

The Queenstown Courier

The Official Publication of the
Queenstown & District Historical Society

Forty-seventh Issue - November 1991

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Annual subscription \$6.00. Couriers included in subscription.

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All correspondence and accounts should be addressed to the Society's
permanent address - PO Box 132, Queenstown

Queenstown & District Historical Society (Inc) *Annual Report for the Year Ended* *30 September 1991*

Presented to Annual General Meeting held on 30 October 1991

As George Griffiths told us at the 20th Annual Conference of the NZ Federation of Historical Societies, history was not "more or less bunk, according to the late Henry Ford", but that it is vigorous, relevant and useful; that it belongs as much to today and tomorrow as yesterday. We can thank George Griffiths for this reassurance, and I believe that our Society is performing an important function in this area which is acceptable to the academic as well as the non-academic historian, in the role of teaching, learning, researching and preserving a little of our history.

But sadly, people also pass on, and it is with sincere regret that we record the deaths of eight members; Mrs J Carpenter (Dunedin), Mr Eric Salter (Queenstown), Mr Leslie Lewis (Queenstown), Dr D U Strang (Arrowtown), Mrs Dorothy Davies (Queenstown), Mr Robert Hood (Kelvin Heights), Mrs Jean Craigie (Arrowtown) and Mrs Ann Malaghan (a Life Member from Auckland). We extend to each of their families our sympathy.

Membership:

Total membership has increased during the year to around 230, with 29 new members, but to offset this there have been 16 resignations and deaths. This increase is indeed gratifying and reflects the policy of your committee to attract interest in the society, particularly from new residents and younger people in Queenstown.

Field Trips:

Field trips are opportunities for members and the general public to meet and to learn something of an important historical area. Three such trips were held during the summer period: Morven Hills Station - Lindis Valley (3 December '90); Mavora Lakes, Von Valley and Whites Cottage, returning on the TSS Earnslaw (25 February '91); and Clyde, including a visit to the Kawarau Gorge Mining Centre (14 April). All these expeditions were very well supported, indicating their popularity, but the invaluable commentaries

by Allan De La Mare, Raymond Clarkson, Peter Edgerton (Kawarau Mining Centre) and Max Snow (Morven Hills Station) and others must be acknowledged.

20th Annual Conference of the NZ Federation of Historical Societies:

We had the honour of organising and hosting this conference on 22-24 March, which attracted seventy-eight delegates and observers from Auckland to Wyndham. It was encouraging also to have so many of our own members attending some or all functions. Highlights included the Key-note address by George Griffiths, Michael Deaker's after-dinner speech, the 'London Bus' excursion to Arrowtown and the walk and inspection of historic buildings and sites in central Queenstown. At the AGM Mr Raymond Clarkson was elected to the Federation Executive, representing our Society.

Mid-Winter Function:

Seventy-three members attended a mid-winter luncheon at Sherwood Manor on 20 June. The guest speaker was Mr Jim Colman, facilitator of the town centre study, who entertained and provided some interesting thoughts on development whilst retaining historical values. By the interest shown in this function it could well become an annual event.

Projects:

Perhaps the most significant project for the year was the placement of a bronze plaque in the Queenstown Gardens, commemorating the early Maori people of this area and the legendary swim across the lake by Haki Te Kura. An unveiling ceremony was held on Sunday 10 March, with representatives of the Maori people from Invercargill and Dunedin. Again a very well attended function which concluded with afternoon tea at the Bowling Club. This project was in fact our contribution to the 1990 Sesquicentennial celebrations.

Members will no doubt have noticed the renovated Garden Gates; our financial contribution of \$220 covered this work.

The WG Rees Memorial prizes to the Wakatipu and James Hargest High Schools were again presented for essays on historical research in the Queenstown area.

And finally the mounting of the Turkish Field Gun at Arrowtown has been completed.

Historical Research:

It is interesting that several organisations and individuals have requested, from our Society, information on historical events, sites and buildings. It is gratifying that we are indeed recognised as a resource group and I believe it is appropriate that we continue to research and supply historical information.

