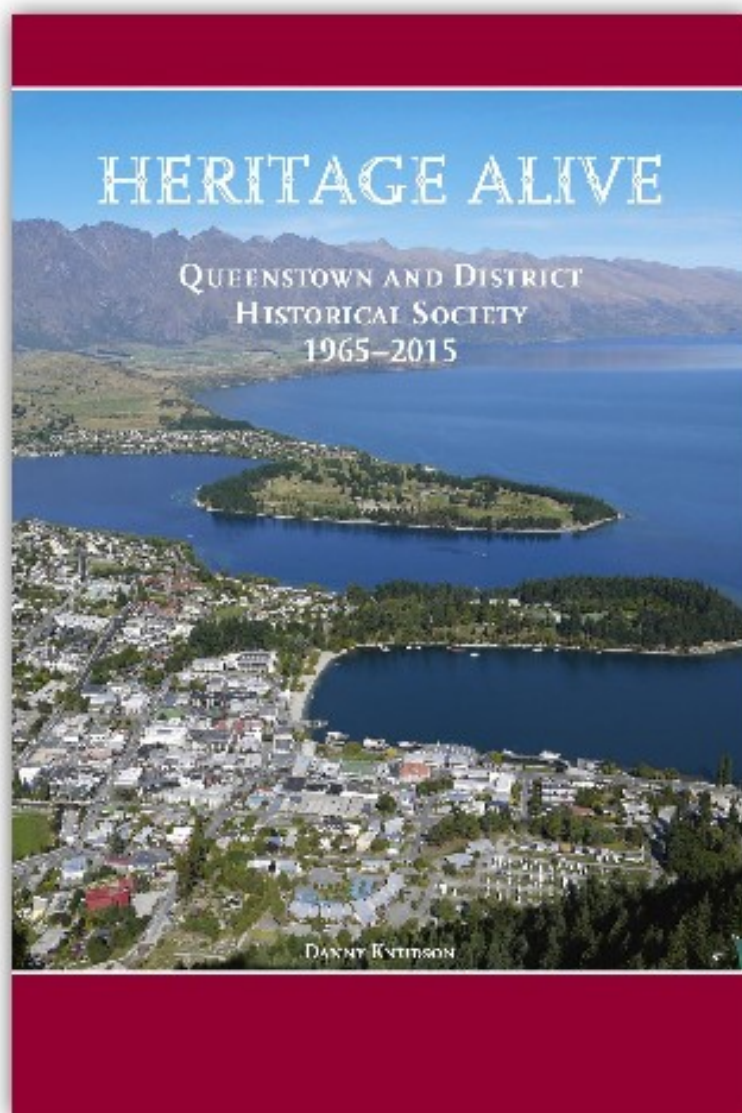


THE QUEENSTOWN COURIER

WINTER 2015

Issue No.93



**Book Celebrates Fifty Years of the
Queenstown and District Historical Society**

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE QUEENSTOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Queenstown Courier 93: Fifty-Year Anniversary Edition

As the cover shows, this is a special edition consisting of the 150-page book, *Heritage Alive: Queenstown and District Historical Society 1965-2015*, written by Danny Knudson, and designed and printed by Print Central. Also we have this short magazine containing the next six months of articles about the 2015 Calendar.

In 1965 a group of feisty citizens joined forces to oppose threats to historic buildings in the Wakatipu District. Numbers grew and influence too. Over the following 50 years, the Society has protected, promoted and celebrated our rich past, keeping heritage alive for the future.

This lively history of a vibrant society commemorates the voluntary efforts of the Society's many members, through successes and setbacks, always sustained by activities, trips and events which explored and shared our local history.

We are greatly indebted to Danny for undertaking to write the history, which he has done very thoroughly and thoughtfully, by reading minute books, contacting many past presidents, locating the 120 photos, and taking the photos which grace the opening pages. The result is a worthy and handsome book which we hope you'll find both enjoyable and inspiring.

