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James Mitchell, William Rogers and Jack Tewa on Lake Wakatipu, 9 August 1862 ***By Ronnie Baker***

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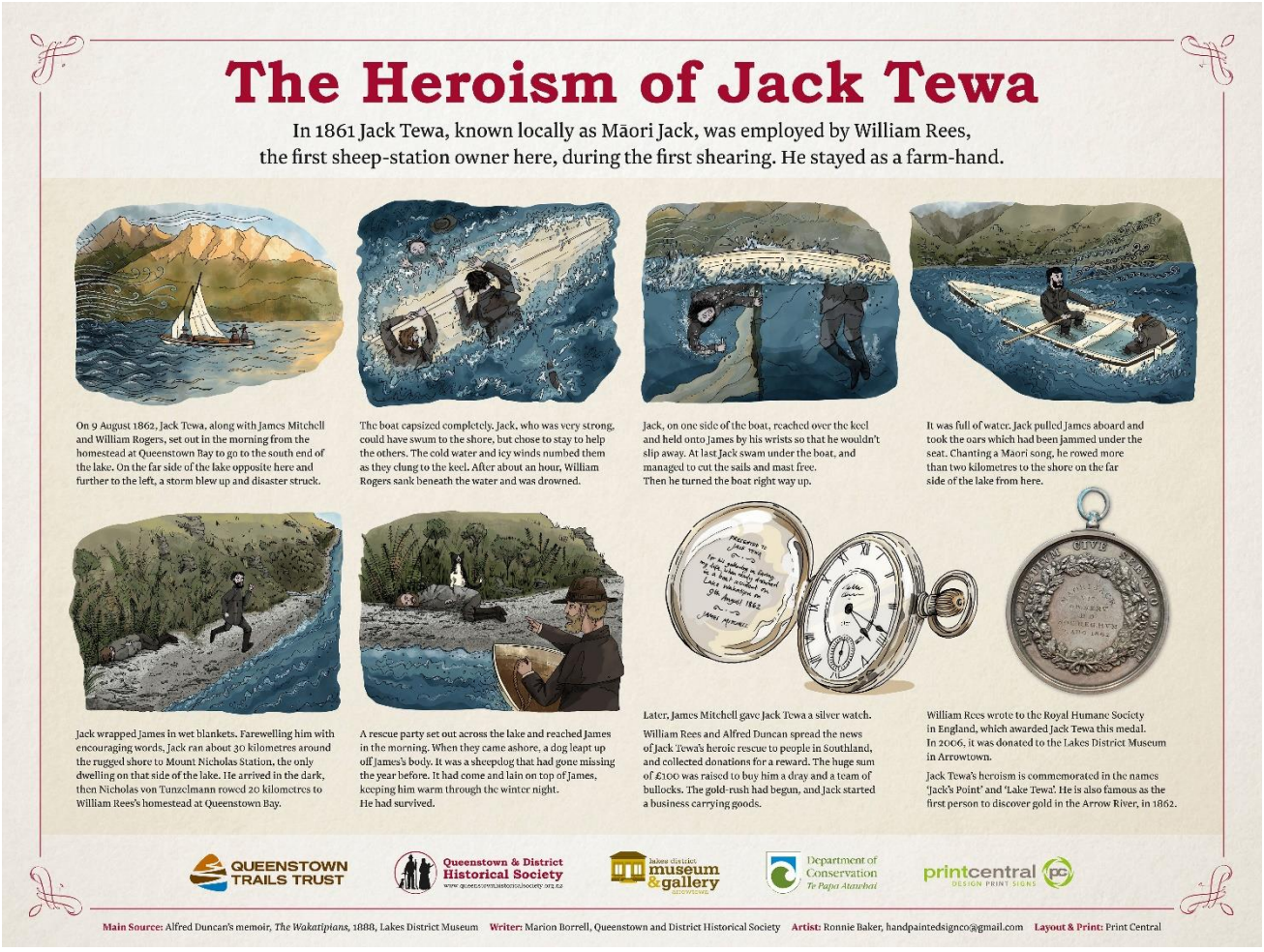


The Historical Society has created this panel for the Queenstown Trails Trust. It overlooks the lake and the scene of the action, beside the trail adjoining the Jack's Point golf course. The sequence of illustrations is by local artist Ronnie Baker.

Because some of our members might not be able to walk or bike to see the sign, we're publishing it as an article.

The Heroism of Jack Tewa

In 1861 Jack Tewa, known locally as Māori Jack, was employed by William Rees, the first sheep-station owner, during the first shearing. He stayed as a farm-hand.

On 9 August 1862, Jack, with James Mitchell and William Rogers, set out in the morning from the homestead at Queenstown Bay to go to the south end of the lake.

When they were on the far side of the lake, a storm blew up and disaster struck.

