

# *The Queenstown Courier*

The Official Publication of the  
Queenstown & District Historical Society

Forty-Ninth Issue - November 1992

## Officers of the Society

<b>President:</b>	Mr R J Clarkson 36 Lake Avenue, Frankton	442-3681
<b>Vice President:</b>	Mr G McIntyre 17 Brisbane Street, Queenstown	442-9251
<b>Immediate Past President:</b>	Mr D Wilson 56 Panorama Terrace, Queenstown	442-7385
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Back numbers of Couriers available.

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

## *Queenstown and District Historical Society (Inc).* Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 Sept. 1992

As residents of Queenstown and the surrounding district we have much to be grateful for. Not just for the environment and the physical attractions, but for the history of the area and the people who have recorded the important and interesting events. We are reminded of Herries Beattie and his writings of the Maori people, of W. G. Rees and Alfred Duncan, of the two local blacksmiths Bridge and Black, who named 'The Camp' Queenstown in 1893. We also think of the gold miners, European and Chinese, the business men like Bendix Hallenstein, Francis St Omer who planted so many trees on a bare landscape, of McConnochie the nurseryman and Philip Boulton the County Clerk who planted the Sequoias outside the Court House. We are in fact indebted to a great number of writers and historians over the years to the present time, with Alan De La Mare and others keeping up this tradition. We are indebted also to Clive Geary who is now interviewing and recording on tape, interviews with older local identities. The question we might ask 'who are the historians?' the answer is quite simple, we are the historians if we only take a little time to record anything that may be of interest in a few years time, and this of course can easily be done through our own publication 'The Queenstown Courier'. I therefore suggest that you might give consideration to contributing an article, whether only a few lines or an essay covering several pages, and in time it could become an important record.

### Obituaries:

We sadly record the passing of five members during the year. They were Mr Don Ritchie of Queenstown, Mr Eric Williams of Wanaka, Mr Cedric Benzoni of Cromwell, Mr Doug Scott of Rees Valley Station, and Mr Roger Sew Hoy of Arrow Junction. We extend to each of their families our sympathy.

### Membership:

It is with pleasure that we record a significant increase in membership to 246. This is due to the enrolment of 30 new members, but being offset by 11 resignations and 5 deaths, the nett increase is 14. However it should be realized that a membership in most cases represents a family or couple, which in actual terms we have an individual membership in excess of 400 and this makes our Society one of the largest in the country.

### Field Trips:

The popularity of our field trips to areas of historical interest appears to be

increasing as the numbers attending indicate. This year four trips were held during the summer period:

- Speargrass Flat and district on 1 December 1991 (96)
  - Fairlight and Nokomai area on 24 February 1992 (119)
  - Rees Valley and Arcadia on 22 March 1992 (97)
  - Brackens Gully, Crown Terrace and Glencoe Station on 27 April 1992 (54).
- The latter excursion was somewhat of an experiment, which involved quite a physical trek up the steep sided gorge of Newchums Gully to reach the Brackens Gully gold mining site. Not only the younger members tackled this trip, which indicates that a similar outing should be arranged in the future.

#### **Mid-Winter Luncheon:**

This year's function was delayed until 20 September, but a very successful day resulted in Arrowtown with a conducted tour and commentary at the reconstructed Chinese Village by Mr Nick Clark of the Department of Conservation, followed by a Chinese luncheon at the Arrowtown Hall with Dr James Ng of Dunedin, who spoke on the Chinese of the Queenstown area. Dr. Ng's knowledge and enthusiasm on the subject provided a delightful talk, while Mr Bob O'Connor of Queenstown provided an interesting display of Chinese artifacts.

#### **The Williams Cottage:**

We have for many years taken an interest in this 126 year old cottage for its historical significance in down-town Queenstown, and have made various submission for its restoration. The latest development is that the present owners now intend to sell the property. On notice of this, we have submitted to the Queenstown Lakes District Council that they should acquire the property so that restoration work could proceed. Financial and other contributions could come from various sources, including our own Society.