Marion Borrell (Editor)



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BACKGROUND TO THE 2015 CALENDAR, THEN AND NOW

July-December – From Talks Given at the Launch

July: View of Lake Wakatipu by Marianne North, 1880

By Marion Borrell

One cloudy summer morning in 1880 a fifty-year-old English visitor had an early breakfast and set off alone for a walk. So far so normal. Except that she was carrying her easel, folding stool, paints and probably a packed lunch. She found a spot amongst the boulders, tussock, speargrass, flax and coprosmas, and this is what came of it – a celebration of our clouds, mountains, lake and plants. She painted for hours, accompanied by bellbirds and tui visiting the flax flowers. Afterwards she wrote in her diary that she'd become quite cold with sitting so long in the wind, and afterwards she went for a brisk walk around the lakeshore to warm up. While here she also painted the view from Pigeon Island towards Mt Earnslaw, as well as detailed botanical paintings.



*Copyright The Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic
Gardens, Kew, London*

She was Marianne North, born in 1830 into a family of landowners and politicians. She was provided with a series of governesses whom she argued, so she was sent to a school but was considered unteachable – nowadays we'd call her stropky. After that she taught herself by extensive reading in the family library, and through the extensive journeys her family took on the Continent. She also studied and grew plants and specialised in botanical painting.

Her mother, shortly before her death, asked Marianne to promise never to leave her father, and it seems that she was happy to oblige. He was an MP and a sociable person with many influential friends in London, so Marianne came to know distinguished people including Charles Darwin. She regularly visited Kew Gardens where the director, Joseph Hooker, sparked her enthusiasm for exotic species. She and her father kept travelling, including to Egypt, Palestine, Syria and so on.

After her father's death, Marianne, then aged 40, became a compulsive traveller, botanist and artist. Over the next 24 years she travelled throughout the world, made hundreds of paintings, and has some plant species named after her. She went into jungles and up mountains. She was unstoppable. At Charles Darwin's suggestion, she came to Australia, then came over here.

So that her paintings could be kept together, Marianne paid for a fine new building at Kew Gardens to house them. Kew Gardens has given us permission to reproduce the painting free of charge.

To return to this scene. The only evidence of human influence is on the peninsula. The trees are much taller than the native shrub-land around, and are obviously planted in rows. We can detect the route of Park Street past the Gardens gates and the main walk through the gardens and out towards the point. These are the beginnings of the Queenstown Gardens which were planted from 1867 onwards, so the trees here are 10-12 years old.



Marianne North

Sources:

Recollections of a Happy Life, Marianne North, Macmillan & Co, 1992, and Marianne North's diaries accessed via Google

August: Ferry Hotel, Lower Shotover, about 1900

From the talk given by Kevin and Glenys Reynolds, proprietors of Ferry B&B

The history of the Ferry Hotel goes back to 1862, the early gold-rush days, when a punt was used to cross the Shotover River downstream from the present road bridge. The ferryman, Frederick Foster, built a hotel on the eastern side for the benefit of his customers and named it Halfway House Hotel. It has had many different owners and publicans through the years and several changes of name. The Hocken Library has provided us with a list of publicans from 1867, but it's hard to know for certain who was an owner and who was a publican.



Ferry hotel in 1900 Lakes District Museum EL0084

David Blair, who was a ferryman, acquired 300 acres of land and what we believe to be the Halfway House Hotel on Christmas Eve 1867 and changed the name to Blair's Hotel. In 1872 the hotel was burnt down but quickly replaced. The next change of ownership occurred in 1873 when a J. Limerick was listed as the publican. The rapid turnover of owners was a recurring theme for the hotel through to the 1970s. We have counted 26 different owners/ publicans since 1867.

The hotel was relocated to its present site in Spence Road in 1915 when the second bridge at Lower Shotover was opened. The hotel was cut in half and shifted from Old School Road, some say by a traction engine.



Ferry hotel in current location, 1930 LDM EL0776

The hotel ceased to trade in 1971. After that various different people lived in it, including, we understand, the workers building the present curving concrete bridge who had their own resident chef.

We have operated our B-and-B for since 1996, becoming possibly the longest occupiers in 151 years. We have hosted people from all over the world, and all love the ambience of the old building.

