

# **THE QUEENSTOWN COURIER**

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**Issue No.103**



**Wai-whaka-ata/Lake Hayes in pre-colonial times**

**Section of a painting by Marion Marquand, 2019**

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### **Welcome to this ‘Lockdown Issue’**

Fortunately, it was almost complete before the lockdown – museum archives had been accessed, photos taken, contributors consulted and visited.

In 2018, when I wrote the article about the 1918 Influenza Pandemic (published in last winter’s Issue 101), I didn’t imagine that we’d be dealing with a pandemic now. The comparisons are interesting. Then, the disruption lasted for only about eight weeks, but we expect that the disruption will continue for much longer this time and will have longer-lasting effects on the district.

Today’s ‘now’ becomes tomorrow’s ‘history’.

This issue begins by peeling back the familiar colonised surface of our district to investigate the previous vegetation.

A long-lived early settler, Sarah Salmond, recorded times of huge change as Europeans migrated here and built their community.

The restoration of a vintage truck documents the preservation of a relic of farming in the basin.

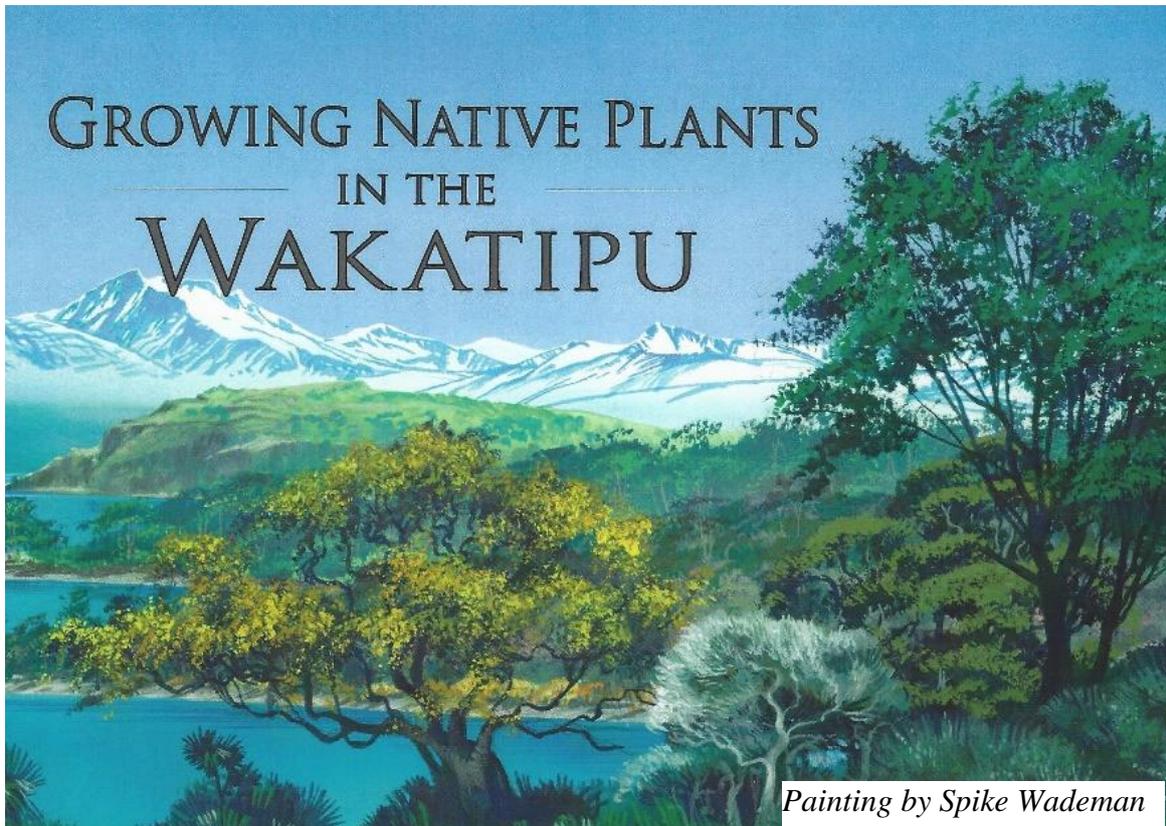
Two topical subjects complete this issue: the current removal of camp-ground cribs in Queenstown which demonstrates changes happening now, and brings forth memories of family holidays there; and a revisiting of ‘Arcadia’ at Paradise as the property has just been sold.

Marion Borrell, Editor

6 May 2020

## Historical Vegetation of the Wakatipu Basin

By Neill Simpson and Benjamin Teele, reprinted with kind permission



The Wakatipu Basin is characterised by a diversity of landforms, from steep mountains to braided rivers. The basin is at the centre of a geological crossroad. Its western border is flanked by the Southern Alps, holding back vast amounts of rain. To the north and east it borders the semi-arid plains of Central Otago.

The basin was formed from a series of glacial advances over the last two million years. These carved deep valleys into the mountains, and as they retreated, left behind the lakes and rivers we have today. The last major glacial advance was 18,000 years ago, and reached as far as Kingston. The top of the glacier stretched about 100 metres above the current lake level.

As the glaciers retreated, plants began to re-establish. We can identify what the vegetation of the basin was likely to have been before humans arrived from different sources that include: vegetation remnants, pollen cores, preserved charcoal, interpreting past climate, types of soils, coprolites (fossilised droppings – particularly from moa), and moa gizzard remains.

The pre-human vegetation of the Wakatipu Basin would have been a mix of beech and broadleaf podocarp forests. Beech began to dominate most hill and mountain slopes up to about 1100m from the Southern Alps to the Remarkables, with scattered patches further east. Mountain beech would have been found on the drier slopes, with areas of red beech and occasional silver beech. Silver beech dominated the upper, wetter valleys. Good red beech forest mixed with mountain beech can still be found at Bobs Cove, and

tiny remnants of mountain beech can still be seen on the upper slopes of the Remarkables. Above the treeline, snow tussock mixed with scattered shrubs dominated, rising to herbfields, cushion fields, rock, snow, and ice.

Lakeshore vegetation was influenced by the moderating effect of the water and, therefore, was more diverse. Here grew many broadleaved trees and podocarps, such as mountain totara, kahikatea, matai, and miro (all still found on Pigeon Island) along with numerous shrubs. Ground plants included various herbs, ferns, grasses, orchids, sedges, mosses, lichens and fungi. Bird life would be prolific and noisy.



The Arrow River Basin with its scarps, deep gullies, many wetlands, knolls, and frost hollows would have contained a mosaic of plant communities. These would have included: wetlands, pockets of broadleaf and beech forest, diverse shrubland mixed with grassland, small shrubs, and herbs on shallow soil and open valley floors.



Kowhai would have been a prominent species across the Wakatipu Basin. Grey shrubland, composed of hardy dryland plants, was probably confined to valley floors and rockfields, and would have been less prominent than is found today. Throughout the basin this diverse array of plant species would have provided numerous sources of food and habitat for lizards, birds, bats, and vast numbers of insects.