#### **W G Rees Memorial Prizes:**

The annual prizes for essays on historical research in the Queenstown area were again presented to the Wakatipu and James Hargest High Schools. The winner of the Wakatipu prize was Brigette Waibel, whose outstanding essay was reproduced, unfortunately, without photographs and sketches, in the 48th issue of the Courier.

#### **Projects:**

With the partial removal of the piles which identified the location of the old Frankton Wharf, which was constructed around 1863, your committee decided

been marked, presumably by his bank, the property was put up again when Turton's bid of £1,102 was successful.

When the Achilles Gold Mine's Bullendale operations ceased in 1901, the workers faced a bleak future with no employment and the need to leave their homes. They decided to make a bid to take the mine over on tribute. They made their offer through Cotter, the local storekeeper, who had an interest in seeing the mine continued to operate. Their bid was for £2,000 but it was declined by Turton who indicated £5,000 was the minimum which would be accepted. As this was beyond the means of the miners, the closure of the mine and the loss of their jobs had to be accepted.

By far the most important case in which Turton was involved was that of Eager v Grace in 1872. Eager who had a rich claim at Pleasant Creek Terrace on the western Shotover mined by tunnelling, discovered his neighbour Grace had been extracting gold from his claim for a year or more. No one knew how much gold had been stolen but Eager sued in the Wardens Court for £12,000 damages, an enormous sum. Eager called evidence of miners and experts to show the value of equivalent ground to substantiate his claim. It was also revealed Grace's bank accounts showed over £8,000 had been lodged in nine months.

The Warden and Assessors gave judgement for £8,124. Grace appealed the decision commencing a long legal battle which went to the Supreme Court on three occasions and finally the Court of Appeal. The final decision was that the original judgement should stand. At this point the parties tired of the litigation and cost involved came to an arrangement whereby Grace paid £4,000 in full settlement. The case had cost thousands of pounds in legal fees and one of the chief beneficiaries was Turton who throughout had represented Grace.

Shortly after this case was settled Turton built a large home on Frankton Road which incorporated the latest in appointments and was the most lavish home in the district. All rooms had marble fireplaces, while hot and cold water was delivered to all bedrooms from porcelain lion masks. The bathroom was huge and included a Turkish bath cabinet. The house was named Hawkeshead but the locals nicknamed it Grace's Folly as a permanent reminder of Grace's

contribution to Turton's wealth. The building was demolished in 1972.

Turton practised from a wooden building on the south side of the Mall about the present position of H & J Smiths. The building still remains though extended, as a holiday home in Stanley Street beside Horne Creek.

Turton also owned property in Arrowtown. One of these situated close to the Royal Oak, described in the rate records as a wooden office, was probably used by Turton on a regular basis to deal with local clients. He also owned at different times, a house in Darby Street, a shop in Buckingham Street and the Stone Cottage. One of his tenants was Charlie Eichardt, who features in one of the delightful stories in *Child of the Arrow* by Josephine Trail.

Turton was buried in Queenstown cemetery, his resting place marked by a simple stone.

1991	Payments	1992
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95	Subscriptions	109.50
220	Donations - Gates	.00
0	Advertising	.00
8	Printing & Stationery	64.87
16	Room Hire	20.00
0	Insurance	.00
90	Post Office Box	105.00
522	Couriers & Postage	621.85
3269	Trips	3397.12
80	Rees Memorial Prize	80.00
1443	1990 Plaque	-150.00
200	Drill Wheels	.00
250	Travel - R. Clarkson	250.00
22	Sundry	1.50
5500	Conference	.00
4696	Bank Balances Closing	6685.64
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16411		11185.48

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 1992.



D.G. Warrington B.Com ACA

### *Wesley Turton*

Wesley Turton practised law in Queenstown from 1870 until his death in 1922. Because of the nature of his profession and the size of the town he must have known more about the people and carried more secrets than any other person in the area.

Turton was born in New Zealand in 1847, the third son of the Rev. Henry Hansen Turton. Henry Turton was an early missionary who later entered the public service as Resident Magistrate and Gold Fields Warden in the Coromandel. In 1864 he served as a member of the House of Representatives for the New Plymouth electorate.

