around a paddock, and a horse grazing. Here was a real surprise which brought to life the story of a family who lived in this remote place which no one would have otherwise known about.

This triggered in me the thought that I should mark the spot where my grandparents raised their family. On Christmas day 2022 with our whole family, and our son-in-law playing the pipes, we erected this panel.

Panels like this are easy to have made and not very expensive. I hope it inspires other families to do the same.



With Lynette, Paul and Kirsty

## **Panel at the Site of the Macnicol Family Home**

Colin and Mignonette Macnicol moved to this house in 1907 from their first little house at The Nuggets goldmine further up the Shotover river. They moved to Skippers when the Nuggets Goldmine closed in 1907 to allow their first child Duncan to attend Skippers school.

Here they raised seven children, four boys and three girls. Mignonette died six months after the birth of their seventh child. Colin and the family then had to fend for themselves. Margaret (Peggy) at 15 years old, took on the role of mother, and with all helping each other they survived and remained a very close family.

Colin at this time worked for Council, maintaining the road from Maori Point to Skippers and up the Branches Road.

He had emigrated from an area known as The Gorbals in Glasgow in 1880. We are unsure what he did for the next twenty years but believe he worked on sheep stations and set up a wool-scouring business at Kawarau Falls and worked in goldmines at Macetown and Bullendale.

He married Mignonette Smith in 1901. Mignonette's parents were Alf and Emma Smith who had a goldmining claim on the opposite side of the river from The Nuggets.

Colin and Mignonette are buried in the Skippers cemetery next to Mignonette's parents Alf and Emma Smith.

**We, their descendants, are forever thankful to these two pioneers.**



Colin & Minne with (L-R) Colin, Irene, Louisa, Duncan & Margaret. Not yet born: Archie & Robert





Minnie, Colin and baby Duncan at the cottage at The Nuggets goldmine.



Colin, Louise and Irene at the Skippers house

## Gold Finds within the present QLDC boundary up to 1 December 1862

### Information from George Griffiths as recorded by Ray O'Callaghan

**Dr George Griffiths, QSO** (1933 - 2014) was an authority on Otago history and a long-serving *Otago Daily Times* journalist. In 1978 he co-founded the Otago Heritage Books publishing company and bookshop in Dunedin. He will perhaps be best known to our readers for his biography of William Rees, *King Wakatip*, 1971.

### Introduction

In our last issue #112 we published excerpts from Vincent Pyke's book, *History of the Early Discoveries of Gold in Otago* (1887). Simultaneously, committee member Ray O'Callaghan (the great-grandson of John O'Callaghan) was writing up notes he had made during conversations with George Griffiths in Dunedin in the late 1980s. There is one important point on which he differs from Pyke. As he also includes many new details, we're publishing the information from George who, 100 years after Pyke, had the benefit of more sources.

### George Griffiths' Information

Between 1850 and 1860 there were nine reported findings of gold in Otago Province, but no interest within the provincial government. The Nelson gold rush changed the attitude of the Otago establishment and a reward was offered for the discovery of a payable field. In May 1860, Tasmanian Gabriel Read produced 7 ounces of gold in ten hours near present-day Lawrence. He received the reward, and Otago had its first goldfield. From there, prospectors spread up the Clutha.

The closest gold workings to the current Queenstown Lakes District boundary were south of Lake Whakatipu in the Garston-Athol-Nokomai area where mining occurred from March 1862, but there was limited accessible auriferous ground. Miners there were interested in William Rees's run as an attractive prospect. Rees himself was in no doubt that his run was auriferous even before the development of the major Otago goldfields.

Within the QLDC district, three river valleys provided locations for strikes of sufficient magnitude to be considered an official goldfield – the Cardrona, the Arrow and the Shotover. Surveyor James McKerrow reported that the first gold in this area was obtained April 1862 at **Quartz Creek** (near Lake Wānaka). He thought this could prove to be a paying goldfield. It didn't.