For the Millennium in 2000 we had our best booking when a group of people from Australia, the UK, USA and New Zealand booked us out for two weeks for a reunion. They gave us a photo of themselves as hippies when they lived here. Today they are viticulturists, veterinarians, school teachers and other occupations.

We have been proud to be the custodians of the Ferry hotel. We have investigated the history of the building, something that had never been done before. We have also looked after it, installing a new roof, heat pumps and radiators. We have pressurised the water, and refurbished coal range, all to keep the old hotel going for a few more years.

We have enjoyed our eighteen years here, but it's time now for somebody else to sit on the verandah enjoying a glass of rum and coke and watching the sun set.

September: Lakes District Hospitals, Frankton

By Ralph Hanan

Our long-serving hospital at Frankton has an interesting history. It was constructed initially in 1863, as shown in the small photo.

Thousands of miners flocked to the district from 1862, in search of gold in the Arrow, Shotover, and other rivers of the district. Life was tough in this remote, unfamiliar and unforgiving landscape. Gold-mining itself was a dangerous pursuit. Besides



The first Lakes District Hospital LDM EL0262

accidents, and the inevitable fights among men competing for claims to the precious metal, there were pervasive illnesses, including scurvy, pleurisy, pneumonia, diphtheria, typhoid, dysentery, and frostbite.

The historical documents pay particular attention to scurvy. There were hundreds of cases in the district. Miners lived for months on a diet exclusively of mutton, bacon, tea and damper. Fresh vegetables and potatoes were generally unavailable, and their

importance as a source of the essential C vitamin was not well recognised. In addition, many miners suffered from rheumatism due to the long periods they spent in the icy river waters.

In December 1862, six months after the gold rush began, a young doctor, James Douglas, arrived in the area. Born in Larnackshire, Scotland, and educated in Glasgow, he was only 26 at the time. He practised medicine in a tent alongside the Arrow River for several months. It soon became self-evident that better medical services and facilities were essential.

And so, in July 1863, a hospital was built at Frankton, a central location in the district. In its first six months, the hospital was incredibly busy. It served 227 in-patients and 164 out-patients. There were only seven deaths during this time - not bad, considering that antiseptics were unknown in those times and disinfectants were not readily available. The average number of daily patients was 15.

It is interesting how our first hospital was funded. A local advocacy committee raised money from various local sources, for example each of the three banks in the area donated £10. In one week, £700 was collected. With the Otago Provincial Council contributing £2 for every £1 collected, the committee soon had the necessary £3,000.

We can't help but reflect on the resourcefulness of these pioneers, as today we struggle to have more aged care beds in our Lakes District hospital and we bemoan the absence of a comprehensive retirement home in the Wakatipu!

Dr Douglas was appointed superintendent of the hospital in 1864 and served in that capacity for 46 years. He was prominent in local public affairs, being president of most charitable organisations in the district, including the Jockey Club and the Acclimatisation Society for over 50 years.



The Second Lakes District Hospital, 1898 LDM EL2667

He was respected for his dedication and compassionate approach to his patients, also for his sense of humour. Before the construction of bridges, he often crossed rivers on horseback to reach his patients. On being called out to assist a woman in labour, he sat beside her and said, reassuringly, “My good woman, I did not get you into this fix, but I will do my best to get you out of it!” Dr. Douglas retired from the hospital in 1910 and died a year later, never having married.

Back in December 1894 the hospital was completely destroyed by a night-time fire. As well as the original hospital, the fire razed a recent two-storey addition and the doctor’s residence, leaving only 6 or 7 chimneys where the hospital had been. The 10 patients not only escaped, but made themselves useful. The *Lake Wakatip Mail* reporter commented: *Great praise is due to the inmates who all did their best, and the abler ones worked splendidly, and managed ... to get out a large quantity of goods.* This included the doctor's piano and, fortunately, his surgical instruments. The Lake County Council generously allowed its Queenstown facilities to be used as a temporary hospital while a new hospital was being built on the same site. It was funded in part by insurance proceeds of £1,600 from the fire.