Wesley Turton lived with his parents until early manhood and took part in the Maori Wars. He read for law and on completing his examinations, practiced on the Thames Goldfields with his brother Hansen. In 1870 he came to Queenstown where he remained practising law until a few days before his death on 17 October 1922.

Turton was said to be a reserved man, who admitted few into his intimate confidence. He was described as of sound judgement, keen perception and rare intellect.

Soon after his arrival in Queenstown, Turton married Annette Elizabeth Swanson and there were six children of the marriage. At the time of his death those surviving were:

- Redmond Hansen, a solicitor of Greymouth. Redmond Turton born in Queenstown in 1876, died in Greymouth in May 1934. He graduated LLB from Otago University in 1900, practising law in several locations, including Queenstown where he joined his father during the dredging boom. In 1907 he was appointed a magistrate, the youngest ever appointed at that date. Relinquishing his magistracy when the war broke out, he enlisted and served in Gallipoli and France with the 12th Otago Mounted Rifles. He returned to private practise on his return from war service.
- Mrs Norman Halcombe who had spent many years in Great Britain and was then living in New Plymouth with Mrs Turton.

- Mrs Geoffrey Eaton-Turner of Great Britain who previously lived in the Andes, South America.
- Mrs Lewis Devendish-Meares of Mullingar, County Meath, Ireland.

Two sons predeceased Wesley Turton. They were:

- Gerald, who died in the Phillipines in 1904. Strangely, Turton first learned of his son's death through Lodge Golden Gate, an American Masonic Lodge.
- Douglas Kirk who died in Havelock North in 1921.

Turton was solicitor for both the Queenstown Borough Council and the Lake County Council. He was also Crown Prosecutor. Although other solicitors practised in Queenstown from time to time, Turton by virtue of his long residence and experience was looked upon as the doyen of his profession and received most of the work. This must have presented him with the need to walk a fine line at times, particularly when he represented a client before the two local authorities. Probably because of possible conflict of interest, Turton does not appear to have played any part in public affairs. His only known involvement was on the Wakatipu Hospital Committee in 1884.

Turton's work covered every aspect of Law, ranging from the trivial, to matters of importance. Brief details of some of his cases illustrate this:

In 1874 a Chinaman, Ah Ting, sued one named Pasco for £150 for eviction, conversion of a building and improvements and loss of tools. Ah Tong, who appears to have been a professional carver and is responsible for the carved eagle lectern in St Peter's Church, had lost his tenancy of premises in Beach Street owned by Pasco. How they occupied the time is not stated but the report on the case indicates it took six days. Finn and a top Dunedin solicitor Barton represented Ah Tong, while Turton represented Pasco. The Court found for Pasco with costs.

In 1887 Turton prosecuted in the case against P B Boulton, clerk to the Lake County Council, for the theft of over £1,000. Though the two, if not friends, must have known each other extremely well, because of his position it fell to

Turton to prosecute. Boulton was convicted and given a five year gaol sentence.

The Boulton case was a serious one, monopolizing gossip and conversation in the town for a long period. But sometimes in a small community little things blow out of proportion and take over the headlines.

Such was the case *Smith v Fischer*, heard by Judge Broad and a jury of four in 1887. Mr Soloman, a top Dunedin solicitor appeared for the plaintiff and Turton for the defendant. The plaintiff, a solicitor, was one of the applicants for the position of secretary of the Wakatipu Hospital Committee. Although only a part time job with a salary on £25 per annum, it was looked upon as a prestigious position and was sought after. Fischer, the manager of the Bank of New Zealand, and secretary to the committee omitted to bring the application before the committee. Smith sued for £100 damages, but indicated he was more interested in establishing that he had been seriously disadvantaged by Fischer's shortcomings. The Court took him at his word, finding for Smith and awarding a farthing in damages. It was a fitting end to a quarrel between friends which had got out of hand.