Finance:

The generosity of members who have made donations for various projects must be acknowledged, as this certainly helps to keep our membership subscription at such a low level. Our appreciation must also be recorded for the grants from Trustbank Southland (\$500), the NZ Lottery Board for the Sesquicentennial project (\$1,200) and the Hillary Commission for the Federation Conference (\$250).

The Williams Cottage: Williams Cottage

Little has happened since the last AGM except that all the historic buildings contained in this block were under scrutiny by the Town Centre Study Facilitator and we still await the consultant's plans which will emerge from that study. Two recent planning applications for development adjacent to the McNeil Cottage and the Lake Lodge of Ophir have been declined as the District Planning Committee considered, under the Resource Management Act 1991, the effect of the proposed buildings on the environment to be major. However, \$700 is still being held for the Williams Cottage from a special Trustbank Southland Grant.

Finally I wish to record my appreciation to members of the Society for the support given to each function or activity during the year and to all office bearers for their time and good judgement to achieve a worthwhile and notable year.

Signed: **Duncan Wilson**

Queenstown and District Historical Society
Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Year
Ended 30 September 1991

1990	Receipts	1991
146	Bank Balance Fwd	2215.02
1157	Subscriptions	1249.50
670	Donations	158.00
300	Grant from Trustbank	500.00
45	Art Society for PO Box	45.00
32	Sales of Couriers	48.00
1072	Trips	3546.00
189	Interest	283.89
700	Special Grant - Trustbank	0.00
0	Lottery Grants Board - 1990	1200.00
0	Hillary Commission - Conf.	250.00
0	Conference	5715.00
<hr/>		<hr/>
\$4311		\$15 210.41

1990	Payments	1991
67	Subscriptions	94.50
40	Donations - Gates	220.00
47	Advertising	0.00
97	Printing and Stationery	7.92
35	Room Hire	16.00
18	Insurance	0.00
90	Post Office Box	90.00
441	Couriers & Postage	521.75
1025	Trips	3 269.00
80	Rees Memorial Prize	80.00
0	1990 Plaque	1 443.12
0	Drill Wheels	200.00
0	Travel - R Clarkson	250.00
156	Sundry	21.50
0	Conference	5 500.36
2 215	Bank Balance Closing	3 496.26
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\$4 311		\$15 210.41

Bank Balances at 30 September 1991

Current Account	3 496.26
Term Deposit	1 200.00
	<hr/>
	\$4 696.26

Auditor's Statement

I have examined the financial records of the Society which in my opinion have been properly kept. I have obtained the information and explanations I required. In my opinion the financial statements presented above give a true and fair view of the financial activities of the Queenstown and District Historical Society for the year ended 30 September 1991.

Signed: **D G Warrington B.Com ACA**

Queenstown Borough Council's Hydro-Electricity Supply

The following account from the Otago Daily Times describes the inauguration of the hydro scheme at The One Mile in 1924. The scheme served the town until after the war, having been taken over by the Otago Electric Power Board in 1945.

QUEENSTOWN, September 18 1924

When the history of the Queen City of the Lakes comes to be written up September 18, 1924, will be chronicled as the reddest of red-letter days, because it signalled the inauguration of an up-to-date hydro-electric scheme in that highly popular tourist centre. As far back as 32 years ago, when very much less was known of the benefits and advantages of electricity than is now the case, the matter of introducing electric light into Queenstown was seriously discussed by the then borough council, but owing to the estimated cost of such a scheme being considered beyond the means of the town at that time it was decided to hold over the project till a future date. Had there been a seer among them he would in all probability have been held up to scorn had he predicted that not until the year 1924 AD would Queenstown have an electric installation. On several occasions since that early period has the project been in the air, and various sources of power have from time to time been investigated. Brewery Creek, Kawarau Falls, Wye Creek, and Lake Dispute have all in turn been reported on, pigeon-holed and eventually abandoned because of their unsuitability from an engineering standpoint, or impracticability from the financial aspect.