The boat capsized completely.
Jack, who was very strong, could have swum to the shore, but chose to stay to help the others. The cold water and icy winds numbed them as they clung to the keel.
After about an hour, William Rogers sank beneath the water and was drowned.

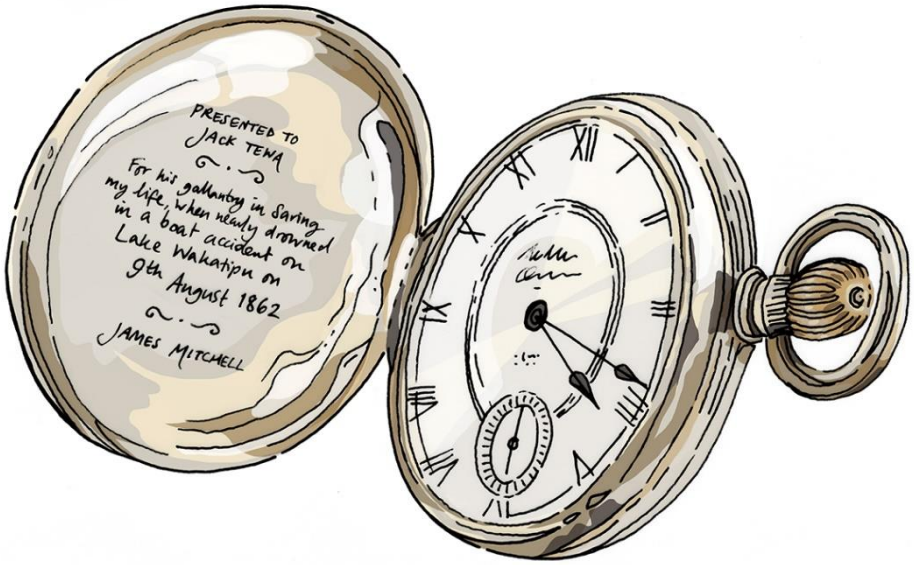
Jack, on one side of the boat, reached over the keel and held onto James by his wrists so that he wouldn't slip away. At last Jack swam under the boat, and managed to cut the sails and mast free. Then he turned the boat right way up.

It was full of water. Jack pulled James aboard and took the oars which had been jammed under the seat. Chanting a Māori song, he rowed more than two kilometres to the shore on the far side of the lake.

Jack wrapped James in wet blankets. Farewelling him with encouraging words, Jack ran about 30 kilometres around the rugged shore to Mount Nicholas Station, the only dwelling on that side of the lake. He arrived in the dark, then Nicholas von Tunzelmann rowed 20 kilometres to William Rees's homestead at Queenstown Bay.

A rescue party set out across the lake and reached James in the morning. When they came ashore, a dog leapt up off James's body. It was a sheepdog that had gone missing the year before. It had come and lain on top of James, keeping him warm through the winter night. He had survived.

Later, James Mitchell gave Jack Tewa a silver watch.



William Rees and Alfred Duncan spread the news of Jack Tewa's heroic rescue to people in Southland, and collected donations for a reward. The huge sum of £100 was raised to buy him a dray and a team of bullocks. The gold-rush had begun, and Jack started a business carrying goods.

William Rees wrote to the Royal Humane Society in England, which awarded Jack Tewa this medal.
In 2005, it was donated to the Lakes District Museum in Arrowtown.

Jack Tewa's heroism is commemorated in the names 'Jack's Point' and 'Lake Tewa'.

He is also famous as the first person to discover gold in the Arrow River, in 1862.

Main Source: Alfred Duncan's memoir, *The Wakatipians* (1888)
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LOGOS: Queenstown Trails Trust, Queenstown and District Historical Society, Lakes District Museum, DOC

Jack Tewa – What do we know about him?

This is the information currently available about Jack Tewa from Pakeha sources, compiled by Marion Borrell.

Julia Bradshaw, who was the archivist at the Lakes District Museum and then curator at Shantytown, researched the information about the West Coast.

Jack Tewa, Maori Jack, Hatini Whiti, Anthony White, Ngatina Ereueti, Jack Edwards. These various names have made it difficult for researchers to follow his movements.

In this district, Jack Tewa aka Maori Jack is famous for the rescue of James Mitchell in 1862, as told in the previous article, and for the discovery of gold in the Arrow River at much the same time.

Late 1861: Prospector becomes station hand.

Alfred Duncan and George Simpson were living at the head of the lake in order to stock it with sheep for William Rees.

Duncan recounts: … *the boat came up* [*from Rees's station which was at Queenstown Bay] bringing two Maoris who wished to prospect for gold in that part. They were named Bill Leonard and Jack Tewa, and they stayed with us for a week or so, until the main body of shearers and rouseabouts arrived, when they announced their intention of giving up prospecting, in which they had been unsuccessful, and taking their places on the shearing floor.*

A temporary shed was erected on a bay about a mile south of our hut, consisting of a frame of saplings, and grey blankets stretched over it. Eight shearers – all Maoris – occupied the shearing boards, and the station hands did the other work in connection with the shearing. One of the features of the shearing was the nightly concert, in which all the Maoris took part. It is difficult to imagine anything more demoniac than the extravagances of these performances. The aspect, movements, and noises of these wild looking creatures, their distorted features, and their hair tossed in all directions, as they lashed themselves into fury over the weird unearthly tunes in which they indulged. And yet they were as quiet as a lot of fellows, and as hard working and respectable as any gang of shearers that I have ever seen.

After the shearing was over, everyone returned to the home station, including Alfred Duncan and George Simpson who drove the sheep back to Queenstown Bay. The other Maori left the district but Rees employed Jack Tewa as a station hand.

Early August 1862: Discovery of Gold in the Arrow

William Rees wrote to Vincent Pyke: *Maori Jack … showed me a sample of gold which he said he had washed with his shovel on the bed of the Arrow. I then felt certain that it was only a question of time before I should be surrounded with diggers.*

Rees was right. Jack Tewa is now acknowledged as probably the discoverer of gold in the Arrow River. While he didn't exploit his find, soon other prospectors heard of it and the rush began.

9 August 1862: The Rescue of James Mitchell.

This is recounted in by Alfred Duncan in *The Wakatipians*, by William Rees in the letter sent to the Royal Humane Society in London, and in the Invercargill newspaper repeated by other papers. The accounts by Duncan and Rees are not identical in scope and in some details. For the information panel, Duncan's account is the main one used.

With the donations of £72 collected for Jack Tewa, a dray and team of bullocks were purchased and presented to him, and he became a carter, transporting goods to the diggings.

As a result of Rees's letter to the Royal Humane Society, Jack Tewa was awarded this medal for bravery. The Latin inscription HOC PRETIUM CIVE SERVATO TULIT means, 'He has obtained this reward for having saved the life of a citizen.'

It seems odd to us that his medal has what we would now consider a nickname, 'Maori Jack', engraved on it, but apparently that is how he introduced himself. Tewa clearly valued the medal, and it has assisted historians in tracking his movements.

Photo: Jo Boyd, Lakes District Museum

1863-5: Carting and Goldmining in the Wakatipu

As well as being a carter, it seems that he was also prospecting and mining.
January 1863: The *Otago Daily Times* reported that he had departed on a prospecting trip in the direction of Southland. Then in September that year the *Lake Wakatip Mail* reported that he was 'making a respectable livelihood' as a carter.

1865: Alfred Duncan recounts that shortly before he left to return to Britain, he chanced to meet Tewa in Queenstown. He *had just arrived from the Shotover, where he had been successful in taking £400 out of a claim in which he had a share. Hearing that I was on the eve of leaving for home, he entreated me to let him accompany me, as he had the means of taking a trip, which had been the dream of his youth and the aspiration of his riper years….* [He wished to go to a theatre and be introduced to 'Queen Wicatoria'.] *Jack and I had always been great friends, and I really think he would have done anything in his power to please me, but I could not see how to oblige him in this matter, as I was not going home direct…. I persuaded him at last to give up the idea of taking a trip to the mother country, and to return to the Shotover, where I hoped to meet him again on my return. Wringing his big powerful hand, I left him in standing in the middle of Rees Street, the tears running down his handsome face, and I regret to say that I have neither seen nor heard of that good-hearted giant, Maori Jack, since that day.*

August 1865: Vincent Pyke in *Early Gold Discoveries* records that Hatini Whiti, known on the Central Otago goldfields as Maori Jack, accompanied him on an expedition find a road link between Lake Wanaka and Haast. They went via Haast Pass, then returned

to Clyde. Pyke recorded that Jack Tewa was a 'Thames native', that is, from Thames in the North Island.

October 1865: The *Lake Wakatip Mail* reported that Maori Jack guided a party of 70 miners to the mouth of the Haast River. These accounts were corroborated in 1897 by Maori at Bruce Bay who said that 'Big Jack', who had received a medal for saving a life on Lake Wakatipu, had come over the pass at the head of the Okura River about 30 years before. So, Jack Tewa was well known as a guide as well as for the medal.

West Coast Appearances.

Research is complicated by there being several people known as 'Maori Jack' on The Coast at the time.

28 December 1867 in the *Grey River Argus*: During the holiday period a swimming race was held across the Grey River and back. One of the contestants was a Maori named Jack who was a good swimmer, but didn't win first or second place. Maybe that was Jack Tewa.

2 October 1871: At No Town (the name of the town) in the Grey Valley, Ngatina Erueti aka Jack Edwards got into a fight with a mining partner named Nicola Johannes over the best way to work the claim. They both became heated, and Edwards hit Johannes on the head with his long-handled shovel. Believing that he had killed him, Edwards ran away and hid near Lake Brunner. Eighteen months later he was found and captured. When the case went to court, Johannes – who obviously had survived – didn't want to press charges as he said that he was just as much at fault for the quarrel.

The Resident Magistrate at first sentenced Jack Edwards to two months imprisonment with hard labour. But the magistrate was told about the medal from the Royal Humane Society for 'saving the life of one man at the risk of his own, and, under circumstances of great peril, bravely endeavouring to save the lives of others.' The judge therefore commuted the sentence to six weeks, without hard labour. (Not quite a get-out-of-jail card, but still useful!)

The trail goes cold:

To date no further references to Jack Tewa under any of his known names have been found. Perhaps he returned to Thames or travelled further afield as he wished.

The medal returns to the Wakatipu

In 2006 Annette Reinheimer of Christchurch contacted the Museum as she had been given the medal by her uncle, Fred Reinheimer, who was a descendant of West Coast miners. She didn't know how it had come into her family's possession. The Museum was delighted to purchase the medal which is now on display.

Sources:

Lakes District Museum archives including information collected by Julia Bradshaw
Duncan, Alfred H. *The Wakatipians*, Lakes District Centennial Museum, 1964, first published in 1888.
Griffths, G.J. *Queenstown's King Wakatip*, John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1971
Newspapers accessed from PapersPast: https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/

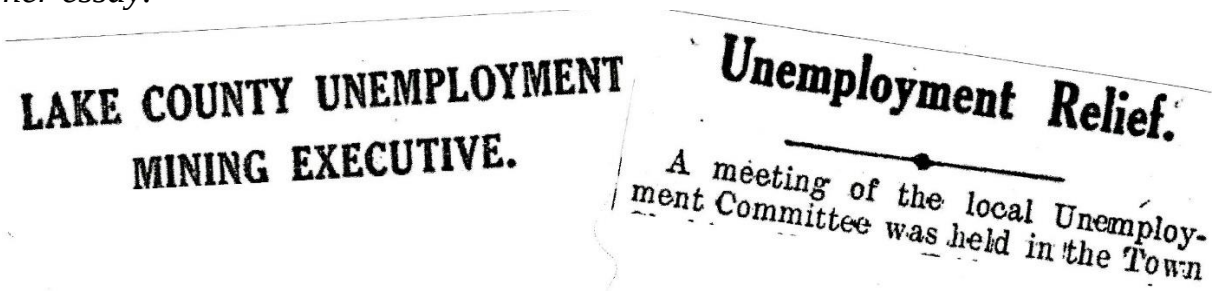
The Great Depression in the Wakatipu, 1929 - 1938

By Andrea King, written in 1989 when at Wakatipu High School

Edited selections from articles in Issues 42 and 43, 1989. The full essay can be found on our website – search the index for 'Depression'.

As New Zealand copes with the economic effects of COVID-19, and the Wakatipu suffers from the absence of international tourists, it's timely to look back 90 years.

In 1989 Andrea King was a joint winner of the Historical Society's William Rees Memorial Essay Competition for senior secondary school students. Winning essays were always published in the Queenstown Courier. Thirty-two years later, she is a lawyer working in Dubai. We thank her for giving us permission to select material from her essay.



LAKE COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT MINING EXECUTIVE.

Unemployment Relief.

A meeting of the local Unemployment Committee was held in the Town

The National Situation

The number of local men who lost their lives in world War I was heart-breaking. Those who did return came back with an amount of gratuity money. Many bought small businesses and farms and set up a regular, secure lifestyle for themselves and their families. When the economy collapsed in 1929, however, this group of people was probably the worst affected. Most had minimal savings tucked away and had to struggle to keep their businesses and lifestyles economically secure. Many could not.

Initial optimism that the depression would be short-lived declined as unemployment rose, and the government reduced its expenditure. In 1931 there was a 10% reduction in public service salaries, taxation was increased, and prices of goods were raised, all of which stretched the average family budget to the limit.

There were 'cuts' in all aspects of life. Employers could no longer afford to retain workers who were considered 'extra'. Those they did retain were usually for a minimal wage. Unemployment rose day by day. Under the 1930 Unemployment Act, unemployed people were paid at first a reasonably small amount, yet rates were lowered as pressure of numbers grew. The Prime Minister announced that only people doing actual work would be paid, and work schemes were set up, such as for gold prospecting and rabbit control. While there was discontent in cities with demonstrations and riots, in Queenstown people were more accepting of the crisis, for reasons explained below.

It was in this situation that the Labour Party came to power under Michael Joseph Savage in 1935. The government aimed to 'insulate' the economy through guaranteed prices for farmers, raising workers' wages and salaries, creating more jobs on public works, and generally reversing the retrenchment policies of the previous government. To many people, Savage was a hero who brought them out of the depression.

The Wakatipu District

Most people accepted the hardships that prevailed, and felt they had no choice but to cope and 'get on with the job.'

A picture of Queenstown life can be gained from interviews with folk who were children at the time. Bill Gordon kept producing his tasty sausages. The blacksmith did not stop shoeing horses that continued to be hired out from the stables. Hailles and Lobb Drapery and the grocery shops stayed open for business, along with Wilkinson's souvenir shop and pharmacy, to give a few examples. Murdochs' carrier business circulated around the town and beyond in their Dodge truck. Veints' butchery kept up meat supplies – their prices included sausages for sixpence a pound, steak for 10 pence, and a whole sheep was $4 or 5. The cheese factory near Lake Hayes and the flour mill kept going, and businessmen from Invercargill also 'popped through' every now and then to sell their wares.

Cows were brought down from the Commonage every morning and evening for milking. The milkman called each day at every house to fill up the billies. The *Lake Wakatip Mail*, the Post Office and the telephone exchange kept communication going. Nothing, however, could outdo the discussions of the local ladies when they visited each other or chatted over the fence. The community was extremely close, and newcomers were made welcome.

When the *Earnslaw* came in, everyone gathered to meet it. Not even the Depression could dull the unique beauty of the area, and the short tourist season helped keep the shops, tearooms and accommodation houses going in Queenstown, Glenorchy and Paradise.

Self-sufficiency was the order of the times. Besides having vegie gardens, henhouses and orchards, people went out to fish or hunt. Wild pigs were abundant especially at Bob's Cove, and goats and a few deer wandered Fernhill. Ducks and quail could be shot. Most boys had rabbit traps set in secret places, and sold the skins to a local buyer – a popular source of pocket money.

Businesses

In Queenstown it was rare for a business to close down. Instead, they reduced staff, and some had to diversify. Hours of work were longer for businesses, especially as many were family concerns. The shops were often open late on Saturday nights, and Wednesdays were half-days. There were no unions to restrict trading hours and some owners worked on into the evening to save hiring extra staff. For example, Mr William Veint owned a butchery in Rees Street and later Lower Beach Street. After he had come home and eaten his dinner, he would go to his abattoir in what is now Veint Crescent to kill meat in the evening while it was cool. Although budgets were very tight, most Queenstown businesses maintained themselves, usually due to family effort.

Farming

During the earlier and better years of the 1920s, many farmers had bought land and would continue. During the Depression, persistently low prices received for produce made the cost of mortgage repayment a nightmare and drove many farmers in New Zealand to the verge of bankruptcy and beyond.

Local farmers were affected. As prices continued to drop, sheep farmers came into Queenstown and sold their home-killed meat door to door. Their families, of course, were able to feed themselves from their large gardens, orchards, hens and house-cows. However, half a dozen or so farmers were forced to give up their farms to cover debts. Although the Lake County Council reduced its rates by 44% to 1⅛ penny in the pound on rateable property, a delegation from the local Farmers' Union asked for further reduction. However, as the Council was already coping with outstanding rates arrears, it decided it could not afford to give further rates relief.

Charlie Easton with Dandy, Rowdy, Spanker and one other. *(LDM EL6063, and Alan Hamilton)*

Against the advice of some people, Charlie Easton drained the swamp (across the road from what is now Industrial Estate) which was nicknamed 'Misery Farm' because it was so unpromising. He ploughed the area with a team of bullocks and planted a market garden. Soon he was producing rows of luscious tomatoes. Often he came into town to sell his produce, and due to his generosity, usually gave each person an apple as they passed by. Miss Isobel Tallentire commented, 'I wouldn't be surprised if he gave away more than he sold.'

Public Works Schemes

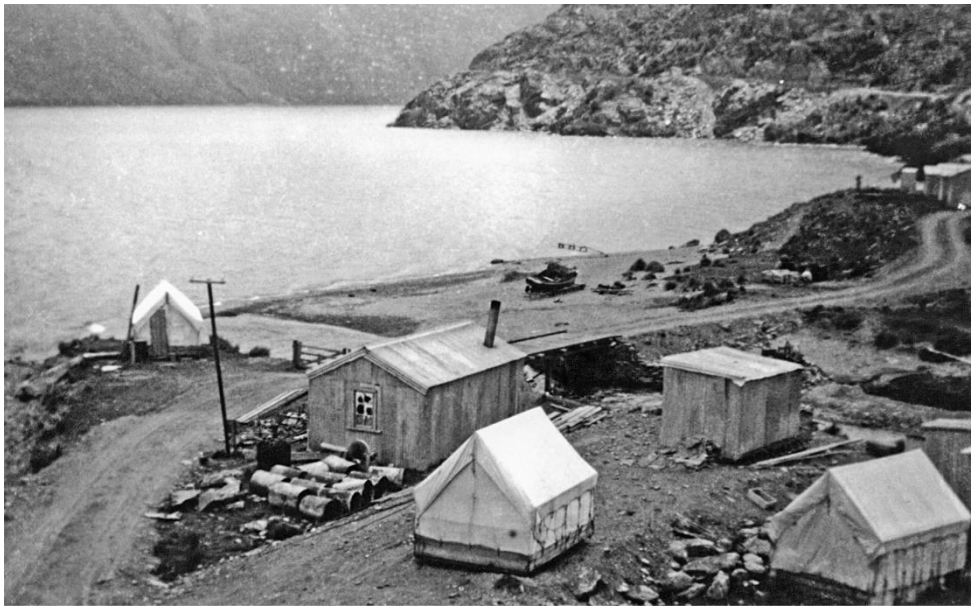
In the Lakes District these schemes definitely helped 'clean up' the unemployment problem, which was relatively minor when compared to the city figures. It was estimated that fewer than 35 people received the 'dole' in Queenstown. The major work schemes set up here soaked up most of the local unemployed as well as bringing numbers of city unemployed people. Local Public Works schemes included the Kingston Road, the Arrow Irrigation Scheme, and goldmining.

The Kingston Road

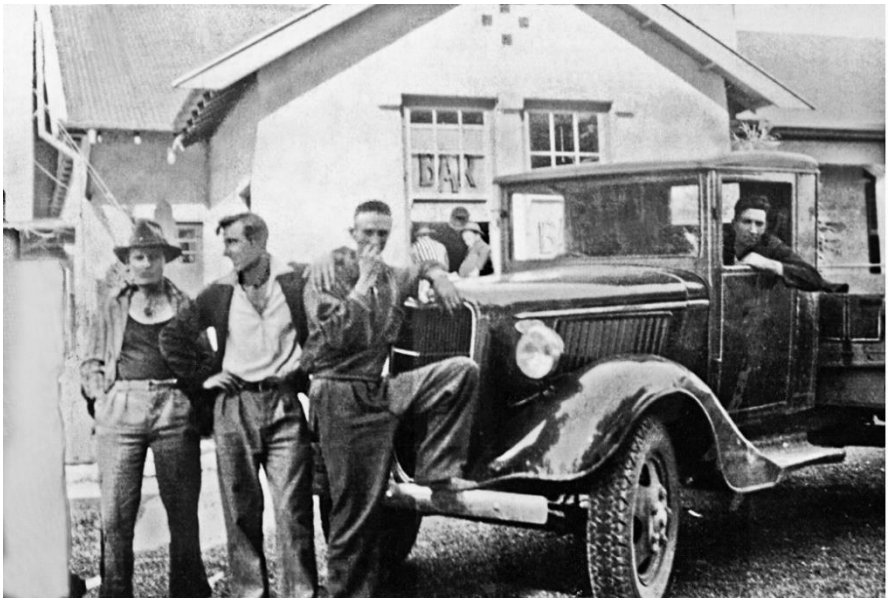
A slow start was made in 1928 at the Kawarau end, and later at Kingston. The authorities and some locals including the Lake County Council and the Railways Department were at first not in favour of the road being built. Many believed that the *Earnslaw* services, operated by the Railways, would be sacrificed.

Construction was halted for five years. It resumed in 1934, by which time opinion had shifted, especially as the road would be designated a main highway, meaning that the maintenance would not be a burden on ratepayers. The road was officially opened on 4 April 1936.

As it was relief work, the aim was employment, so equipment was limited and progress slow. Most of the workers were from Invercargill. They were known as 'Bob Semple's Army' by the locals, and they lived in encampments of tents and huts.



The camp near Devils Staircase.
Tents had wooden floors.
(LDM EL5419



Workers at Kingston pub.
Note how shiny the truck is.
(LDM EP3648)

For longer articles about the making of the road from Kingston, see *Courier Issue 84* by Danny Knudson and *Couriers 83 and 85* by Joan Cooke, available on our website.

The workers at the Kawarau end were kept supplied by the locals. For example, grocers ran regular truckloads of groceries and meat to the encampment after collecting them from the *Earnslaw* and butcher, and received orders for the next load. Doctor Bill Anderson made frequent trips to attend to medical needs. On Saturday (late night shopping) the men and their families would come to the Queenstown Council building (on the corner of Stanley and Ballarat Streets) where locals served them tea, scones, etc.

Gold-mining

Another method of raising revenue was gold-mining and it proved very popular. As the number of unemployed men rose, the Mines Department developed relief schemes as 'conditions that proved disastrous to other sections of economic life were particularly favourable to the development of gold-mining. A number of long-established sluicing claims were revived and often were more successful than new operations. In preceding years, the cost of extraction had risen while the price of gold remained stationary; now labour was cheap and plentiful, and the value of gold increased rapidly in consequence of the abandonment of the gold standard.' Between 1931 and 1934 the export value of gold rose from £3.15s per ounce to £8.45s. Gold-mining offered employment that could provide its own remuneration.

Subsidised prospectors searched, in hope of staking new claims, where goldfields had once existed. The old local mines which had proved so valuable in the late 1800s were now brought back to life. The majority of prospectors were inexperienced, so the Mines Department hastily disseminated information on mining techniques. The miners were permitted to retain the gold they won until they began to earn more than the subsidy, then their pay was discontinued. Their allowance was 15s per week for a single man and 30s per week for a married man.

Miners staked claims at many different points on the Shotover, Kawarau, Arrow, Dart and Rees Rivers and their tributaries. Miners set themselves up in tents and occasionally caves and old shanties at Glenorchy, Kinloch, Skippers, Moke Road, Moonlight and Macetown. Disputes sometimes arose over water and mining claims, which is how Lake Dispute earned its name.

While some worked individually or in small groups, others were employed by syndicates who received subsidies to do so, the aid ceasing as soon as a company declared a profit. Companies in the local area included Skippers Ltd, Upper Shotover, and Moonlight No 1. Some companies depended on technical ingenuity. The Sandhills Company proposed to divert the Shotover River above Arthurs Point; Skippers Ltd suggested the diversion of the river with an 8-foot weir and steel fluming on one side of the riverbed. This company sluiced out 1,098 ounces in five years. At Maori Point on the Shotover, A E Smith also conducted successful sluicing.

In these ways, goldmining proved to be an economic lifeline during the Depression.

The Arrowtown Irrigation Scheme

This was another important government scheme, under the control of the Public Works Department. It was constructed between 1923 and 1931. Besides providing employment, it made a significant difference to the farming community.

For more detail about the Irrigation Scheme, see the separate article in this magazine.

Sluicing at Moonlight *(LDM EL17150.5)*

Miners at the Arrow in 1943: GWP, George Pittaway, Jim Shaw, Bodkin, A. Murphy, Bill Pittaway, G. Hansen, Jim Ingram, B. Adams and Arthur Pittaway. *(LDM EP4212)*

Children of the Depression Remember Frugality

'I've never seen anyone who could slice bread as thinly as my mother could,' John Murdoch said.

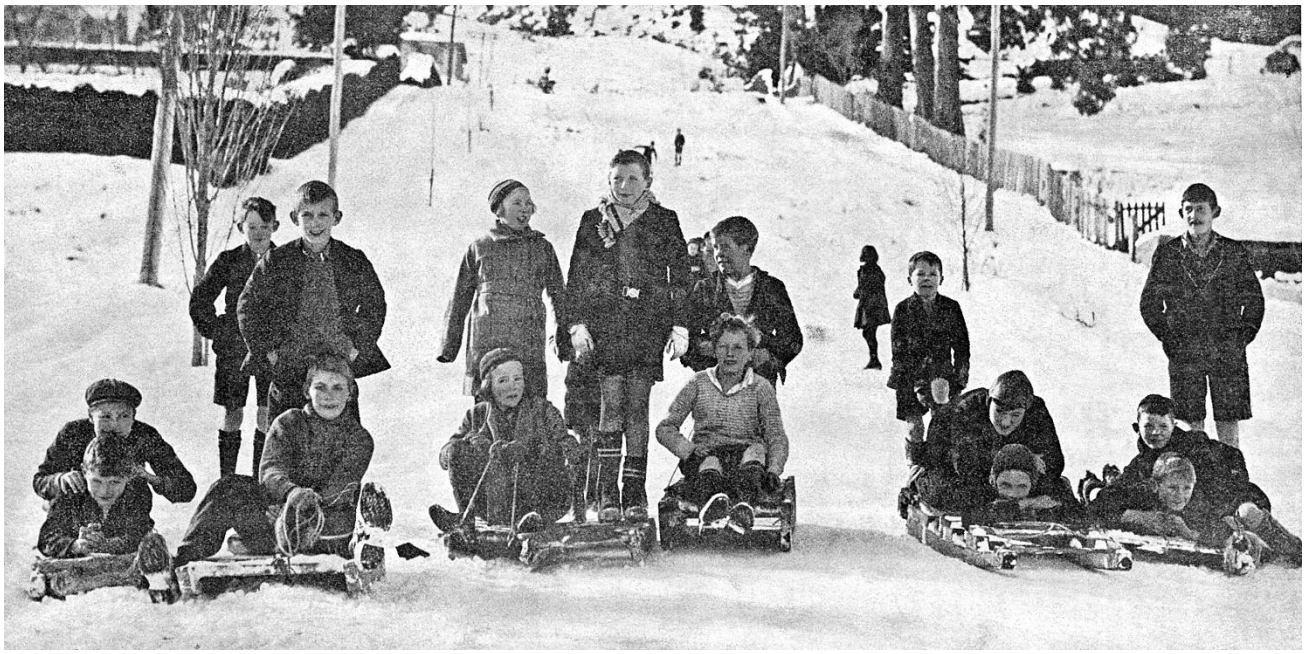
For more about everyday life from the perspective of the children, see the second part of Andrea King's essay, printed in *Courier Issue 43*. She records material gleaned from interviews she did 1989 with locals who lived in the district during the Depression. Details include children collecting sheep's heads and offal from the butcher and slaughterhouse for the family pot; families knee-deep in the lake collecting driftwood after heavy rain; the usefulness of 4-gallon kerosene tins; and home-made soap and candles.