**Lower Shotover, February 1861:** Often overlooked in local goldmining history was the first find in the Wakatipu district. **Thomas Wilson**, who later became the publican of the Glenorchy Hotel, related that one Sunday when he was working as a builder for Rees, he with companions had gone to the Lower Shotover River, done some prospecting and obtained some fine gold. When it was shown to Rees, he was angry, saying gold diggings would ruin his enterprise. This was at the time Alfred Duncan (author of the memoir *The Wakatipians*) was stationed at the Head of the Lake at Bucklerburn, so he didn't know about it. Wilson related how not long after this he headed for the new goldfield at Tuapeka. When he heard later of the gold discovery at Arthurs Point, he reflected on how close he had been to a major find.



**Arrow River, August 1862:** The next person to make Rees aware of gold on his run was **Jack Tewa**. According to Duncan, Tewa turned up at the Bucklerburn early in 1861 with a companion, prospecting for gold. He then took up shearing and stayed afterwards as an employee of Rees. Rees later said that he was shown a sample of gold that Tewa had obtained from the Arrow River on his day off whilst he was living at the station hut at Lake Hayes. He is therefore acknowledged as the first known person to find gold in the Arrow River. However, he did not follow up his find and therefore was not the initiator of the goldrush. (For more about Jack Tewa, search the magazine index our website for 'Tewa'.)

**Cardrona, 9 November 1862:** The first find within our district that was **reported to the Goldfield Wardens** to be of a size that could suggest a goldfield and excite a rush was in the Cardrona. **Michael Grogan** filed a claim and submitted a report to the Warden Kendall at Dunstan on 15 November 1862 that on 9 November he and **James Mullins** were 10 miles up the Cardrona River (tracking the elusive Fox) and picked up 4 pennyweights of gold. They returned to camp, and after discussing the find with an experienced Californian miner, **Pat May**, they returned on 11 November with him and uncovered over 9 ounces in a short time. This report was printed in the *Otago Witness* on 21 November and the rush to Cardrona was under way. Cardrona proved to be a rich field, however it required capital to work much of the ground as the richest gold leads were mostly in what was termed the Deep Lead, whereas surface alluvial gold was patchy. The goldfield had a long life into the dredging era and then in the 1990s companies successfully reworked the ground with heavy machinery.

The discoveries of the goldfields of the Arrow and Shotover Rivers were subject to much more debate because they were not reported promptly to the Warden's Court nor were claims initially filed. This is unfortunate as the participants did not provide their stories until years, sometimes many years, after the events.

### **Arrow River: Spring 1862, but by whom?**

First was the Arrow discovery to which two parties laid claim: **William Fox** and **John O'Callaghan** (joined by William Melody, Richard Cotter and William Scoles), and the party of **Thomas Low** and **John McGregor** (with Peter Stewart, and James and William Christie.) Both parties had been at the Dunstan diggings (which had only been publicised in mid-August), but the profitable river sandbar claims on the Clutha were affected badly by the rising water levels that came with spring thaws. They left at similar times to try and find the source of the gold within the Kawarau or its tributaries, but took different paths.

**McGregor and Low's** party, well-capitalised and equipped, headed up the Clutha to Wilkins Station, crossing the river near present day Albert Town and proceeded up the Cardrona. (Thomas Low's brother William had travelled this way with Rees on his first expedition in the area.) They struck difficulties, being hit by heavy snowstorms when trying to cross the Crown Range. After the descent to the basin, the party came upon the station hut at Lake Hayes where Alfred Duncan was living. Here the party decided to split, McGregor and the Christies going to prospect the Shotover and visit Rees's

headquarters to obtain further supplies if possible, while Low and Stewart would try the Arrow. The groups would then return to Lake Hayes to compare prospects. We do not have an exact date for this, but it would be late September or the first week of October.