In 1910 the borough determined to have something better at any rate than kerosene and candles, and an acetylene gas plant was installed. For a few years subsequent to this the electric lighting scheme dropped out of sight, and in June, 1922, the said gas plant blew up. It must not be supposed however, that this paved the way for the more up-to-date lighting system. That was already under way, a loan of £7000 having been sanctioned by the ratepayers some months previously. In due course the money was secured from the Public Trust Office, and then matters commenced to move. The plant was ordered and the preliminary work undertaken. This has been proceeding since February, at first on the building of the dam and pipe line, and latterly on the reticulation of the town, the erection of the powerhouse,

and finally the setting up of the power plant.

Today saw the culmination of the works of these many months, and the consummation of the ideal cherished by our more progressive citizens. It was also the realisation of the dream of our worthy chief citizen, Mr Andrew Simson, to whose zeal, energy, patience and persistence is largely due the fact that Queenstown today boasts a thoroughly effective and modern hydro-electric installation.

For the past few days the power-house staff has been working at high pressure so as to be in readiness for this day of days, and though there yet remains a good deal to be finished off, it is not such as will affect the actual running of the plant. The ceremonies were timed to commence at 3 o'clock. Glorious weather prevailed, and a large number of visitors, including many men who are interested in the development of hydro-electric works in Otago and Southland, was present. The proceedings commenced with a fancy dress procession, which marched from the post office, and after going round the block followed the main trail to the power-house. From a spectacular point of view it was a brilliant success, many gaily decorated cars and lorries and a clever burlesque of topical subjects and movements, such as the Kawarau Gold Mining Company and the Burberry Patent rabbit trap having much prominence. Large numbers of the residents, including the school children, appeared in fancy costumes covering the period from the cave man to the extravagances of the present day. A band - the remnants of a long defunct organisation was specially assembled for the occasion, and its presence was a very welcome and gratifying feature of the afternoon. The fire brigade and other organisations were also represented.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

On the arrival of the procession and the general public at the power house the Mayor said he would address the assemblage very briefly, as the main speechmaking would take place at the evening function. He expressed his pleasure at seeing such a great company of people present on an occasion that would be looked back upon as a most auspicious day in the history of Queenstown. They had long been in darkness, but all that was now changed, and he felt sure they would not look back.

MOST UP-TO-DATE PLANT IN THE DOMINION.

The Mayor then asked Mr Aldridge (electrical engineer) to address the children on the dangers that were associated with the touching of live wires or with any interference with insulators, etc. Mr Aldridge also addressed a few words of caution and warning to the grown-ups, who were possibly not

aware of certain hidden dangers in the matter of electricity. Referring briefly to the plant, Mr Aldridge said that although it was a small one it was the most up-to-date in New Zealand and as modern a one as existed in the southern hemisphere. It was manufactured by one of the leading electrical firms in the world, and came from America. The Pelton wheel was imported from England, and another small part from Switzerland.

SOUTHLAND BOARD'S CONGRATULATIONS.

Mr A Le Hoyles (Invercargill) said it gave him great pleasure to have the honour of officially representing the Southland Electric Power Board. He regretted it had not been possible for more members of the board to be present on such a great occasion. The keystone of the afternoon's ceremony was in progress. There was an immutable law of Nature that nothing could stand still, whether it be a nation, a community or an individual. The hydro-electric schemes inaugurated that day afforded ample proof of the progress Queenstown was making. The young children of this age would look back in 40 or 50 years on what was being achieved today, and make their comparisons just as we today regarded with wonder the marvels of wireless, flying machines, and many other discoveries in the realms of science. He (Mr Le Hoyles) took it that electricity was going to be a great power throughout New Zealand, and was going to revolutionise residence in the backblocks. The conditions of life would be much more comfortable and enjoyable than they were before electricity came to their aid. His only regret was that the Southland scheme was not completed and the Queenstown one was, but he believed that their greater undertaking would prove its correspondingly greater utility. Progress was Southland's watchword as well as Queenstown's. In conclusion, he wished to express the great pleasure it gave him and the members of the Power Board in offering their congratulations to the Mayor, the council, and the residents on their hydro-electric scheme, which they wished every success.