The new facility, built in 1895, is the shown in the main photograph. It served the community for the next 104 years, until it was replaced with the present hospital in 1999.

Sources:

Golden Days of Lake County, F.W.G. Miller, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1949

Wakatipu’s Golden Days, by A.J. De La Mare, Lakes District Museum, 2000

‘Call the Doctor’, by Danny Knudson in *Queenstown Courier* 89, 2013

‘Fire at the Queenstown Hospital’, *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 10240, 24 December 1994
sourced from www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz

‘Fire at Queenstown Hospital’, *Queenstown Courier* 46, May 1991

October: Jim Easton's Bullock Team, Gorge Road, Queenstown, 1930s

By Alan Hamilton

While writing stories for my book, *The Milk-Cart Kid*, I was searching for photos of my pioneer neighbours. The Eastons farmed the land opposite our farm on Gorge Road, living in a little tin house on the edge of the great swamp where Gorge Road Retail Centre is now.



I was only a little fellow when the Eastons were farming and I remember one day very clearly of them driving their bullock team down the road past our house. Being cheeky, I must have gone to meet them. I was lucky because they gave me a ride down the road towards Queenstown on a sledge they were pulling. The sledge had wheels at the back which made it easier for the bullocks to pull. Mr Easton and his son Jim controlled the bullocks with big long sticks and yelling, 'Up, Dandy, up Spanker!' And Rowdy would get a tickle up from one of the big sticks. But the bullocks just plodded along at their own pace. Getting that ride on the sledge must have been the highlight of my early life out Gorge Road, for even today I can still see them in my mind after all these years.

Now I wondered how I could ever find a photo of the Eastons working their bullocks. I asked lots of old people but no luck, though some thought they had seen one. Then in 2009 I was up in Taumarunui for my nephew Alan's 50th birthday. Alan runs a jet-boat business on the upper Whanganui River. We got a free ride in Alan's boat down the river, stopping at one point to visit and walk through some very old farm buildings. The rooms were still full of pioneer household relics, kitchen-ware etc. The walls had old newspapers, Weekly News, all sorts of papers. One wall had farm pictures for wallpaper – horse teams working paddocks, cows and sheep.

Then lo and behold, a picture of the Eastons ploughing with their bullocks on Queenstown Hill right above our home! Holy smoke, what luck to come all this way and find the photo that I could only dream about, stuck in a hut away in the backblocks of the North Island. It even shows lots of our farm, Lismore Farm, all the way into Queenstown. The land on the right of the photo including the Recreation Ground was our farm. The pine trees are where the primary school is now.

I bet Jim Easton never dreamed that he and his bullock team would be in a calendar in 2015. It's great now that lots of the pioneers who made the district tick have been brought alive again so that we can all reminisce about our good old days.

For the 1962 district centennial celebrations, the Young Farmers Club with Ron Gordon as our boss resurrected over 100 exhibits of old farm machinery, all working, for a Young Farmers Day. Max Robins and I, both Young Farmers, said we would break in a couple of bullocks because one of the first big boats



Alan Hamilto, right, with bullock team pulling a whaleboat in the centennial parade. LDM EP1965

brought to Lake Wakatipu was pulled from Bluff to Kingston by a bullock team. What a challenge for us, but we won, and we were second in the parade in Queenstown – two bullocks pulling a boat with Mrs Rees sitting in it. I tell you, Jimmy Easton had nothing on us!