**Fox and O'Callaghan** took the direct route up the Kawarau. They struck trouble too, having great difficulty getting a horse down into the Nevis River, having to cut tracks and negotiate bluff country. They were the first to get a horse through the gorge but were stuck on the wrong side of the river. They were lucky to contact Alfred Duncan who informed them that the boat was at the bottom end of the lake with Rees, and that they would have to go to the stations located down there if they wanted provisions. Duncan recorded that there were three men, but this seems to be an error as both Fox's and O'Callaghan's accounts only refer to the other. The two then set off down the side of the lake, spending the night in a cave. On arrival at the end of the lake they found that they needed to continue to Nokomai to obtain supplies. They arrived there on 1 October, and on the next day Rees agreed to take 150lbs of provisions up the lake on his boat. The two prospectors travelled on the boat to Rees's station with Jack Tewa, arriving on 5 October. During the journey Tewa mentioned to Fox that he had found some gold in



Gold diggers out prospecting: Illustrated London News [London, 1863]

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Wood engraving. The terrain suggests the Wakatipu area.



the Arrow. Fox left on his own on the 6<sup>th</sup> for the Arrow. Alfred Duncan gives a version of these events in his book. The dates are very close, but his story indicates that Fox left for the Arrow before McGregor and Low. This cannot be so.

Back to **Low and Stewart** at the Arrow River. They had stopped at the beach below present-day Arrowtown and Peter Stewart started panning. While Stewart was prospecting, Low went to quench his thirst from a pool under small waterfall trickling down the hill. He dislodged a tussock and exposed a nugget of gold almost 3 ounces in weight. After he had shown it to Stewart, they decided to head into the gorge. They could see scattered along the 'slate' (schist) river bottom gold pieces looking as though they had been sown, and they picked up a goodly amount. They wandered up the valley finding gold everywhere. The pair returned to Lake Hayes to meet McGregor and the Christies who produced half an ounce of fine gold from the Shotover. When this was compared with the collection of gold lumps from the Arrow, they decided to go to the Arrow.

**Fox** in his account said he arrived at the Arrow on the afternoon of 6 October and spotted Stewart putting on his boots following a river crossing. He told Fox that he had only found a few colours – as one would! Then Fox prospected up the river getting payable gold. He claims he saw no evidence of others mining there. He returned to his partner O'Callaghan telling him of the great prospects of the river. At this stage William Melody and probably Richard Cotter must have been with them.

When Fox, O'Callaghan and party returned to the Arrow the next day, according to O'Callaghan they approached via Bush Creek and Sawpit Gully. This would indicate that Fox was aware of Low and party working the terraces at the lower end of the Gorge. They set up on the terraces near Sawpit Creek. The two parties agreed that they would endeavour to keep the find secret. They had arranged with Rees to provide provisions.

There are various accounts of these first days written without consultation with the participants. Fox wrote soon after the events. Low's account was some years later. Alfred Duncan gave an account in 1888 and again in 1911, in both of which he implies that Fox was first, however he does appear to have the number of men initially involved wrong. He also states that he visited Fox on Sunday 8 October, but he is mistaken. The 12<sup>th</sup> would make sense. These first two parties took out thousands of ounces of gold. When geologist Dr James Hector visited on 13 November about 40 men were working.

### **Who was first?**

Although Fox showed great leadership, was respected by the miners and held in high regard by most, the first discovery of the goldfield was without a doubt by Thomas Low and Peter Stewart. Rees publicly stated at his farewell that McGregor and Low's party were the first to find payable gold in the Arrow. Low is not specific in his dates but his account reads true. Further, Hassing, who was close neighbour to O'Callaghan for some years, also credited Low with beating Fox to the find. It is disappointing that Vincent Pyke, the Goldfields Commissioner, showed little interest in the Arrow, and in researching his history of the Otago Goldfields did not speak with the original parties.

**Shotover River:** This river was overlooked in favour of Arrow because the initial prospecting was done in the lower reaches where the gold was fine and not in obvious condensed rich patches. The amount of gold panned by McGregor and the Christies suggested that the river was auriferous but not outstanding.

**Fox and William Scoles** left the Arrow on 7 November on a prospecting trip heading over the saddle on Coronet Peak then down Long Gully to the Shotover. In two hours they panned 7 ounces. Then they headed up the Shotover, over the saddle into 12 Mile Creek, and down the Arrow, returning to their mates and showing them the gold they had found. But Fox and Scoles did not follow up on their discovery.

**Thomas Arthur and Harry Redfern started a massive rush.** They were engaged by Rees to begin work on 13 November 1862, but on their first Sunday off headed up the gully to what is now Arthurs Point to prospect in the Shotover. They quickly accumulated 4 ounces of gold with just a pannikin (dish) and butcher's knife. When they showed Rees their find, he outfitted them and allowed them to leave so that his shearing wasn't completely disrupted. The claim they pegged returned over 1000 ounces in a two-month period.