The title deeds of the Masonic Lodge property on the waterfront brought Turton into conflict with the Lodge. The Lodge was constituted under the English Constitution with the title deeds lodged for safe custody with Turton, who was also a member of the Lodge. At a later date a New Zealand Constitution was established which the local Lodge joined. However, when the Lodge sought the title deeds to hand over to the N Z Grand Lodge, Turton refused to do so indicating he would be held personally liable to the English Grand Lodge if he handed over the title deeds without proper authority. The matter was finally resolved by the Lodge taking the question to the Supreme Court. The Lodge was forced into overdraft to meet the high cost of settling the issue.

Turton acted as solicitor and agent for a number of overseas companies engaged in gold mining locally. In 1895, to satisfy unpaid liens for wages, the property of the Premier Consolidated mine of Macetown was put up for auction. There were three bidders, H. B. Smith for the workers, W. J. Farrell and Turton acting for Glenroch Consolidated Company the owners of the premier mine. Farrell's bid of £1,500 was successful but as his cheque had not

that it was appropriate to permanently mark this site with a bronze plaque attached to a prominent boulder. The plaque (at present being made) will read "*This is the site of the Frankton Wharf constructed to serve the shipping system on Lake Wakatipu and the surrounding district, circa 1863-1942*".

#### **District Planning Application:**

When applications are made for commercial development of historic sites or areas, again your committee have submitted opinions from an historical point-of-view. Members will have noticed the development of the McNeil cottage on Church Street, and I think you will agree that the result is quite pleasing, compared with the original design of building applied for. Other issues on which submissions were made include the Town Centre Plan, the Bullendale Mine site in the Mt Aurum recreational reserve, and Scheme Change 86 controlling the height of commercial buildings on the foreshore areas.

#### **Historical Research:**

This area of service to the community and to people from other centres appears to be appreciated. There is no doubt that our Society is well recognised as the appropriate source for matters on historical research, and again we are fortunate to have a good number of amateur historians who are well able to do this work.

#### **Finance:**

We acknowledge the generosity of members, and the grants made each year by the Trust Bank Southland Community Trust, which provide funds for specified projects. However you will notice that the Society's finances are in good shape, and this gives us confidence to plan better things in the coming year.

Finally I wish to record my appreciation to all members of our Society who have supported the various organised functions, to the committee who have performed well in giving their time, their knowledge and experience to achieve the aims that are expected of our Society, and to Raymond Clarkson, Vice-President and our representative on the N Z Federation of Historical Societies, for his significant contribution.

I hope you will all agree that this has been a notable year.

*Duncan B Wilson*  
President

**Queenstown & District Historical Society**

Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Year ended 30 September 1992

1991 -----	Receipts -----	1992 -----
3415	Bank Balances Fwd	4696.26
1250	Subscriptions	1369.90
158	Donations	68.50
500	Grant from Trustbank	500.00
45	Art Society for P.O. Box	52.50
48	Sales of Couriers	4.00
3546	Trips	4222.00
284	Interest	272.32
0	Special Grant - Trustbank	.00
1200	Lottery Grants Board - 1990	.00
250	Hillary Commission - Conf.	.00
5715	Conference	.00
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16411		11185.48

Bank Balances @ 30 Sep 1992

Current Account	3423.14
Term Deposit	3262.50
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	6685.64

**South Canterbury Historical Society (Inc)**

***Federation of Historical Societies (Inc) Conference  
Timaru - 26 - 28 March 1993***

As the next conference of the Federation of Historical Societies is to be held in Timaru, it is easier and less costly for anyone interested to attend.

<b>The cost is:</b>	\$
Registration Fee, which included Friday supper, Saturday morning tea and lunch	25.00
Conference Dinner (optional)	25.00
Luncheon Sunday (optional)	10.00
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	<u>\$60.00</u>

Registrations addressed as follows must be made before 12 February 1993

Historical Societies Conference  
C/- Timaru District Council  
P O Box 522  
Timaru

**Programme  
Theme - "Transport"**

<b>Friday</b>	2.00-5.00pm	Registrations, South Canterbury Museum
	4.00-6.00pm	Federation Executive Meeting, Grosvenor Hotel
	7.30pm	Official Opening - with supper to follow South Canterbury Museum - Guest Speaker: