

Alex Miller obituary

OBITUARY

With sincere regret we record the death of our late President, Alexander Hugh Miller. Alex was a patient in Kew Hospital awaiting surgery when he died of a heart attack on 4 April 1990.

Alex was born in Arrowtown 74 years ago and spent his working life farming at Gibbston. He had a vast knowledge of the history of Gibbston and the Wakatipu Basin. This knowledge was put to good use in his membership of the society. A trip led by Alex was guaranteed to be informative and amusing as he had a rich fund of stories which were interesting and almost always had a funny twist in them. The last trip held only a short time before his death was organised and led by Alex. Those who went on the trip had a great day and appreciated the work and planning put in to ensure a successful outing.

Alex and his wife Charlotte took an active part in many local organisations. The Presbyterian Church, Garden Club, Elderly Citizens, Scottish Society, Travel Club, Lake County A & P Society were a few and Alex served on the Lake District Museum Committee as a representative of this society.

Alex made a significant contribution to the local community and will be missed particularly by this society. To Charlotte and the family we offer our sincere sympathy in their great loss.

To serve as a memorial to Alex the society has donated two books one each to the Arrowtown and Queenstown Libraries.

Effects of World War II on Queenstown - Memorial Essay

WILLIAM REES MEMORIAL PRIZE ESSAY

The prize for the William Rees Memorial Essay for the Wakatipu High School was won by Denise MacMillan. Her very fine essay follows :-

THE EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR II ON QUEENSTOWN - LOOKING AT BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE WAR PERIOD 1939-45

Queenstown Before the War

Queenstown during the 1930's was a small, 'quiet summer resort' of around 800 permanent residents.

Visitors to the area provided the main industry in Queenstown, however 'tourism' was on a much smaller scale than today, with skiing only beginning at a later stage. Most of the tourists were summer holidaymakers from the towns of Gore, Invercargill and Dunedin. Visitors from overseas were few.

Visitors came to Queenstown for the six, short weeks of the tourist season by travelling firstly on the Kingston flyer, then on the steam ships on Lake Wakatipu, such as the T.S.S. Earnslaw and the Mountaineer.

The docking of one of the boats at Queenstown was one of the town's main events, and everyone in the small community would turn out to meet the people arriving off it.

Other entertainment in the town during this period were the big dances held at Easter and on other public holidays, which were attended by young and old alike. The rugby games held on what is today the camping ground, and other sports events, also provided entertainment, as well as the traditional embroidery groups, card games, and musical concerts.

Jobs in the Queenstown area before the war ranged from those working for the Borough Council, on farms, mining, coach driving jobs on the trains and boats, and in shops and businesses in town. Work on the

road from Queenstown to Kingston was available during its building in 1935. Unemployment had declined since the Depression, however there was still some lack of jobs.

People's attitudes before the war appeared to reflect what was happening about them. Attitudes among European New Zealanders towards Britain were, after World War I, still strongly that New Zealand was a colony of Britain, the 'motherland'.

People appeared to dislike the communists, and perhaps naturally enough, the Germans. This was in evidence in Queenstown itself and was demonstrated when one of the Germans, Hallenstein, who had emigrated to Queenstown changed his name after World War I.

However, after having recovered from World War I the Depression struck. People appeared to be more concerned with dealing with their own problems and surviving during this difficult period and after, than in taking notice of such things as politics on the other side of the world.

Queenstown During the War

The War Effort

The advent of World War II was a 'terrific shock' to people living in Queenstown, New Zealand, and the world in general. People were unprepared for it. In London proclamations of 'peace for our time' having been achieved, had only recently been broadcasted. In 1938 there wasn't going to be a war.

In different parts of New Zealand the lack of young men 'left a hole in industry which resulted in the formation of 'land armies' of women to help in factories, on farms, and in the service industry. Both men and women were 'manpowered' into jobs where they were needed.

The absence of men due to the war and the consequent change in women's roles in the work-force, who had previously held more traditional responsibilities such as running households, was shown in Queenstown to a lesser extent than in other parts of New Zealand

by the need here for a women's division of the N.Z.F.U. (New Zealand Farmers Union) to help the running of the farms in the area.

Mrs Lel Luckie, of Queenstown, said that it was at this time she began to wear slacks for the first time.

The women's movement to help in the workforce while the young men were away was part of the larger war effort by all those left behind.

Patriotic feelings, encouraged by the Government with emotive pleas to aid the Allies in any possible way, ran high.

The young Queenstown men who volunteered to fight overseas (estimated at approximately 100) in the 23rd Battalion received large send-offs. The Queenstown Patriotic Committee raised funds to give the men gifts and welcome homes were held in the Garrison Hall for the men home on leave. Mr Wheatley, who owned the local drapers store, organised drives around the district in his car for the men on leave.

Patriotic propaganda was used by the New Zealand Government to 'fire' people up. Newspapers at the time, such as the 'Wakatip Mail', displayed advertisements urging people to invest in National Savings Bonds and Accounts for the good of the country, and the men fighting for the country.

Queenstown people did realise that they were being 'fed' propaganda, its aim was to get people 'fired up', and taught them to hate the enemy. Attitudes were effected by propaganda, to gain recruits for the army, or to invoke greater effort at home to produce more for the war effort.

It was used to keep patriotism and confidence alive. One Queenstown lady said "We never thought we could lose", another said "We knew there was the possibility we could lose, but we weren't going to".

In Queenstown there appeared to be few pacifists or conscientious objectors and the attitude towards them seemed to be that of understanding, after World War I.

The war was a time when everybody 'pulled together' and 'did their best'.

The skill and industry of the local people at sewing, knitting and cooking was put to good use by the Salvation Army, Children of Mary, Red Cross and other such organisations. Hours were spent in the preparation of food parcels for the 'boys' fighting overseas. Biscuits, tinned meat, jam and fruitcakes at Christmas were carefully soldered into tins, then sewed up in wholemeal flour bags to be sent to the Queenstown boys serving overseas. Gingernuts were especially favoured by the bakers, as they didn't require the use of precious butter in their baking, but could instead be made with lard.

These parcels were very important, as they were often all that a soldier would have for a long time.

Rationing

One of the biggest effects of the war on Queenstown and on New Zealand in general were the restrictions on, and rationing of, certain goods.

Petrol rationing began in 1939 and continued with only one short break until 1946, and then again 17 months later until May 1950. The effect on Queenstown was not great as ^{not} many people owned cars, however those that did found travelling even short distances difficult as from 1942 until 1945 only one coupon a month, with a value of 1 - 2 gallons of petrol, was issued per private car.

This inability to travel also caused what Col. Alex Robins described as what he noticed as the 'big difference' to Queenstown when he returned from the war. Petrol rationing slowed Queenstown's growth as a tourist destination rapidly during the war period, as people couldn't travel long distances. 'It had a big effect on quietening the town'.

Apparently Queenstown's development was also disabled by the 100 mile limit placed on travellers in the latter stages of the war, as people were being discouraged from using scarce petrol resources.

The "Wakatip Mail" printed notices, firstly asking people not to travel, and as the war progressed and petrol became scarcer, further emphasising this.

According to Mrs Luckie, people didn't travel anyway, as they felt they were using somebody elses petrol if they travelled.

On April 27, 1942 Emergency Rationing Restrictions were introduced, and, although there had been shortages of goods prior to this, the first ration books in New Zealand were issued.

Many products were rationed which effected all of New Zealand. Silk stockings were no longer being imported in 1940, and women had to be content with wearing old mended stockings - wool, cotton or other material ones, or, for the more bold, none at all, although this was not widely accepted.

The war effort included massive exports of meat and butter to Britain which, while depleting the amounts available to New Zealanders, didn't cause resentment. "We shall be helping the people of Britain with tens of thousands of tons of additional meat, and our own boys stationed in Britain and fed in Britain, and also those fed from Britain' we are equal partners with Britain in this war and we must do our part," - Minister of Supply.

Imported goods such as sugar, tea, blankets and fine wools, such as those used for baby clothes and knitting, were rationed also, as often it would be extremely difficult for them to reach New Zealand due to German targeting of supply ships.

Other food products such as chocolate and sweets became less and less available as they contained sugar.

Clothing coupons, as were tea and sugar coupons, had to be cut from the ration books.

The factory emergency regulations of 1939 introduced austerity clothing, under which no ruffles or frills were allowed. Strict guidelines had to be followed in the making of garments.