More miners rushed to the Arrow and Shotover where surface alluvial gold was easily recovered using hand tools and a simple cradle. The miners at Cardrona, where alluvial gold was limited, mainly moved on to the Arrow and Shotover.

#### **Conclusion:**

The first gold find in the Wakatipu district was that of Wilson and his associates in the Lower Shotover early in 1861. The second was Jack Tewa in the Arrow. Where he prospected is not clear, but we can conclude that he did not venture into the gorge for two reasons: it would have required wading and in winter the icy nature of the area would be discouraging, and secondly, from Low's description the lumps of gold upstream were there to be seen whereas Tewa had recovered only a small sample. 'He did not consider the prospect good enough', according to Alfred Duncan. Tewa's find had no influence on the designation of the goldfield.

None of the original Arrow and Shotover parties filed official claims. In October Fox went to the Dunstan to secretly sell about 50 ounces of gold for cash and supplies, but he did not report the find or take out a claim until 15 November, after Dr Hector's visit. Although Thomas Low was the undoubted discoverer, Fox was the man associated with the goldfield and the place was named Fox's after him. Just over 8 years after the event, Bendix Hallenstein along with other such Queenstown notables as Malaghan, Robertson, Boyes and McBride, organised a petition to the Otago Provincial Council asking that Fox be rewarded with either cash or a land grant for his contribution to the goldfield discoveries. There are eleven pages of signatures showing the esteem in which local people held him. The Provincial Council did not grant a reward.

For the discovery of the Shotover goldfield, credit goes to Thomas Arthur who promptly took out a claim, thus informing the Warden. Fox, on the other hand, although recovering sufficient gold further upstream to start a rush, sat on the information and never exploited it.

What became of all those original players? Well, those are other stories.



## **Brown Trout in Lake Hayes**

### **by Marion Borrell**

When the Society went on a field trip in October 2024 to some heritage sites around the lake, it became apparent that many locals didn't know the purpose of the stone building on the rock above the road (No, not a suitable location for a privy!) nor that commercial trout fishing took place here in the 1880s and 1890s.

#### **Introduction of Trout to the Arrow District**

In September 1874 a group of Arrowtown men including the Mayor Alexander Innes, Mr J.C. Jones and John and Peter Butel bought trout ova from the Dunedin Acclimatisation Society to raise at the Butels' reservoir at what is now Millbrook.

*The Arrow Observer* newspaper welcomed the development with parochial pride: 'Notwithstanding the repeated failures and large expense incurred by our Queenstown friends in attempting to introduce trout to their portion of the district, Arrowtown has the temerity to have a hand too. ... It is just possible that we may yet be in a position to present our neighbours with some real trout, thus saving them further expense and ill-fated efforts at piscatory acclimatisation.'

By November: 'The trout introduction experiment has successfully reached another stage. The bulk of the interesting young strangers have been turned adrift in Hayes Creek [now named Mill Creek] in two places – Miller's Flat and below the Falls - to begin life on their own account, and we wish them every success. Since our last notice, a suitable pond was constructed under Messrs Butels' mill-race into which a small number were put and now remain. A number (over 100) are still in the hatching-box. All are well and healthy and respond in a lively manner to the process of feeding. ... The introduction of trout into the Arrow district may be looked upon as *un fait accompli*.'

In May 1875 the newspaper described 'a beautiful trout about six inches long: 'It is a beautifully light silver colour, the characteristic scarlet spots are plainly shown, as the colour of trout is greatly influenced by the quality of the water. ... There is no doubt but this is the real river trout, *salmo fario*, the Bricein of the Highlands. The trout can easily be seen at any time in Messrs Butels' mill-race. They are 6 to 8 inches in length, and feed readily on raw meat.'

By March 1876 'The growth of these fish during 18 months is almost marvellous. It would seem that New Zealand is far more suitable than Home, and we may count on having, at no distant date, one more staple article of food to vary with the eternal beef and mutton.'

After the formation of the Lakes District Acclimatisation Society in 1879, young fry were released each year. The annual release into Lake Hayes was 16,000, and upstream at Millers Flat/ Wharehuanui another 16,000. Altogether in the Wakatipu-Wanaka area in 1896 238,8000 fry were released. The fish thrived remarkably - one in Lake Hayes was tagged as having grown 3½ pounds in one season. Fishing and netting licences provided the income to cover the costs of the hatchery and its staff.

One consequence of the introductions was that the native aquatic species were overwhelmed. Another, just as back in the Old Country, was **poaching**.

Magistrate's Court, Queenstown, August 1884

From the *Lake County Press*, Arrowtown

AT Queenstown on Monday last, A. Urquhart, of Hayes Lake, was charged with poaching trout from Hayes Creek. It appears that Urquhart had been watched by a Ranger from Tapanui named Birch on the day libelled, and was seen to land, with a "gaft," a trout. On perceiving the Ranger, Urquhart made off, throwing the gaft into a culvert, and on arriving at home Urquhart locked himself in his barn. The Ranger discovered the gaft, but could not get possession of the trout.

The accused denied everything, and the penalty inflicted by the Bench was L20, and L8 odd costs.

Whilst not desiring to in any way shield Urquhart from the law, we still take leave to say that such a penalty was out of all reason. The trout should certainly be protected at this season of the year, and those who poach should be punished; but in this case the circumstances are particularly hard. Urquhart is a steady, industrious, but very poor man.

If he were the only poacher, we might feel inclined to say that he deserved the punishment, but we know well enough that there are any number of poachers, and it does seem to us as though the Ranger thought Lake Hayes—as it is a small sheet of water—and Hayes Creek—which is easily accessible—about the easiest "hunting ground" whereon to earn the reward offered by the Society whose business it is to put down poaching.



There is too much likeness to the administration of the Game Laws of the Old Country in this case, and in fact in all the Acts which provide for the protection of fish and game, there is the true ring of class legislation that should never be permitted except where the poorer classes are very slaves. "The quality of mercy is not strained," and we take leave to hold the opinion that in inflicting a penalty upon anyone, a Magistrate should take into consideration his or their worldly position.

Until the streams and Lakes of this County are open to all—in the open season—to fish in poaching will go on, and we trust the day is not far distant, when a very great change will be made in the existing law.

### The White Family Netting Trout in Lake Hayes



L-R: Peter, George Sr, George Jr, either Ettie or Lizzie, James, the Greek fishmonger from Cromwell, Rachel and Barbie. Note the net piled in the foreground. (*Hart Photos, LDM E2324*)

This photograph was taken on 1 October 1897, the first day of the Whites' last netting season when the catch of 147 trout weighed 493 pounds when dressed.

From 1885 to 1897 George H. White (my great-grandfather) had the sole right to net in Lake Hayes, which cost £40 per year. George was a Shetlander born in 1834 whose father had been lost at sea leaving a wife and five young children when the fishing fleet went down in a storm. George was then brought up by an uncle and ran away to sea when aged about 12. He was a sailor until he deserted ship in Melbourne in 1853 to join the goldrush there. Later he came here seeking gold, and in 1870 bought land at Lake Hayes, across the road from the current showgrounds. Here he farmed and also put his nautical skills to use. He built two boats, the larger of which at 16ft had a full sail rig.

Fishing was the family's main livelihood. The nets would be set in the evening and taken up in the morning. The plentiful catch was gutted and then cold-smoked in the smokehouse. Some was exported to Tasmania. The boat was at times taken to Diamond Lake beyond Glenorchy and was transported by dray over the Crown Range to Lake Hawea.

### **The Whites' Fish Smoker 1889**



Drawing by Audrey Bascand, 1970  
in *Old Buildings of the Lakes District*

It was built by George Junior when he was 17, having learnt stonemasonry from his father. This was his first solo project and has stood the test of time.

It's about 4 metres high and used to have a wooden door on one side and more fish racks inside. From the base on the south side where a hole is visible, there was a long stone funnel down the slope to the firebox.

Please note that it is on private property so can't be visited.

Source: Family history especially Keith Grant



# **Queenstown & District Historical Society Incorporated**

## ***Our Heritage Today – For Tomorrow***

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