INSPECTION OF THE MACHINERY.

The large gathering then adjourned to the Lake shore for afternoon tea, which was dispensed by the ladies of the town. An interesting half hour was subsequently spent amongst the maze of machinery by many of those who attended the ceremony, while the knights of the camera were kept busily employed snapping the proceedings at their various stages throughout the afternoon.

Among those visitors present were Messrs M.C. Henderson (Dunedin city electrical engineer), J. B. Shacklock (chairman of the Dunedin Electric

Power and Lighting Committee), A. Le Hoyles (representing the Southland Electric Power Board), W. Black (Mayor of Alexandra and chairman of the Otago Central Power Board), A. Ashworth (also a member of the Central Otago Board), James Ritchie (chairman of the Vincent County Council), D. Middleton and George Reid (representing the Vincent and Lake County Councils respectively), Jones and Longton Jones (representatives of Turnbull and Jones, Dunedin), and Eastgate (manager of the National Electrical and Engineering Company, Ltd., Dunedin).

COST OF THE UNDERTAKING.

The work has been carried out under the supervision of Mr A. P. Aldridge (electrical engineer, Dunedin) and his assistant Mr Collins. The dam and pipe work were constructed by the Borough Council under the able supervision of Mr T. Byrne. The cost of the scheme will run into nearly £9000. The council was limited to £7700 in the first instance, but the expense has exceeded this amount, entailing the raising of an additional loan.

TURNING ON THE LIGHT.

The ceremony of turning on the street lights was performed by the Mayoress (Mrs Simson) at 7 o'clock, and Dr Anderson shortly addressed a large assemblage which was present, expressing the thanks of the citizens to the Mayor and councillors, and the various contractors and workmen. The celebrations will be continued this evening. There will be a social gathering and speechmaking, followed by a dance.

A PICTURESQUE SETTING.

The power-house is most picturesquely situated on the right-hand bank of the One-mile Creek, some chains up from its outlet into Lake Wakatipu. It nestles well into the bush that clothes the upper reaches of the stream, and stands right at the foot of the steep incline which gives the pipe line a fine fall from the dam. The view obtained looking down stream is truly most arresting. In the background is the Remarkables Range piercing the sky in its stately beauty, and charming the eye with its varying lights and shades. Set at the foot is the lake, sparkling in the sunshine like a priceless jewel. In the foreground is a winding road following the stream through the bush and shrubbery which give out the fragrant sweetness of manuka, beech, and wild fuchsias. At the rear of the building the creek comes down over crag and rock in a series of waterfalls canopied over with spreading beech and other graceful native trees. The prospect on every hand indeed is one that inspires and brings to mind the words of Job: "Stand still and consider the

wondrous work of God.”

THE PLANT DESCRIBED.

The building, which measures 18ft by 12ft, houses a plant which is the most up-to-date of its kind in the dominion. It is automatic in practically every respect, and embodies some remarkable protective features. The machinery can be set in motion, controlled, or shut down without the aid of an attendant or mechanic. This does not mean that the plant will require no attention at any time. It means that in the event of faults occurring they will automatically cause certain mechanisms to operate which will in due course rectify the fault, relieve the trouble, or shut down the plant till attention has been given it. As soon as this is done the machinery will operate again automatically. The Pelton wheel, which was supplied by Messrs Beving and Co., England, has a maximum output of 115 b.h.p. It is coupled to a 75 k.v.a. 3 plant, 50 cycle generator (3300 volts), manufactured by the General Electric Company, U.S.A.

The governor controlling the water power is another wonderful piece of machinery, one of the features of which is to eliminate all waste of water and conserve the supply against the contingencies of a dry period. With the exception of the Pelton wheel the whole of the power house equipment was supplied by the National Electric Lighting Company through its New Zealand agents. The town reticulation, which has been under way for many weeks past, has been carried out by Messrs Turnbull and Jones (Dunedin), under the supervision of Mr J. Tonkin. Two hundred ironbark poles and approximately 20 miles of copper cable have been used in this department. An arrangement was also made with the Post and Telegraph Department to use some of its poles for carrying the transmission lines. Power to the extent of 3300 volts is first conducted to the two sub-stations in the town, there to be transformed and distributed at the rate of 230 volts for lighting purposes and 400 for power. The street lighting is under separate control. The two three-phase time switches responsible for this can be set to any given time by means of a clock which controls the street-lighting hours.

The dam is situated in a narrow gorge in One Mile Creek, 500ft above the lake level. It is built of reinforced concrete, the concrete and gravel for which had to be packed on horseback from the town. The structure is of the arch intake type, and its foundations are embedded 18 ft into the rock, while its sides find their strength in the rocky ramparts which wall in the creek at this point. The height of the dam on the up-stream end is 44ft 6in, and its

storage capacity is 1,000,000 gallons. The diameter of the inlet pipe is 2ft, reducing to 13in as it leaves the dam. This gradually reduces to 9in when it reaches the power station. The pipe line, which is 2400ft in length and carries 230lb to the square inch of pressure, is trestled down the bed of the creek for some distance, and then branches off the eastern side. A branch pipe conducts the water down to the lower dam, which controls the town service supply.

The wiring-up of business places and private houses has been going for some months past, but as there are many connections yet to be made, it is not possible to give an estimate of the number of consumers that will be linked up with the system. The engineer estimates that there will be ample power available for such household purposes as cooking, heating, etc. The local council has not yet made any announcement regarding the cost per unit of light and power, but these will be definitely fixed within the next few days.

Mr Horace Tomkies (Queenstown) has been appointed by the council to run the plant.

The Bullendale Ambulance

The following well researched account of the Bullendale Ambulance was written by Owen Genty-Nott - Officer in Charge of the Queenstown St John Ambulance Service. We are grateful for his approval to reprint it in this issue.

The Skippers-Frankton Hospital Ambulance

From the start of goldmining in the Wakatipu region, miners had to carry the sick and injured to the nearest accessible road for onward horse-drawn transport to either Frankton or Arrow Hospitals.

From the Upper Shotover area this meant a major undertaking involving at least 40 men and horses, carrying the victim in a litter to the nearest road. From the press of the time, "The work attached to it was sufficient to make the strongest of men tremble when carrying the stretcher". Those who have driven the Skippers Road of recent years will know that it remains virtually as it was in those days, albeit somewhat narrower then and more deeply rutted. The tracks which led off to the many camps that flourished in the area would have been pack-tracks at best, at a steepness that would cause today's bungy-jumper to hesitate.

Early in 1883 a Mr Fred Evans, described as a "mining manager of Skippers", decided that something should be done to improve the lot of the sick and injured, so he set about to design a special waggon suitable for the narrow tracks, and sought public donations to fund the building of it.

To date no photo or sketch has been located but it is recorded that it was three feet wide (to suit the narrow four foot wide tracks), adapted to being pulled by a single horse (in shafts), and with an undercarriage which could be quickly detached so that the bed portion could be carried manually. Adjustments could be made to raise and lower the patient's head to keep the body level over any terrain.

"The whole unit being light, strong and able to be carried by one man

(empty), and having a powerful (sic) brake and detachable awning to protect the patient." Construction was handled by The American Carriage Factory of Dee Street, Invercargill and the Lake Wakatipu Mail of 16th March 1883 described the finished product as:- "a very handsome and useful affair, that not a man would hesitate to give a trifle towards the cost, as it may well be the means of saving hundreds of pounds to the public who have been in the habit of shouldering the old stretcher."

An earlier report indicated that during the previous twenty years (from 1862) the lowest average annual cost to bring one man to Frankton Hospital was £50.0.0! Another correspondent of the time described it as, "something very beautiful, like a waggonette with nice light flexible springs, four light, strong wheels and covered all over with a moveable tilt which could be taken off at a moment's notice." This unit was first driven by its designer, Mr Fred Evans, then Manager of The Phoenix Mine, in May 1883 to Fisher's Store and was the first time Mr Evans had attempted to drive a wheeled conveyance on the Shotover Tracks.

Mr Evans reported in the Lake Wakatipu Mail as follows:

"I selected one of my staunch, slow horses, but after leaving Queenstown at 9am and getting to Arthur's Point, I began to wish I had selected a faster beast, as the predicted possibility of my 'funeral furniture' vanished the further I got on the road, and as I am usually considered a fast rider, I found that driving, after all was likely to be faster of the two. However I found on taking the track from Miller's Flat main road, that it took an unusual amount of driving and very little time was allowed for admiring the country below, but before I got to the top of the Saddle, all fear departed and I drove along as if on ordinary roads, with the exception that a good lookout had to be kept for big loose stones which are taken little notice of by one on horseback. Having reached the Zig Zag, Mr T Richards took the handles behind and I went down the hill just as easy, and more so, as a loaded pack horse would and finally reached my destination, Butcher's Point at 3.30pm, just about my usual time of riding that distance. Considering the novelty of the thing, with the many stoppages for persons to have a look, I think I made good time."

Fred Evans continues his report which has been reprinted by the Wakatipu District Historical Society, who together with the manager of the Lakes

District Museum I wish to thank for their help in compiling this article.
“As to the utility of the ambulance (barring the Zig Zag), I am satisfied that two men and one horse can take a patient from The Reefs to the Hospital with great comfort to the patient and little labour (beyond the walking) to the attendants, and I do not think any improvement can be made to it. (Mr Aldridge made no alteration to it). I intend to advise the addition of a spring, or air mattress to it, either of which will make the thing complete.”

“I am, Etc., Fred Evans.

Skippers, May 22. 1883.”

(Published in the Lake Wakatipu Mail, 24th May 1883)

To start off the funding of the district's first ambulance, the Hospital Committee allocated £25.0.0 and the locals rallied to raise a further £29.13.6. As the total cost came to £45.0.0 it was decided to use the balance “for a strong set of drawing harness”.

On 6th July 1883 the Lake Wakatipu Mail reported: “Mr Fisher, one of our most respected storekeepers allotted a stall to house the ambulance which would be floored, be central, and ready at a moment's notice. Any body of miners would be proud of it and although some had complained that the wheels were too high or some other thing wasn't right, it was noticeable that their names were absent from the published list of subscribers.” Two days later a correspondent to the Lake Wakatipu Mail complained that the Council were not servicing the Upper Shotover Tracks and one prominent gentleman (councillor) who said they were “in good condition” was challenged to “risk his neck repeating the Jehu-like feat (sic) of managing to convey a sick person from this place to the Hospital!”

On Sunday 10th February 1884, the first patient, a Mr James Stephenson, was carried by the new Skippers-Frankton Hospital Ambulance to Frankton. (Reported in the Lake Wakatipu Mail of 15 February 1884.) “Driven by Mr Sainsbury with his own mare in the shafts and assisted by Messrs J Griffiths, J Jones, J Copley, R Stephenson and the author. Mr Thomas Sainsbury deserved great credit for the way in which he piloted us over some of the very roughest pieces of road in the province.”

Now are we wimps or what? “Great comfort to the patient”! “Little

labour”! Two to six attendants walking on those tracks in all weathers, for six hours or more and then having to walk back home again! Prior to the advent of the Ambulance it took two days from Skippers to Frankton with the patient carried in relays by teams of miners on foot. (Hence the cost as mentioned earlier.)

As a footnote, early records from the Frankton Hospital relate: “391 miners used the Hospital between September 1863 and March 1864. 227 Indoor and 164 Outdoor(!) Cured 203, Deaths 7, Cost £1,917.0.0. Average daily patients 15.” Either their maths were not so good in those days or 181 patients wandered off “not cured”?