Mrs Luckie described one incident with rationed clothing that she experienced when she was in the Girls Sports Club in Queenstown. They had planned to travel to Winton for a tournament, despite the difficulties of travelling, however having overcome this they were unable to get uniforms. The girls instead made their own uniforms from tea towel material, which was not rationed, and so travelled to the tournament.

Queenstown was not as effected by the shortages of eggs and fresh produce as some areas of the country due to its ability to grow its own vegetables, and managed to continue as well as it always had. Nobody resented the sacrifice of certain luxuries as it was for the war effort, and they felt the suffering of the people in Britain was much worse.

It appears that most people managed well with the shortages although it was recognised that a lot of people had a 'hard job' of it, especially those living alone. However in Queenstown people pulled together and helped each other, such as giving surplus coupons to a neighbour in need.

Despite the rationing the town always managed to put on good suppers for the soldiers who returned on leave, which "made it all wonderful".

The Home Front

Another aspect of the war effort was the formation of a Home Front in Queenstown.

The Home Guard was composed of those older or injured men, and ones in occupations necessary to the war effort at home. In Queenstown a Guard was formed of approximately 20-30 men, who were trained by soldiers and practised marching regularly.

A women's complement to the Home Guard was also formed, a branch of the national Women's War Service Auxiliary, which also met and drilled once a week, with mock parades in what is now the Mall. Next to the police station was a dugout, in which was carried out practices for air raids. The Voluntary Aid Detachment prepared with

a survey how many spare rooms each house in Queenstown had, for future refugees, and courses in such things as first aid.

Such preparation was carried out very seriously, although Queenstown people felt there wasn't much threat to New Zealand, even after Japan entered the war.

Other parts of New Zealand did feel threatened. At one stage during the war, Archfields Girls School from Dunedin was sent to stay in Queenstown as they were thought to be safer there than near the coast.

However, in general Queenstown people appeared much more concerned about the threat to their men fighting overseas than the threat to themselves.

Queenstown After the War

In the final stages of the war the 1st Echelon of soldiers returned home. The tourism industry in Queenstown was once again affected by the war. On their return the men, and their wives, received discouraged travel passes throughout New Zealand. Tourism in Queenstown "took off" as an estimated half of the visitors were returned servicemen and their wives, mainly from the North Island. Queenstown was no longer a "quiet little village" and has continued to grow from that point onwards.

Ever with the war over it continued to leave its mark with the rationing of some goods continuing for some years to come, such as tea which halted in 1948, and petrol rationing lasting until 1950.

Moke Creek - Free Lance Journal

MOKE CREEK

The following article has been taken from the Free Lance of June 1049. At this time Moke Creek and Seffertown were still occupied as the story tells.

THE TWO CITIZENS OF MOKE CREEK

Lying to the west of the fabulous Shotover River in Central Otago, and to the east of the upper end of Lake Wakatipu, are the rugged ramparts of the Richardson Mountains, rising sheer to 8,000 ft. Deep, forbidding, beech-covered valleys form great cleavages amongst the peaks, and rushing streams drain their flanks and summits of perpetual snow. It is a hostile hard country, testing the endurance of men; but the lure of gold has enticed many a miner to pit his puny strength against these formidable fastnesses which no roads penetrated or tracks entered.

Such a place was Moke Creek. Situated on the fringe of the Richardson Mountains, at the junction of that stream with the Moonlight Creek which flows into the turbulent Shotover, this township was six miles from Moke Lake on the west side of Ben Lomond, and five miles from Arthur's Point. Gold was found there in 1863 by a miner named Moke, who washed up 36oz. of the metal the first day and 36lb. on the second. At the peak of the ensuing rush there were 3,000 miners in the settlement and surrounding gullies.

Served by a hastily-constructed track over the 4,500ft. Ben Lomond saddle, all material had originally to be carried in on men's backs, by pack horses, or sledges for about 14 miles from the then scarcely formed village of Queenstown. In the Moke Creek township and district were stores and about 20 shanties serving as hotels and a school which in 1881 had up to 25 pupils.

Wealth in Thousands

As an indication of the wealth taken out in gold, one miner known as "MaDee Joe" washed up \$250 worth in two days, and John Kapatze, a

Tartar Greek, extracted £3,000 from his claim in one of the biggest strikes of the area. Another party for four in six weeks earned £2,500 between them; as claims were then, because of their richness restricted to 10 square feet, their gold content may be readily conceived.

Going in from Arthurs Point, the visitor passes through well-grown plantations of willows and poplars, with the Shotover River emerging from a sheer-walled gorge on the right. After a mile of steady ascent he leaves the trees behind and reaches steep, tussock-covered slopes, with great outcrops of rock, and only here and there an isolated clump of trees indicating some miner's early dwelling. Finally, after a long, bare climb a ridge is crossed, a corner turned and the track drops steeply into the Moke Creek Valley.

Suddenly, on rounding a turn on the track, there is seen half-a-mile ahead a quarter-mile square of great poplars sheltering within them an area of lush grass, with all that is left of the buildings of the one-time thriving settlement in their midst. Now just a collection of several wooden houses, they were the first to be built of timber there, the material being brought in over 80 years ago, piece by piece over the precipitous Ben Lomond saddle.

The timber is red beech rafted down Lake Wakatipu from Glenorchy to Queenstown, and it is to-day as sound as when it was erected. The largest building is 50ft. long by 15ft. wide.

Here still remains two of the old-timers - veteran Johnnie Seffer, of Russian parentage, born and educated at the Creek; and John B. Ross, born and educated at Frankton, near Queenstown, and who has spent most of his life from boyhood at the Moke. So strong is the lure of the hills within them that, despite their trials and vicissitudes, these warriors have never felt the lasting urge to leave, and are perfectly content to spend the remainder of their days amidst the scenes they have so long known and loved.

Johnnie Seffer is now 65, and is still wonderfully active and alert. One of a family of ten, all reared at Moke Creek, he is by way of

being a philosopher, a lover of Nature, and a visionary. In broken English he will tell how more than once he has had Divine manifestations that gold was to be had in certain localities, even in a claim given up as useless, and how he has always struck it rich through the revelations of his dreams. His memory for past dates and people he has met is prodigious, and there is nothing he likes better than to narrate the details of their activities from the beginning of the settlement.

He is the proud owner of over 60 tame goats to which he is inordinately attached. In commemoration of various Russian notables and Russian places and events, he, full of patriotism, has given their names to many of his pets. There are others on which he has conferred more commonplace and less unpronounceable titles such as "Threepenny Billy," because of its diminutive size. The goats are the friendliest of animals, coming confidently about the house and even inside to be hand-fed with tit-bits, bread being their particular weakness. They are timid of strangers, however. Some of the "billies" have fine beards and spreading horns, and display a mottled range of colours from black and white to chocolate and grays.

Just for Pets

On the track in from Arthur's Point are notices, "Visitors please don't shoot tame goats," but at least once these injunctions have been ignored and a large number killed. Neither Johnnie Seffer nor John Ross uses the milk for drinking-purposes; the goats are kept as pets alone, and condensed milk is drunk.

Once a week, winter and summer, Johnnie rides out to Queenstown for provisions, making the 10-mile trip each way in a few hours. In winter the track is often under snow, but this leaves him undaunted, as do the blizzards which beset the high hills, or heavy frosts that made treacherous the going. From 1903 he was postmaster at Moke Creek, retaining that position until the office closed in 1916.

He was also librarian for a very fine library which was started about 1864 and used by the miners until the settlement was abandoned after 1916. Many of the books are there yet, handsome leather-bound

editions of classical authors of the past. There to-day one can read all Dickens's works, and those of other literary giants such as Lord Lytton, Dr. Johnston and Thackeray. All the famous poets have their places on the shelves, there are two complete editions of Chambers's Encyclopaedia and Journal, a set of Official Year Books from 1896 to 1913, the writings of Anthony Trollope, Aldous and Professor Thomas Henry Huxley, and a host of other treasures.

Worthwhile Books

Looking through some of these, the "New Zealand Free Lance" found one book on mathematical problems published in 1898, and in the 600-odd books remaining in the library there may be earlier issues still. The miners of the 'sixties must have been discriminating and avid readers, for in the whole collection there are not more than a dozen light love stories and only a few fiction magazines, most of them now out of print and long forgotten. The library is seen by few, and is used as a storeroom for a heterogeneous collection of lumber ranging from saddles and old clothes to bits of furniture, empty tea-cannisters, an ancient clock or two - and the dust of ages.

It is strange to come across such a valuable assortment of books in such an out of the way place as Moke Creek, and it seems a pity that some use is not made of them. Yet perhaps it is as well that a misguided section of the public has not easy access to them. There was a similar library at Skippers from which tourists just helped themselves until practically no volumes were left.

Johnnie Seffer's contemporary, John Ross, is, like his companion, active and alert for his 74 years; he, too, is full of early mining reminiscences, for mining has been his occupation during his lifetime. Though now retired, he still finds plenty to do - firwood to cut and gather, feeding his dogs, of which he has eight or nine, and helping his mate with getting in hay for the winter. Sometimes when tucker is getting low, he will don gum-boots and walk to Queenstown and back in a day, coming home with a sugar bag fully loaded with provisions. They bring them up tough in the hills.

Like Johnnie Seffer, John Ross is a philosopher, and he is proficient in English grammar and speech. But his masterpiece is spelling, and no word from "desiccated" to "phthisis" can stump him. It is a favourite pastime of his to trip visitors with "jaw-breakers" as he calls them, and he derives much quiet pleasure in so doing.

Dictionary Useless

When the "New Zealand Free Lance" came through the test successfully the interrogator seemed quite disappointed. Asked if he ever referred to a dictionary he replied: "I used to at one time, but lately I found it was no use to me, so I threw it away!"

With pride he added: "I'm willing to pit myself against any professor of the English language." Perhaps he has gained his knowledge from the library, but at any rate he is a hard man to catch out.

Comprising the total population of Moke Creek to-day these two old-timers spend their days in the peace and harmony of the hills, and they get on exceedingly well with each other. We found Johnnie Seffer busily engaged dressing with an adze a poplar post, and John Ross in one of the paddocks turning hay to be used as winter feed for the two horses and the goats.

At present they are thinking of installing electric light - kerosene lamps and candles are all they have ever had - for there is plenty of water-power, and they have a special hut for a pelton-wheel. There is no wireless; apparently they are satisfied with verbal news brought in with the supply of papers once a week by Johnnie, who, however, keeps up-to-date with Russian affairs, for he gets regularly a paper from the land of his parents' birth.

Johnnie Seffer and John Ross are of the old school, contented with their humble lot in Nature's stronghold, scorning to-day's artificialities and enjoying the only life for which they are fitted - the one-time postmaster with his goats, and the adventuring miner with his dogs and his English proclivities.

Hotels list for Lakes District

HOTELS

At the height of the gold rush hotels and grog shops sprang up like mushrooms and for a short period a very large number were operating. Even when the fly-by-night ones had departed the area was still well catered for and Licensing Records for the late 1880's show the following :-

Queenstown

Richardts
Mountaineer
McBrides (now Wicked Willies)
Supreme Court

Queenstown District

Junction, Arthurs Point
Sportmen's Arms (now Packers Arms)
Antrim Arms, Frankton Road

Greenstone District

Glenorchy Hotel, Glenorchy
Earnslaw Hotel, Glenorchy
Alpine Club Hotel, Glenorchy
Phoenix Hotel, Bullendale
Otago Hotel, Skippers Point
Reefer's Arms, Maori Point
Welcome Home Hotel, Long Gully
Kinloch Hotel, Kinloch.

In addition two wholesale licenses were operating one in Queenstown in the name of M.J. Malaghan and the other in the Greenstone District in the name of Jules Bordeau who was the carrier to Skippers.

Nokomai Hydraulic Sluicing

-16-

NOKOMAI HYDRAULIC SLUICING CO.

The following is an extract from a letter from Ron Gordon of Mosgie late of Thurby Domain, who was brought up in Garston and had a personal knowledge of the gold mining scheme and the Chinese who maintained the long race used to bring in water :-

"About two years ago at a meeting I stated that Wong Chock Wing the last survivor of the Chinese on the goldfields had died in Dunedin recently.

I have now discovered that a Mr Choie at Outram aged 94 worked for three years on the nozzle for the Nokomai Hydraulic Sluicing Company.

I have visited Mr Choie and it was hard going as he has a very limited grasp of English, in fact he was the poorest hand at English I have struck among them.

He came to New Zealand in 1920 but after the severe winter of 1923 he went home to China.

He later returned to New Zealand, but this time he took to gardening at Outram and has been there ever since.

He must surely be the last of the Chinese on the goldfields.

I am wondering if he was related to Choie Shang who also worked for Nokomai Hydraulic and who was walking out to catch the train en route to China when he collapsed and died on the top of the Nokomai saddle."

Macetown Directory

1874

In 1874 Macetown was a busy town and the centre of much mining. At the same time too Arrowtown was still based on mining and was a thriving town. The extracts from the directory of the time make interesting reading.

MACETOWN DIRECTORY

Batteries for quartz-crushing - Macetown Quartz-crushing Company, Limited (legal manager, L.H. Preston), 10 head of stamper; Tipperary G.M. Company, Limited, 10 head, manager A. Resta; Homeward Bound Company Limited 10 head; Maryborough Company, 10 head, manager, Mr. Watkins; New All Nations Company, 5 head, manager F. Harvey.

Ditchers - W.T. Smith, W. Jenkins

Hotels - Alpine, - Dyson; Welcome, E. Elliott

Mining Companies - Homeward Bound, G.M. Company, legal manager, F.F. Watson, Dunedin; Lady Payne G.M. Company, J.F. Healey, manager; Treasure G.M. Company, J.F. Watson, legal manager; Gladstone G.M. Company, R. and A.J. Park, managers, Dunedin; Tipperary G.M. Company F.F. Watson, legal manager; Tipperary No. 1 South, L.H. Preston, legal manager; Victor Emanuel Company, L.H. Preston, legal manager; All Nations Company, R. Park, legal manager; Defiance Company, A. Hamilton, legal manager, Dunedin; Premier Company, J.F. Watson, legal manager, Dunedin; Maryborough Company, M. Pym, legal manager, Dunedin; Mountain Maid G.M. Company, legal manager J.F. Healey; United G.M. Company, legal manager, R. Park; Garibaldi G.M. Company, legal manager, R. Park.

Postmaster - H. Needham

Schoolmaster - H. Needham

Streckekeepers - W.T. Smith, W. Jenkins, R. Pritchard

Telephonist - H. Needham

ARROWTOWN DIRECTORY

- Arrow District Hospital - President, J. Barlow; treasurer, J.K. Paton; secretary J.F. Healey; medical officer, Dr C.L. Webb
- Arrow Cadets - Captain, Edsall Gruber; lieutenant, T. Patchett strength of company, 52.
- Arrow Rifles - Captain, William Jenkins; lieutenant, J.F. Healey strength of corps, including Macetown contingent, 70.
- Arrow Brass Band -
- Athenaeum - President, H.B. Smith; secretary, A. Mackay
- Bakers - Romans and Heller, W. Jenkins
- Bank of New Zealand - John Barlow, agent
- Blacksmiths - E. de la Perelle, W. Butler
- Bootmakers - H. Fielding, James Gray
- Butchers - R. Campbell, Romans and Heller, W. Jenkins
- Bookseller and Stationer - E. Gruber
- Carpenters - Wilson Boyd, E. Foord, G. Tucker
- Carters - Henderson and Jopp, J. Baker, C. Ross, S. Oldfield
- Certificated Accountant in Bankruptcy - James F. Healey
- Chemist - Edsall Gruber
- Clergymen - Church of England, Rev. D.C. Hampton (church office W. Jenkins); Presbyterian, Rev. D. Ross; Catholic, Rev. Father Mackay
- Dairyman - J. Reid
- Drapers - R. Pritchard, H. Graham, W.T. Smith, Carswell and Mahood, W. Jenkins
- Dressmakers - W. Jenkins, Misses Wittlesens
- Fishmonger - C. Hay
- Goldsmith and Watchmaker - Begbie
- Hotels - Temperance, J. Begbie; New Orleans, John O'Kane; Ballarat, Mrs Bond; Royal Oak, T. Patchett; Lake Hayes, John Roche; Wedderburn, Joe Howard
- Mining Agents - L.H. Preston, James F. Healey, H.B. Smith
- Masonic Lodge (Arrow Kilwinning) - R.W.M., C.W. Bremer; secretary Dr C.L. Webb; treasurer, L.H. Preston
- Newspaper - Lake County Press, published every Friday, J.T.M. Hornsby, proprietor
- Police Officer in charge - Sergeant Brown
- Postmaster and Telegraphist - J. Delany