November: Pritchard's Store, Arrowtown

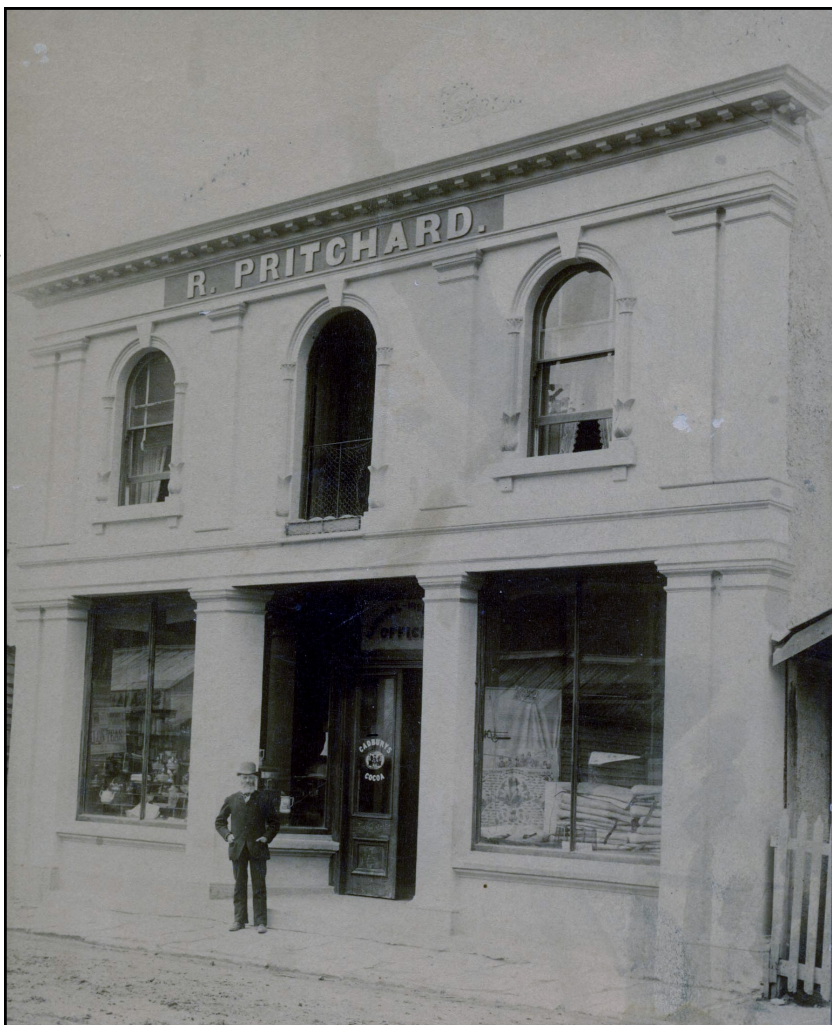
By Gavin Jack

Robert Pritchard was a Welshman who emigrated from North Wales (aged 24), initially to Victoria, and then, 11 years later, in 1862, (aged 35), he arrived in Arrowtown, where he immediately established a general store from premises of canvas over a wooden frame. We glean from the record that the structure was probably supplemented by the addition of corrugated iron sheets until, in 1872 it was replaced by a magnificent, two storey, architecturally-designed, stone building seen here with Mr Pritchard in the doorway.

In December 1886 the top storey of the building was severely damaged by a fire which started next door in the Morning Star Hotel, on the site of Buckingham Green as we know it today. Pritchard's loss was some £6000, for which he only had insurance cover of £1800. However, he rebuilt, creating the store we know today.

The *Otago Witness* takes up the story on 10 June 1897:

A few weeks before Christmas last, a fire at Arrowtown destroyed Mr R Pritchard's store containing one of the best-assorted and largest stocks of general merchandise kept anywhere 'up country'. The damage done has now been repaired in so far that a new and in many respects improved warehouse has been completed and opened, showing that Mr



Robert Pritchard outside his store before the fire.

LDM EP0130

Pritchard has every confidence in the district....He is now the oldest businessman still in harness in Lake County, and claims to be one of the oldest merchants in the Australasian colonies having been upwards of 42 years in the Guild. More than this, Mr Pritchard has always managed to make his business a success, supporting itself and its "conductor". (You see, in those days one 'conducted' business!)

The article goes on to highlight some specific features of the building:

It is well lighted by large show windows and skylight, displaying the goods perfectly to the inspection of customers. In addition there is a collar 32 feet by 32 feet with a concrete floor so constructed as to slope to a sink capable of draining off any influx of storm water. The fittings of the store are of kauri and cedar highly polished and furnished with brass mountings, giving the whole a very bright and rich appearance. There is a large and commodious office fitted with every convenience for the transaction of business. Large fire-proof safes and other protections against accident give one the impression of being in the "sanctum sanctorum" of a large commercial establishment.