Several thousand years ago, the inland basins of the South Island high country had more moderate climates than at present. They were probably less prone to summer drought with a correspondingly lower incidence of fire. Consequently, the landscape was more wooded than at the time of human settlement, with beech and podocarp forest occupying extensive hillside tracts and scrubby woodlands on valley flats. Many totara logs have been found around the hills of inland Otago, dating back to about 800 years ago.

Natural fires intensified with Polynesian settlement, and deforestation took place within decades after initial human arrival in the drier parts of New Zealand. Our native trees are inherently vulnerable to fires. Targeted, repeat-burning in highly flammable recovering vegetation was sufficient to create an alternate fire-prone stable state (consisting of scrub, fern and grassland). Dense matagouri and associated shrubs,



Karearea/Falcon on matagouri (Barry Lawrence)

tussockland, and speargrass were the dominant vegetation on the valley floor by the time European settlers arrived. They quickly put this to the torch (often in dramatic fashion) to improve access through the often impenetrable, thorny vegetation and dense stands of bracken fern, and to provide pasture for sheep. When William Rees came over the ridge from the Cardrona Valley in 1859, looking for good sheep country, he is reported in the *Otago Witness* as saying, ‘no

fires had cleared the country before us and consequently our further progress was not only fatiguing but painful. Speargrass, often more than three feet high, and masses of matagouri constantly impeded us, especially in gullies.’ A few days later having progressed, again with difficulty, up the lake by homemade raft, they started back ‘setting fire as they went, and soon flames reached the top of the mountain ... the fire devouring everything behind them’.

*Growing Native Plants in the Wakatipu* is an expert guidebook for planters, published by the Wakatipu Reforestation Trust.

Available from the Trust ([www.wrtqt.org.nz](http://www.wrtqt.org.nz)) and published online at:

[https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/97e521\\_0cbab3b63e35429d81636a24718a7158.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/97e521_0cbab3b63e35429d81636a24718a7158.pdf)

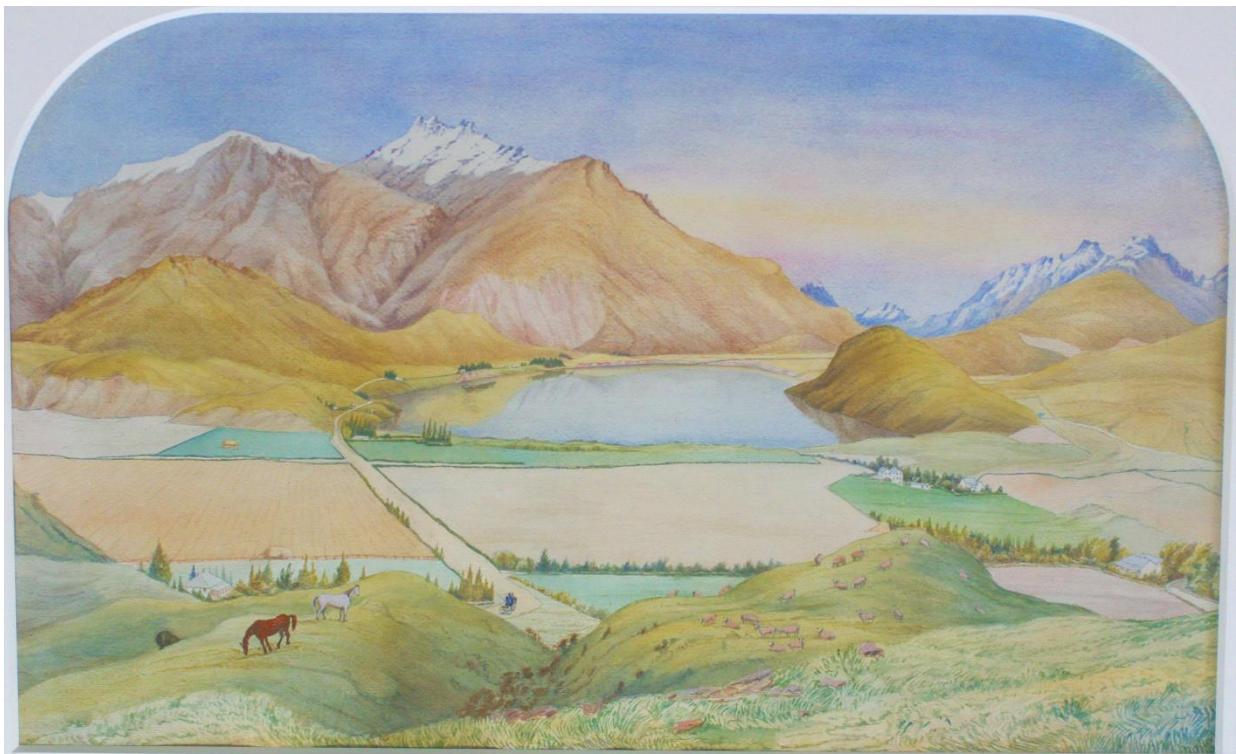


## Wai-Whaka-Ata/ Lake Hayes - A Case Study of Changing Vegetation

Compiled by Marion Borrell



Wai-whaka-ata/Lake Hayes painted by Marion Marquand, 2019.  
Pre-colonial flora and a person on a mokihi. Botanical advice from Neill Simpson.  
Commissioned by QDHS for the historical panel about the names of the lake.



Circa 1886, watercolour by Christopher Aubrey, from McEntyres Hill.  
Cropping and pasture covers much of the farmable country.  
(Courtesy of Lakes District Museum)



1905 Alex Grant harvesting oats at Threeewood.  
The only native vegetation clearly seen is the wetland at the edge of the lake.  
(Courtesy of Lakes District Museum and Print Central)



2015 Harvesting grapes at Stoneridge Estate.  
A new crop is spreading on some of the hillsides.  
(Photo by Marion Borrell, courtesy of Stoneridge Estate)

## Sarah Salmond née Cockburn, 1864-1956

This monologue is mainly Sarah's own words, either written by her or reported by her son Jim (JD). It was presented by Kirsty Sharpe at 'People from Our Past' in April 2019.

Fictitious Scenario: It is 1942. Sarah is at her home above Hallenstein Street on her 78<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her husband John had died two years before the date of this imagined occasion.



Thank-you, my dear family, for gathering for my birthday. Jim has encouraged me to write down some recollections and thoughts.

I have vivid recollections of my early childhood in pleasant rural Berwickshire. I was the youngest of a large family. My father was a farm labourer, with the right to have a potato patch and keep a pig. Occasionally we ate salmon - after my father had been out mysteriously at night. Sometimes we went hungry, and I remember picking sorrel weed to eat. I don't recommend it. A new age has come about for working people with Social Security, and for that I give thanks.

My eldest brother George was the first to emigrate, and he settled on a small farm near Cromwell. Hearing from his letters about the good prospects there, my mother – who was of gypsy descent – urged my father to pull up his deep roots. We left for NZ when I was eight in the sailing ship *Zealandia*. It was 1872.

After about a year in Cromwell, we came on here, and I've lived in this district ever since - that's 61 years - so far.

I attended school for the first time and stayed until Standard Four, but when I was 11, I left school to keep house for my father. My mother was a midwife, so she was often away attending the births then running the household until the mother was well enough to take charge again.

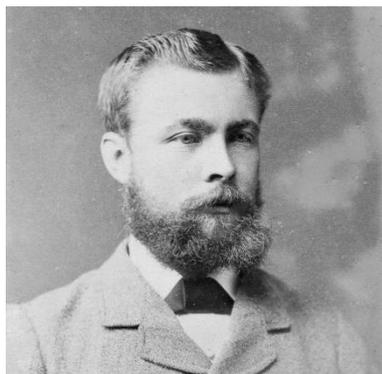
When I was 15, I went to keep house for my brothers George and David up the Rees Valley. Instead of taking a lake steamer from Queenstown, I sometimes used to ride on the bridle track. The crossing of the swift-flowing Rees River was a risky business and once almost cost David his life.

There were many inquisitive wekas on our farm. They were very cunning at stealing bright things like spoons. I became quite expert at running them down. They were tasty when roasted and made a change from mutton.

With no young company nearby, I read a great deal, especially the Bible and George's books on astronomy. The night sky stretched my mind to infinity and wonder. I still treasure my little book on astronomy, *The Heavens Declare*. During the long winter evenings beside the fire, I listened avidly to George and our neighbour Charlie Haines discussing the theories of Charles Darwin and such modern scientific ideas.

After about two years, while I was away in Queenstown, the homestead on the farm burnt down. This ended my sojourn at the foot of Mount Earnslaw. Being then aged 18, I became the governess for the Wither family's children on Sunnyside Station – that's now called Cecil Peak Station. I could write easily and spell well, which, judging from

some letters I receive, is more that some well-educated people can do today! I was able to teach the children reading and writing and simple arithmetic.

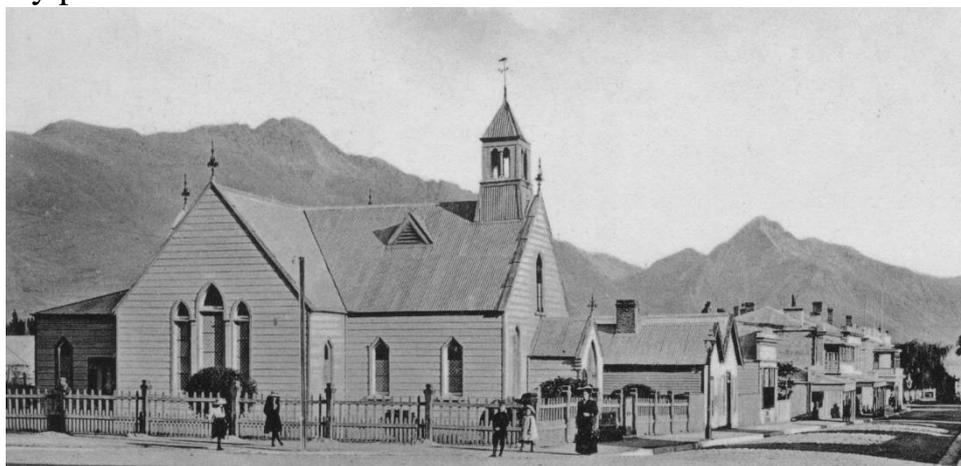


*John Salmond*

Occasionally we came across to Queenstown by lake steamer or rowing boat. On one such trip I met John Salmond, a carpenter who had recently arrived from Scotland. We married in 1886 and in the years that followed our eight children were born. In time we shifted to this house here in Hallenstein Street. It had once been the scene of an attempted arson, but with John's fine improvements, it has served us very well. From the front windows we can indeed 'lift our eyes to the hills' and the heavens, and wonder at God's creation.

Our lives have been filled with our family, the Presbyterian church, and our Queenstown community. There's a simplicity and purpose in such a life. For me it meant preparing plain wholesome food, cleaning, sewing and mending, and caring for the sick. (Remember castor oil?) John played his part by being on the Borough Council for many years, as well as in the Fire Brigade and Masonic Lodge, on the School Committee, and singing at fundraising concerts.

When his work as a builder took him away from Queenstown during the week, he would return on his bicycle by Saturday night, in time to carry out his church duties as an elder and lay preacher.



*Queenstown Presbyterian Church, Ballarat Street (Lakes District Museum)*

Back in those days Sunday was much better observed than it is now. It was a day for slowing down and spending time together, as we are doing now. After the morning service and Sunday School, we would visit Granny, and for tea there would be a slice of cake.

My philosophy of child care I would call benign neglect. What they don't need is coddling or spoiling. The children often amused themselves for hours on Queenstown Hill, with the older ones looking out for the younger.

John and I were determined that our children should have more education than we had had. It has been a great satisfaction to us that all achieved this, whether through scholarships to secondary school and tertiary training, or through learning on-the-job.

Another cause for satisfaction is that three became national leaders in the Presbyterian Church.

Right now [1942] many countries are again in the midst of war. It has long seemed to me that war is contrary to everything Jesus lived and died for. In mind, in heart, and in faith, I'm a pacifist. But in the past I kept this belief to myself. In the dark days of the Great War, I honoured the courage of the lads who left to fight. With anxious heart, I said good-bye to George, and grieved in silence over his death at Passchendaele. We were just one of many such families here. When at last the war was over, all personal sorrows were put aside to welcome the survivors on their return.



George Cockburn Salmond

I pray that this current war in will end soon, and that those in power come to realise that fighting does not bring lasting peace. If the world was run by mothers, how different it would be. I've always believed in full political rights for women, and signed the Suffrage Petition in 1893. We must hope and pray for more such advances in society.

Always, we must be grateful for the goodness around us, and count our blessings – the sunshine, the flowers, the fresh air, the cool mountain water, the moods of the lake, the beautiful sunsets, and the wonders of the heavens. I rejoice with the Psalmist that God's goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life and have brought us together to give thanks today.

Epilogue: Sarah lived a further 14 years in her house.

Omitted from the monologue is further evidence of her love of astronomy. It was due to her determined advocacy that the site in Melbourne Street where scientists observed the Transit of Venus in 1874 was preserved and is now an historic reserve. In 1953 she had the honour of unveiling a monument on the site. The next article recounts the events of 1874.



When she left home to go into hospital, Sarah took two books with her: *The Bible*, of course, and *The Heavens Declare*. She died in 1956 aged 93.

Articles about her son George Cockburn Salmond by Clare Salmond, and her nephew David Cockburn by David Clarke, are published in *Queenstown Courier Issue 99*, Winter 2018, available on our website.

### Sources

Salmond, J D, *Hearts of Gold*, Otago Daily Times, Dunedin, 1962

Salmond, Clare, *Salmond Fishing*, self-published, Wellington, 2016

*Dictionary of National Biography Vol 2 1870-1900*, Bridget Williams Books and Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1993

Historical photos courtesy of the Lakes District Museum

## Transit of Venus Observatory Site, Melbourne St, 1874

Compiled by Marion Borrell

On December 9, 1874 an American observation party led by Professor C. H. Peters observed the Transit of Venus across the sun. Simultaneous observations and numerous photographs (for the first time) were taken around the world to gather data to calculate the distance of the Earth from the sun.

The party of six arrived with their scientific equipment, cameras and building materials, set up their observation station, and stayed for three months.



There was excitement in Queenstown much as there is now when a major film is being shot here. The scientists were welcomed as celebrities and entertained by leading citizens.

Such was the enthusiasm that people kept visiting the site to watch and ask questions. It is interesting to note that Sarah Cockburn would have been 10 years old and attending the nearby school, and this experience may have sparked her on-going interest in astronomy and the Transit of Venus.

<p>QUEENSTOWN ATHENÆUM.</p> <hr/> <p>TRANSIT OF VENUS.</p> <hr/> <p>A L E C T U R E</p> <p>WILL BE DELIVERED BY</p> <p>PROFESSOR PETERS,</p> <p>IN THE</p> <p>T O W N H A L L,</p> <p>ON</p> <p>THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26,</p> <p>IN AID OF THE LIBRARY FUNDS.</p> <hr/> <p>Subject: TRANSIT OF VENUS. To Commence at 8 o'clock. Tickets, 3s and 2s.</p> <p>H. P. MACKLIN, Vice-President.</p>
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Professor Peters' lecture, chaired by the Rev. Donald Ross, explained the project to the citizens. It was held in the Town Hall and Athenaeum in Lower Ballarat Street (1872), now the Ballarat Trading Company, with funds raised to support the construction of the Library (1876) which now houses the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The lecture was reported in great detail in the *Lake Wakatip Mail* (4 December 1874): *An appreciative and full audience assembled, and during the lecture, Professor Peters was frequently applauded...On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, anyone looking through a darkened glass, at nineteen minutes after one, would observe a mark, looking like a notch, on the edge of the sun. After half-an-hour, this would be like a spot on the sun, and this apparently black spot would move over the sun, and finally disappear at twelve minutes to six. (The lecturer illustrated these movements and stages of contact by reference to a diagram.)*

The range of his talk was impressive, covering the history of solar astronomy from early Egyptians and Greeks. He made specific mention of Captain James Cook and included anecdotes amongst many scientific facts.

The community was in a state of suspense as the date approached, with everyone hoping for clear skies.

**N O T I C E .**

— — —

**P**ERSONS mustering sheep on the 7th, 8th and 9th DECEMBER NEXT, and a few days previously, are requested not to set fire to the grass, so as to allow of every opportunity of a clear photographic view of the Transit of Venus being taken by the American observing expedition, at Queenstown.

### The Day of the Transit of Venus

*Lake Wakatip Mail*, 11 December 1874

*It is almost impossible to conceive the importance of the transit which has made the pulse of scientific men of every nation beat with such intensity of interest. ...*

*The day opened gloomily in Queenstown, more especially for Professor Peters and his party, whose anxiety was naturally very great. The barometer had fallen during the night, and at daybreak clouds were to be seen floating in nearly every direction, while slight showers fell.*

*Towards noon, however, prospects became brighter, and occasional intervening openings of clear blue sky were seen through the clouds, which were also lighter. Those azure spaces, through which the sun shone, soon became more numerous, and it was on*

*one of these auspicious occasions, about five minutes before the moment of first contact, that old Sol, with the planet, passed into a clear wide space, and appeared in unobstructed splendour, and continued so, with slight intermission, for about one hour and a half, affording the observing party ample time, not only to note the first and second contacts, but also to note a great many measurements afterwards. Consequently, a few minutes after the first contact, Venus – as a ‘notch’ in the sun, and then as a speck in it – was plainly visible to many observers with the most simple appliances of coloured or smoked glass.*

*After three o’clock, the sun became much obscured; but still occasional sights were obtained. Shortly before five o’clock, however, - an hour before the final contact - that luminary again shone forth, and the Professor and his staff were again busily at work striking off photographs, recording measurements, and the course of Venus. Half an hour put an end to this delightful excitement. ...*

*Such is the general chronicle of the incidents during this great day in the annals of astronomy.*

*Of course, the results are not all that could be wished, still Professor Peters states that he is quite satisfied. The instruments and appliances worked admirably, and everything passed off well. The number of photographs struck off during the transit was 193, we are informed.*

*Although greatly regretting that every other station in New Zealand was a failure through bad weather, we cannot help congratulating both our visitors and the people of the district upon the happy results of the observations taken at Queenstown of the Transit of Venus.*

Before their departure, the scientists were honoured with a banquet at Eichardt’s hotel where wine, compliments and self-congratulations flowed beneath Union Jacks and Star-spangled Banners. There were toasts to both the Queen and the President of the United States. Queenstown revelled in its astronomical celebrity. The Mayor, Mr Betts, remarked that he ‘fully believed that, through this expedition, the name of this town would become renowned to the end of the globe.’ (Though maybe his own knowledge of astronomy had not been enhanced.)

Professor Peters amused the audience by becoming an astrologer: *‘I see in the stars a large city here of the future; railways converging upon it; people coming from many other parts of the earth to enjoy its beautiful climate, and behold its grand scenery. (Loud applause). I tell you, gentlemen, that despite worldly cares, there is a great future before this Island. I see it reflected in the stars, if you will allow me to say so, and I see this small, but beautiful, town the capital of that Island, the centre of attraction, the abode of those who possess taste and wealth, as well as the humbler student of nature. (Loud cheers). You, gentlemen, cannot prevent that destiny, for the stars predict it. (Laughter and applause).’*

Other Transits of Venus occurred in 1882, then 2004 and 2012. The next will be in 2117.

Source: *Lake Wakatip Mail* sourced from Papers Past: [www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz](http://www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz)

Photo courtesy of the Lakes District Museum

## Restoration of a Local Vintage Truck: 1937 Chevrolet 15cwt Pickup

By Bruce Walker

The restoration of old or vintage items has become a way of recognising and enjoying life as it was when we were young or when our parents or grandparents were youngsters.

To begin any restoration, a project has to be identified, an assessment of what needs to be done, a suitable place to do the work, a detailed plan formulated, replacement parts and accessories sourced and a financial commitment made. Is there a timeframe to work to and also an end goal? Once these aspects are set the journey can begin.

For the restoration for the 1937 Chevy the project was easily identified. The truck had been purchased brand new by the Allan family of Cloverdale, Lower Shotover Road, in 1937. Having served the family's work needs on the dairy farm, it was parked under trees to slowly decay in the 1990s. It was a project wanting attention as it was part of the family and the district. In order to stop further deterioration Suzy, née Allan and I towed the truck up to our shed to protect it from the elements. We then formulated a plan for its restoration.

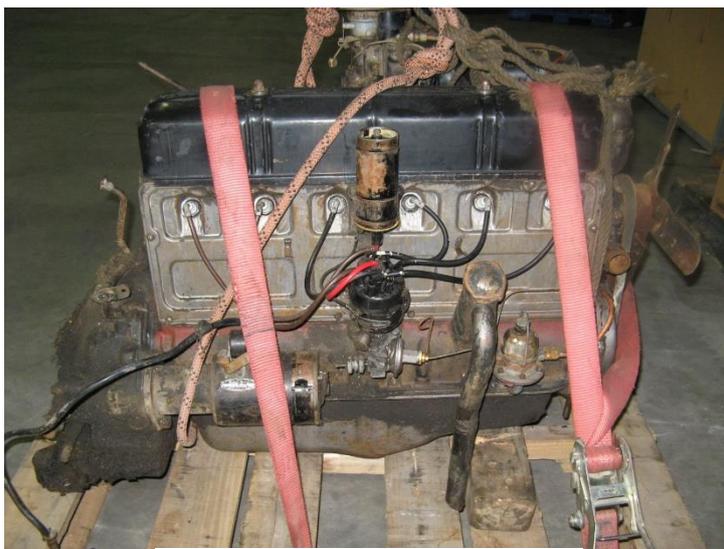
Being a novice restorer, plenty of advice was sort from friends, the Vintage Car Club and research. Does one strip it down to bare metal or work around the existing structure and replace worn and broken parts? The risk doing the former can leave a shed full of parts as enthusiasm wanes. After years of thought, discussions and advice we came up with a plan, set aside funds and started one Sunday afternoon. It didn't go well!



1 March 2010: Work is about to begin

The first job was to put the Chevy up on stands and remove the wheels. The first stud I undid snapped – someone should have told me about left-hand threads. Not a good start.

From a simple mistake like that, a train of events was set in place. To replace a 1937 Chevy stud you don't go to Repco. You have to source them from vintage Chev owners. We visited the Invercargill Vintage Car Club and tipped out five boxes of studs and wheel nuts. Not one of the thousands we sifted through matched. This became a common theme when looking for vintage parts. While some aspects of the restoration created frustrations, other parts were straightforward.



Engine ready for reconditioning

The engine/gear box needed to be completely renovated with bearings, rings, pistons, valve gear, camshaft and electrics. AEG of Invercargill were able to complete the work needed and knew exactly what was required as they had just finished a similar project. The work was completed along with a renewed radiator, starter motor and generator. At that point we decided to retain the 6-volt electric system and keep the project as close to the original as possible. While the engine was away, the chassis was soda-blasted to remove the scale and rust, under-coated and top-coated to protect the metal surface.



Soda-blasting

Our next large disaster happened while the engine was away. Members of the Vintage Car Club recommended to me an Invercargill panel-beater who was a specialist in restoring vintage body panels and mudguards. Our approach to him was positive so we sent the panels and guards down to him. After a month we rang to enquire as to the progress only to be told 'been busy – ring next month.' After 12 months of ringing, we went to Invercargill and collected the panels and returned home with them – they hadn't been moved off the pallets that we sent them down on. Over a year wasted. Contrast this with the chrome work that was sent to Shiny Bits in Geraldine and returning within weeks looking fabulous.

The late Bill Richardson, of Invercargill, provided me with an address of a company in the USA that specialised in Chevy parts from the earliest model to present day. This company was able to send almost any item one can imagine, in fact, from its catalogue a complete car or truck could be built from scratch. Often a phone call helped explain the part or a problem.

One particular problem we had was to source kingpins for the front wheels. The kingpins hold the wheel assembly to the front beam or axle. Unfortunately, the pins they sent were too large, only by 1mm although they were the correct pins for a 1937 pickup truck according to the catalogue. When I spoke to the parts manager in the USA and told him the pins were too large, he responded by saying, 'I bet your truck came from Canada.' Sure enough, he was correct as the Chev assembly line in Canada was part of a GMC plant. When the Chev assembly line ran out of parts i.e. a front beam, they simply substituted a GMC part and the vehicle continued down the assembly line. The kingpins were slightly different in diameter and not compatible. Luckily a vintage enthusiast in Clyde had a spare front beam which could be swapped out, sand-blasted and repainted, kingpins fitted and the wheels attached.



Engine restored and returned

The truck was originally purchased to cart milk cans to the cheese factory on Speargrass Flat Road. It also did the milk run into Queenstown in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A wooden deck was specially made in Dunedin to carry a specific number of milk cans. Unfortunately, the cans came in all shapes and sizes and there was no standard diameter, which compromised the load capacity of the deck. As the deck was mostly intact, the catches and hinges in fine condition, it was not a difficult task to rebuild the deck to the same pattern. Macrocarpa timber was sourced from down south



A completely new deck

and has been a wonderful medium to work with. Coopers oil has provided a deep protective finish to the timber.

The truck was a farm vehicle sold by Cooke Howlison of Dunedin. It had no refinements and was very basic. The cab had no head-lining, heating or trim. It had a wooden frame of rough-sawn timber, the doors were wooden-framed and over time had rotted along the sills. John Wilson of Cromwell was able to remake the frames and reattach the door skins. I replaced the interior wooden frames with suitably treated timber. All the glass had to be replaced with safety glass.

Being a dairy farm truck, the panels and mudguards had serious damage to the lower part of the guards due to the cow manure. Roddy Maxwell of Cromwell made a great job of restoring and rebuilding these parts leaving only minor panel-beating to complete them. As vehicles of this age had panels built of thick steel, there was always something solid to work with.

Once the doors and panels were repaired, we stripped the original paint to take the cab back to bare metal. In this process we uncovered the original sign-writing that was on the door of the truck.



Original signwriting uncovered

While talking to Suzy's Auntie Jean, who learnt to drive in the truck in the late 1930s, she told us she could remember a travelling sign-writer who came to Central Otago, from Dunedin twice a year to repair shop signs or create new ones. He visited the farm and completed the sign while the truck was in the back yard. We photographed the sign and hope to have it replicated.

With the paint removed I noticed a small crack in the panel above the door. Dinner was ready so I thought a quick weld, grind and job done in five minutes. Three hours later I headed up for dinner. I had forgotten all the panels had been originally soldered not welded, so as soon as I touched the metal with the welder, solder melted and my crack was now the size of a fifty-cent piece! Careful welding and grinding eventually filled the hole and I headed up to a cold dinner and an unhappy wife.



Suzy sanding

All the electrical wiring had to be replaced. A wiring diagram is usually made into a loom with individual wires labelled to different instruments or lights. A chance meeting at a car show in Naseby gave me the address of a firm in Melbourne that produced looms for European and American cars. While on the phone to the manager, I could hear the pages of his 'loom book' turning until he came to 1937 Chev 15ctw pickup truck. Within a week the loom arrived complete with vintage cotton tape covering the wire bundles. It took Dave Thomson, the auto-electrician, who took two hours to remove the old wiring and replace it with the new loom. It fitted perfectly.

A restoration project does involve a huge amount of time and a large financial commitment. This is especially so if one's experience is limited. Over time, skills do improve, and by your mistakes, knowledge is gained. Time is probably the most difficult to quantify and find. Many hours are spent thinking and puzzling over problems that a more experienced restorer would quickly know the answer to. Techniques in panel-beating can be found on YouTube and with practice one's skill level can improve. By setting aside Sunday on a regular basis and with a not too ambitious plan in mind, tasks can be accomplished and be satisfying. A regular schedule keeps the project moving without becoming so overwhelming it is abandoned. A warm dry space that is not used for anything else means tools and parts can be left in place for the next session. Very good lighting, either fixed or portable, is a must.

When asked, 'Would you attempt another restoration project?' most restorers would probably answer, 'That depends.' And it does depend on the project, what needs to be done, the financial implications and an appropriate space for it. But for the pure joy and satisfaction of completing and driving a restored vehicle, nothing can put a broader smile on one's face as heads turn as you drive down the road.

### Our Vehicle

1937 Chevrolet 15cwt Registration – IY2838 Chassis # 1507

Originally owned by the Allan family of 'Cloverdale', Lower Shotover Road, Queenstown.

Sold to the family by Cooke Howlison of Dunedin  
and driven to the farm by Mr Frank Horman.

Cab and chassis were built in Windsor, Canada and assembled in Petone. The cab arrived in a flat pack and was soldered together. The engine is a Blue Flame 6 cylinder of 216 cu inches and has a 3-speed gearbox. We believe the tray was put together in Dunedin to a specification by the Allan family. It was used on the farm to cart milk cans to the cheese factory on Speargrass Flat Road, delivery of milk to Queenstown residents, and for the carting of sacks of small seed (turnips, clover, grass seeds) to the Frankton wharf for shipment via the *Earnslaw* to Kingston to go by rail through to Dunedin or Invercargill.

When the Speargrass Flat cheese factory closed in the early 1950s, the milk was picked up by a flatbed truck and taken to Alexandra. Cream was taken to a drop-off point at the old airport gates for delivery to Invercargill. Milk deliveries into Queenstown ceased when Government regulations banned the delivery of raw milk to the domestic market, and milk was then processed and bottled in Alexandra. It then returned the next day in bottles for home delivery. From then the Chevy became a farm utility carting hay and for general purpose farm work.

Petrol rationing during WW2 limited its use, but evening outings to dances, miniature rifle shooting and other functions in Arrowtown allowed the young people of the Wakatipu basin to socialise and move about. A canvas canopy, hay bales and horse covers made for a cosy ride on the deck on frosty winter evenings. I'm sure many a romance began under the covers on the back of the truck during those winter journeys.

Noel Stevenson, son of Jack Stevenson, a wagoner of Lake Hayes, remembers an accident involving the Chevy and another truck belonging to Mr Douglas Senior of Cave Farm, Slopehill Road. Noel was working in the cheese factory when he heard a loud crash of vehicles colliding. Running out of the factory, he headed down Speargrass Road to the intersection with Slopehill Road to find Mr Douglas and Mr Allan shouting and gesturing at each other and the Chevy on its side with the milk-cans upturned. Apparently both men were approaching the intersection at the same time and neither was prepared to give way. Noel recalled the confrontation was a shouting match, both men in bib overalls, standing in the middle of the road, shaking fists and pointing. Blows were not exchanged, but he remembered the incident vividly and with amusement. He thought it was about 1951-1952, as the factory closed he thought about 1953 or 1954.



The Allan family before the restoration

Since it was purchased in 1937, the truck hasn't left the district and has spent its entire working life within the Wakatipu Basin. Now the Chevy is one of the few original vehicles that remain locally. We are very pleased to have rescued it and to retain it within the family.

Our project, begun in March 2010, was completed in March 2017.



Jack's 90th birthday with sisters Jean and Margaret

## Good-bye to the Last Cribs at Queenstown Camping Ground

Photos by Evan Jenkins, words by Marion Borrell



As the final cribs in the former camping ground were being relocated or dismantled at the end of 2019, Evan Jenkins photographed them in their sadly deserted state. However, many of us remember the area as a vibrant settlement where Kiwi families spent their summer holidays.

From the 1930s and immediately after the war, some cribs were built on private land. In 1953 the Borough purchased the whole area, and created many leasehold sections for cabins around the camping ground. The cribbie culture of summer holidays developed.

Cribs were simple structures, many built by the owners themselves, with improvements year after year – a family project. Many of the materials were reused or recycled. They were meant for summer use only. Kiwi DIY ingenuity prevailed.



Naturally, they had large windows facing the lake and the view, some with a deck.

Many cribs began as rectangular boxes that could be developed as time and means allowed.

Colours were often brighter than suburban houses. Was that the holiday mood, or was the paint at sale price?



This two-storey dwelling with split-level roof presents the most advanced architecture.



Favoured materials were cheap and readily available wood and fibrolite. Some used corrugated iron cladding. Roughcast and brick effects suggest more permanence.

Decorative features like this dreamcatcher in the veranda supports add whimsy.



This simple wooden box has been enhanced, probably over time, with a shaped veranda roof, curved steps, multi-coloured stonework on the right, no doubt collected by the owners, and flowering plants. Note the mock shutters and wave-edged eaves.

The sociable cribbie lifestyle appealed to a wide range of people. For children, it meant being free-range, with constant companions, enjoying the lake or exploring the hill behind. For adults, a simpler domesticity, with neighbours, projects, and socialising on the deck.

When the leases expired, the departure of the cribbies changed the cabins from summer to year-round accommodation for which the buildings had not been designed. It would have been very cold in winter without insulation nor much sunshine for the population of workers who moved in, many of them immigrants. Nevertheless, they formed a community, and many were sad to leave, especially as affordable housing is in very short supply.

After building a new camping ground along the hill to the east, the Council wished to develop the area. Several owners removed their cribs. The remainder became rental housing mainly for people on work visas who created a new community.



These last cribs will now be removed, and new developments will spring up on what has become extremely valuable land.

The Lakeview cribs have a significant place in the history of Queenstown’s domestic tourism, and more widely.

The writers of the heritage report for QLDC (details below) conclude: ‘...the Thompson Street cribs [show] a diverse and eclectic mix of building forms, and materials used in construction, often with recycled material. They show a desire for leisure with a “number 8 wire” mentality – holidays were to be enjoyed, the size and shape of cribs were for shelter only where the outdoors provided the playground. Costs were minimised. Interaction was encouraged, whether intentional or not, by proximity. And shared clothes lines and facilities gave a sense of community. Living conditions were designed for periodic stays, but cribs show change through time and the evolving nature of domestic tourism. The size of the cribs grows over time with improvements made to services as they became occupied more regularly and for longer periods. Cribs were designed to take advantage of the surroundings and scenery, with an aspect towards the lake. ...’

The recording of the Thompson Street cribs contributes to a small but growing pool of crib and bach research. ... These cribs and those around the country represent a period of significant development in New Zealand’s socio-cultural history and vernacular architecture contributing to New Zealand’s unique identity.’

#### Source

*The Crib Vernacular: A Study of the Thompson Street Queenstown Cribs.* Cultural Heritage Mitigation Report to the Thompson Street Cribs, Queenstown by Hayden Cawte, Jeremy Moyle, Sheryl McPherson, Ben Teele and Laura Davies, by NZ Heritage Properties Ltd, Dunedin, 2014. Accessed in the Lake District Museum archives.

## Childhood Holidays at Our Crib, ‘Glengeddes’, in the 1940s and 1950s

By Sue Simms née Geddes

What a holiday adventure it was to look forward to every January! We were on our way to Queenstown on the bus from the Invercargill Railway Station to Lumsden to catch the train to Kingston, and then the boat to Queenstown. It was an all-day trip, leaving early morning in a taxi to the station, Mum all packed up with food and clothes in kitbags to last us two weeks.

When the train was nearly at Kingston, there was always lots of excitement wondering which boat would be there to meet us – the big newer boat called the *Earnslaw*, or the older *Ben Lomond*.



May, Sue and Dave Geddes outside 'Glengeddes' (Photo: Sue Simms)

We were going to stay in ‘Glengeddes’, the family crib in the front row of the Lakeview camping ground. This crib (two army huts put together), had been bought from the Public Works Department which had constructed the road from Kingston to Frankton in the 1930s.

Once at Queenstown, we had another ride in a taxi up to the crib. Then the unpacking began. Mum would light the smokey old camp stove after she had checked that the chimney wasn’t filled with straw from the birds nesting there. Once the fire was going, we set the mouse-traps. Our water supply was from an outside tap, and washing and showering were done at the camp facilities. The hut had bunks, a sofa in front of the window looking out to the lake and the million-dollar view, a small table and chairs, and gingham curtains at the windows. Everything in the crib was a cast-off from home – nothing new.

To get a weak power supply, we put one shilling at a time in the meter box. The local milkman called at the Camp each morning and we put our milk billy out on a table by the main gates. We had to collect it first thing in the morning before the sun came out. We had a meat-safe outside on the cool side of the crib for our daily purchases of meat and perishables.

We could hardly wait to go down the hill to meet the *Earnslaw* each morning and night. It was such fun watching all the sheep, horses and even vehicles being taken off the boat when it came in at night. Three days a week it went down to Kingston to get coal, and took supplies to the Stations on the way, and the other three days it did the same to the Head of the Lake. There wasn't a road to Glenorchy then.



Templetons' rowboats; water-skiing in the background (Lakes District Museum EL5469)

The next adventure of our holiday was to hire one of the Templetons' clinker rowboats. They were moored beside the steamer wharf where there are now tiered steps. There were five of us children (we always came with another family), and the rowboats cost two shillings and sixpence to hire. That was six-pence for each of us. One of our party was terrified of water, but he was happy to give us his six-pence and sit on the beach. Off we went. We were only allowed to go as far as the beacon (probably the only restriction put on us for the whole holiday), and yes, some of us would climb the beacon on a calm day.

Lunch would be next on the list, and we'd be off to Robins Bakery on Rees Street for fresh pies and crusty bread. We'd then all walk over to the far side of the Gardens Peninsula to picnic there for the afternoon. We called it the Lions' Den, as there were lots of rocks where we sat around. In the afternoon we swam and jumped off the jetties.

Then it would be ice-cream time – several shops in town sold ice-creams, but our favourite was Tripps in Rees Street.

Other lovely days out were spent going on the *Earnslaw* up to Glenorchy and Kinloch, or riding in one of the Tomkies' launches, *Muratai I* or the new *Muratai II*. The *Muratai* boats went daily to the Jardines' Kawerau Falls Station, and in the afternoons to Bob's Cove. Morning and afternoon teas were served. Then one year, Frank Howarth arrived with his very new and modern boat, the *Meteor*.



*Muratai* in Queenstown Bay (Lakes District Museum EL2299)

A walk up to the now Fernhill area to Thompsons' strawberry farm was another favorite activity.

In the evenings after tea we played play cards and board games. As we got older, we loved to go over to the Camp hall, to gaze through the windows at everyone dancing or watching movies.

When we were young teenagers, water-skiing became the thing to do. We had been sitting on the beach, enviously watching people water-ski. So, not to be beaten, we got some fruit boxes, took the slats off and made our own water skis. We shaped them to look like the real ones. Of course, we didn't have a boat to pull us, so we used the paddling-pool that was behind where the Bath-house is now. We had long ropes and as people walked through to the Gardens, we asked them if they would pull us. We would be at one end of the pool, and they would be at the other, and they pulled us along. For two years this kept us very happy during our holidays.

One special treat was to be taken out to Frankton. Our friends who had a car would shuttle us out, one family then the other. We'd go to the Lower Shotover pub first where the mums and dads would have a beer. Of course, children weren't allowed inside, so we would be passed a drink of 'rasperilla' out the window. Then we would go to the Frankton beach for a picnic tea. We would make a fire and boil little saveloys in a billy. There were only terraces of sandhills and wild gooseberry bushes everywhere. I vaguely remember the odd crib, but it was really just barren.



Photo: Sue Simms - seen fourth from left

Every summer we would collect all the empty lemonade bottles we could find. They were everywhere - people just used to drop them. They were worth about threepence for a large bottle and a penny for the smaller ones. On the last day of our two weeks, we would go down to Buckhams Cordial Factory near the lower Gardens entrance, where the Novotel Hotel is now, to cash in all the bottles. This was the start of our pocket money for our next summer holiday. We came to Queenstown only in January in my young days.

I don't remember there being lots of tourists around in the early years of the 1950s, but by the 1960s, they were starting to arrive in buses.

What wonderful carefree holidays we had, staying in the little crib at the Camp. As I got older, I was able to bring a friend to stay, and we had to head-and-tail in the bunks to fit us all in.

In the 1960s the old crib was replaced with a brand new one. It had all mod cons, and we had many happy holidays in that crib too.

## Arcadia Guest-house, Paradise, and Joseph Cyprian Fenn

By Clive Geary, with additional material



Arcadia Station has just been sold after belonging to the Veint family since 1951. It is reported that the new owner intends to refurbish it and open it as a guest-house again.

This seems an apt time to republish parts of an article by Clive Geary, a former President of the Historical Society, from Issue 55, May 1995, which can be read in full on our website. Additional material has been added from the *Lake Wakatip Mail*.

Who wouldn't want to visit and stay forever in Arcadia at Paradise - names evoking perfect happiness?

Joseph Cyprian Fenn – see below – had the house built between April 1906 and January 1907, and named it Arcadia after a classical Greek area known as a land of rustic simplicity and bliss.

The timber was red beech which was milled nearby. Tom Bryant from Kinloch was employed to shift the equipment needed for the milling from Kinloch to Paradise. This was an arduous task as forty-foot lengths of shafting had to be transported by bullock carts for several miles to Paradise where the sawmill was to be located. The builders were Walker & Son from Invercargill. [The architect isn't named in sources used.]

A reporter from the *Lake Wakatip Mail* visited and was expansive in his praise: *On going inside, the visitor's attention is at once arrested by the spaciousness of the hall, which is elegantly papered and carpeted and which contains the latest*

appointments. In the front of the building are situated the smoking room and a sitting room...The comfort of patrons has on every hand been studied by the owner. On the ground floor are also a capacious dining room 35ft by 16ft 6 in, kitchen, pantry, three bedrooms, bathroom and lavatory....

The apartments in the upper storey are reached by means of an easy grade flight of stairs. These consist of a sitting room, ten bedrooms and a library. The furnishings throughout are on a lavish scale ... and conduce greatly towards the general excellence and up-to-date-ness of the interior. Gothic fireplaces, the latest tiled hearths and mantelpieces also add much to the adornment of the sitting rooms....

The whole of the timber except the stairway and certain mouldings was procured out of the bush in the vicinity and sawn by Mr Fenn's mills.

In 1911 the house was enlarged with an annex, increasing the size to sixteen rooms. An octagonal tower was supposed to be added but this never eventuated.

Joseph Fenn didn't lived in the house but remained in his cottage nearby. He employed managers to run the house as an accommodation house for the tourists who visited the famously beautiful area. Mr and Mrs Storey of Port Chalmers were the first managers before passing it on to Harry Birley (and well-known local mountaineer and guide) and his wife in January 1908. Mr J.W. Gardiner, who had been the providore on the lake steamers *Mountaineer*, *Ben Lomond* and *Antrim* before the Government took over the licence in 1902, became the manager in 1912. Prosperity followed, lifting tourist numbers to 400 yearly from 1911-1914, which surpassed its competitor Paradise House. Following Mr Gardiner came James Watson, 1915-1916 and James George 1916-1919.

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—o:o:—

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J. W. Gardiner,  
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## Joseph Cyprian Fenn

Joseph Fenn was born in Bedfordshire in 1854, the son of the Canon of Gloucester. His father, Joseph Finch Fenn, had seven brothers. All followed the law or the church except John who migrated to Dunedin where he lived in York Place with his wife Catherine (Kate) until his early death. In 1873 Kate married William Mason, the well-known architect.

After schooling at Cheltenham College, Joseph went to Cambridge University. His prowess seems to have been in rowing, where he won the Colquhoun sculls in 1876 and his 'blue' in 1877 when the race with Oxford resulted in a dead-heat.



J.C.Fenn as a young man

When in his mid-twenties he left England for Canada, then New Zealand. He visited Paradise where the grandeur of its lakes, mountains and rivers, claimed his fascination, and he seldom left. From 1881 onwards, by purchasing land and leasing runs, he acquired sizable pieces of land which became Arcadia Station. The first house he built burnt down a year later. He then built a small cottage near the Jordan River where he lived for the rest of his life.

In his over forty years at Paradise, he kept to himself, neither seeking society unnecessarily nor needing society to sustain his mental balance. A cultured gentleman, he was reserved with a generous nature and a high sense of honour.

He never married. The only involvements that did occur are shrouded in mystery or perhaps never happened. According to some sources, when he first left university, he took his bride-to-be to his family home, but his father married her instead. It was after this that the Joseph emigrated. According to sources, he did not open letters from England thereafter.

Possibly, much later, he proposed to the Isobel 'Poppy' Aitken, the daughter of proprietor of nearby Paradise House. However, according to her family, his proposal was more of a business proposition, which she declined.

Of his stainless life there seems no doubt. His independent attitude and courteous demeanour were part of him to the highest degree. Judging by the books in his library, it's clear that he read widely.

In *Golden Days of Lake County*, F.W.G. Miller provides two examples which give an insight into his manner:

*Once when he mustering sheep, a drag with a number of women came along just when Fenn was using the classical drover's vocabulary to urge them along the proper road. He halted the vehicle, and hat in hand, apologised to the women, explaining at the same time that that was the only language the sheep understood.*

*Fenn was always most punctilious in the manner of addressing his employees, which never varied from his manner when speaking to his equals in station. One of the local characters, Jerry Cronin, used to give him a hand at drafting, but unlike Fenn, Jerry*

*was a poor hand at working dogs. On this occasion they were trying to work some sheep and Fenn politely asked Jerry to tie his own dog up, but Jerry waved his hand airily and said all would be well. All was not well, and the utmost confusion ensued. When everything was straightened out, Fenn said with vexation: 'You know, Mr Cronin, I would have given five pounds for the not to have happened.'*

*'Sure, Mr Fenn,' said Cronin, all sympathy, 'I'd have cut the ...'s throat for half that.'*

By 1920 Joseph Fenn had decided that he must quit the property and he sold it, but he continued to live in his cottage beside the Jordan River. On Boxing Day 1923 he was taken to a private hospital in Queenstown where he died on 3 January 1924 aged 69. His grave in the Queenstown cemetery is marked by a substantial black headstone.

According to his obituary in *Lake Wakatip Mail*: *Although a retiring disposition prevented Mr Fenn from participating publicly in any local functions, a subscription list – especially one for a charitable of patriotic purpose – was never presented to him in vain.* He had bequeathed all his books to the Rees Valley Library.

Besides Arcadia House, his legacy lies in the names of several local peaks from Greek mythology – Niobe, Poseidon, Chaos, Minos, Amphion and so on. These reflect his classical learning and his love of the majestic mountains.

#### Sources

Geary, Clive, 'Joseph Cyprian Fenn' in *Queenstown Courier* Issue 55, 1995

Miller, F.W.G., *Golden Days of Lake County*, Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, 1966

#### Additional material:

*Lake Wakatip Mail* accessed from Papers Past: [www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz](http://www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz)

Jim Veint on the Glenorchy Community Website [www.glenorchycommunity.nz](http://www.glenorchycommunity.nz) which is highly recommended and contains photos and excerpts from the guestbook.

Drawings by Audrey Bascand in *Old Buildings of the Lakes District* by Marion Borrell with drawings by Audrey Bascand, published by David Johnston, Dunedin, 1972



Photo taken when the Historical Society visited Arcadia in 1989



**It is appropriate that the Museum is built around the original Bank of New Zealand and stables. While originally a repository of gold, the Bank now is the repository of information on the region's past.**

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