In connection with the General Store, Mr Pritchard conducts a dressmaking and millinery department under the charge of Miss M. Pritchard, niece of the proprietor, which is proving itself a decided success. A considerable quantity of the ready-made clothing sold in the store is made upon the premises, a system that is giving universal satisfaction.

In addition to the store, there is a private dwelling comprising suites of rooms comfortably and tastefully arranged, a feature being floods of light everywhere. The whole building is done in stone with a highly ornamental façade in concrete. In fact, the external appearance is as handsome as the internal arrangements are practical and convenient. Two large show windows sheltered by a tastefully designed verandah give ample room for display and give the establishment quite a “town” appearance. The contractor for the buildings and fittings was Mr W Henderson, of Dunedin, and Mr Pritchard speaks in terms of the highest praise of the manner in which every detail has been carried out. The building in every part is perfectly fireproof (not surprisingly we might say!), and water is laid on everywhere.

Mr Pritchard does a large business not only in Arrowtown or Lake County, but gets orders from so far off as the North Island. Such are the vagaries of shopping by post and the advantages of advertising, Mr Pritchard deals, of course, in everything, from the proverbial needle to the equally proverbial anchor, and he employs from 9 to 10 hands constantly in connection with his business.

We are truly indebted to the *Otago Witness* for this account of Robert Pritchard and his business in Arrowtown which he continued right up until his death in 1907 aged 80.

So there it is in the photo, still to this day, the ‘Sanctum Sanctorum’ of a large commercial establishment!

Source: *Otago Witness* accessed on www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz



Pritchard's store, 1905

LDM EL 1304

December: The Colonel's House at Walter Peak Station

By Brian Bayley



TING! TING! The ship's telegraph instructing the engineer to increase speed to *Full Ahead* on the *Earnslaw* cruise across to Walter Peak Homestead at Beach Bay.

TING! TING! Slow Ahead as we glide serenely into the bay. Survey the Walter Peak station buildings in their beautiful surroundings.

TING! TING! Stop Engines. Make our way from the jetty to view the lovely home generally known as 'The Colonel's House'. This home was built for Peter Mackenzie, one of the six sons of Hugh Mackenzie. Hugh with his brother Alex had shifted over the lake from Coronet Station after the big snow of 1878. Hugh lived the next 50+ years of his life at Walter Peak. 'Colonel' Peter and his family continued to live there until 1970.

Walter Peak Station was not established as a high country station by the Waste Lands Board. Much of the warm low lakeside land had been cut into small freehold blocks of about 100 acres and sold off for settlement. Their ground cover was mostly bracken and fern, and difficult to develop. Hugh built his first house of two rooms, known as 'The Chimney', about two miles from Beach Bay. Over the years he was able to purchase these sections one by one as struggling neighbours shifted away with hope of improving their circumstances.

To finance land purchases and carry out development, brothers Hugh and Alex accepted any mustering offered. They obtained rights to net the bountiful lake

salmon and trout which they smoked and sold – to markets as distant as Dunedin. Areas of potatoes were also grown for sale.

Hugh was later able to purchase land here at Beach Bay on which a two-roomed stone house had been built for James MacLean in 1865. Hugh moved into this house, enlarged it and reared his eight children there. It became known as the ‘Middle House’, and is situated between the two houses seen in the photo, but it’s obscured by trees.

Hugh was later granted a Crown Lease of the Walter Peak high country. The land ran up and over the mountain as far as the Lochie River. Expansionary times for Hugh Mackenzie and his six sons followed. By 1904 they had purchased the adjoining Mt Nicholas and Fernhill properties. The family now farmed more than 160,000 acres, and despite snow, rabbits and kea, they ran over 40,000 sheep in good times.

The Colonel’s House was built in 1907 when Peter married. Some of his siblings lived at Fern Hill and later Mt Nicholas stations. At Walter Peak homestead extensive tree-planting was carried out to stabilise the ground and shield people and buildings from boulders shed by the mountain during storms. A terrace behind the middle house was dug by hand to remove an early mud and rock-slide which had threatened to destroy the house.

The sons: William died in a snow-slide on the station aged 21; Walter was killed overseas in World War I; Peter was badly gassed in the trenches; Hugh Junior left to farm at Greenvale in about 1947; John and Alex remained at Walter Peak until they died in the 1950s. Patriarch Hugh died in 1933.

Fast forward. The Mt Nicholas and Fern Hill properties were sold to the Hunt brothers in 1949. The balance of Walter Peak was sold to George Wiles in 1970. Wiles’s ambitions outran his finances. Before he was sold up he converted the Colonel’s House into a museum. This use was continued by the next short-term owner, John Reid Development.

In 1977 fire broke out in the Colonel’s House. Staff thought it had been successfully extinguished. Alas, within hours the 70-year-old building with all its interesting contents was consumed by fire. A very sad loss.

The replacement building was sympathetically designed and fits the setting very comfortably. It’s more functional than its predecessor, catering for large number of visitors.

Recently Real Journeys purchased 300 acres of Walter Peak land and the lakeside buildings, thereby securing the future of the establishment which provides enjoyment and an appreciation of New Zealand high country farming to the many who visit this special place.

Sources

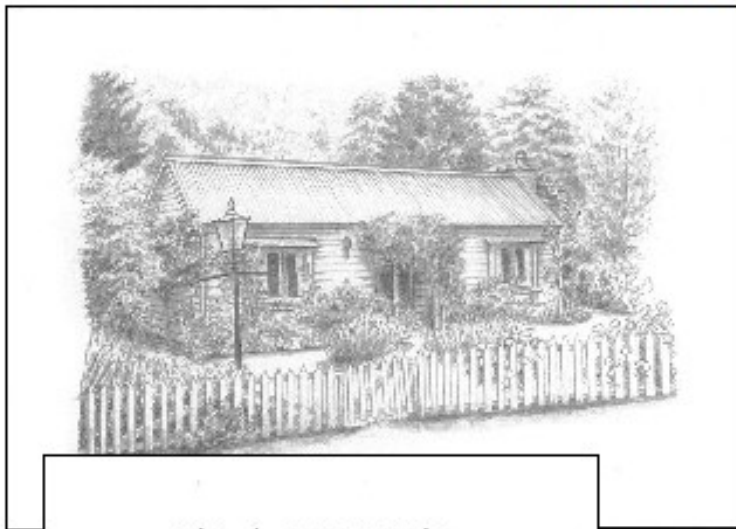
‘Memories of Walter Peak, Mt Nicholas and Fernhill Stations’ by Catherine Jean Baker

Walter Peak Queenstown by Peter Newton

‘Tragedy at Walter Peak’, *Mountain Scene* 21 April 1977



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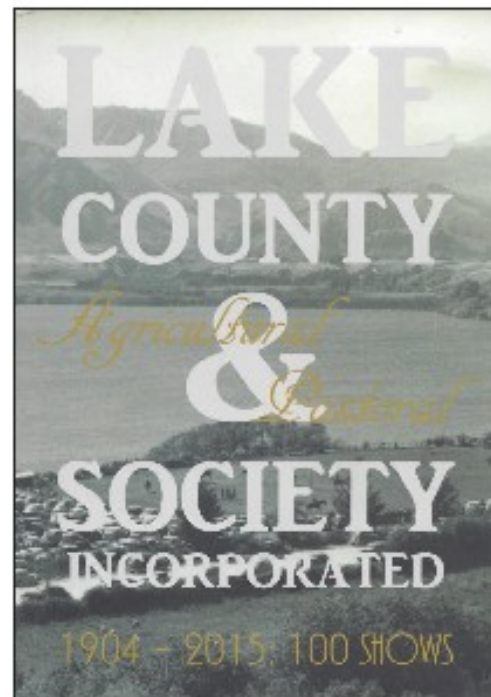
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