Lloyd Veint commented, 'We learned the value of money and I think I'm still frugal because of the Depression.'

Conclusion

It would be wrong to say that the effects of the Depression on the district were slight. Everybody felt it; it was inescapable. Some of the effects, however, could almost be described as beneficial to the local area, for instance the Arrow Irrigation Scheme and the Kingston Road. A great deal of employment, for out-of-area people too, was created, and the locals were very generous to the families who came to earn a living on the public Works Schemes.

Perhaps a reason that the county was less badly affected than city areas is that it had a tight-knit community, and all locals including the Councils co-operated to support one another. The area had always been reasonably isolated and self-sufficient. The community would not allow destitute people or starving children. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Depression here was that people maintained their dignity. The Depression proved to be character-building, and the people learned that the saying 'Money doesn't buy happiness' is true. The people of this district proved this.



Tobogganing in Ballarat Street in 1934 *(The Weekly News, LDM EL6470).*

The Arrow Irrigation Scheme – Origins and Continuation

By Marion Borrell

Winding across the basin from the Arrow to Frankton, the Arrow Irrigation Scheme continues to provide water 90 years after it was completed. Its scope and the impact it had on farming may be a revelation to many people today.

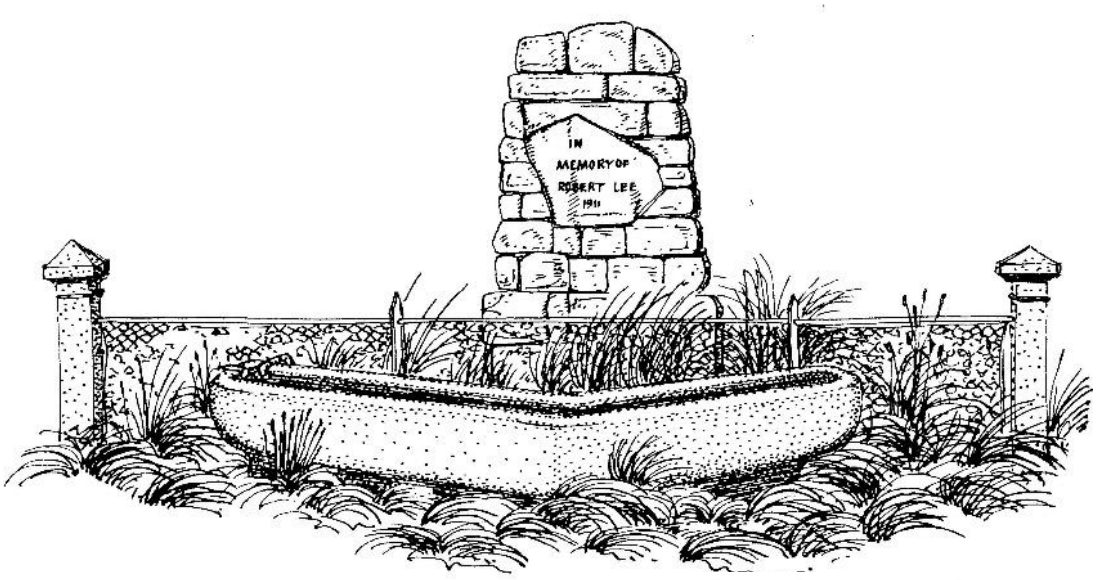
Irrigation's Early Years

The first water-races along the hillsides date from the era of gold-mining. In addition, races were created to provide water for Arrowtown from the dam in Bush Creek. These activities in some cases were competing for the valuable water, and farmers applying for water rights for irrigation could face objections from goldmining companies.

As mixed farming increased in the Whakatipu basin, farmers realised that because of the short growing season for grains and winter feed crops, irrigation would be very beneficial.

One early example of irrigation from the 1870s took place at Gibbston. Miners who had water licences from Deep Creek and had built houses near their claims then applied for sections of land which they farmed using their water for irrigation.

Another example is Robert Lee's at Threepwood Farm on Ladies Mile opened in 1911. His scheme brought water across the Kawarau River and cost £3-4000 ($320,000 today). Sad to say, Robert Lee died in 1912 and so did not live to see the fruits of the scheme, but his son, Leo, received the benefits. After Robert Lee's death, the community donated funds to create this memorial beside Ladies Mile which includes a water trough for the use of horse teams, with an overflow trough underneath for sheep.



Drawing by Audrey Bascand, 1971

These two examples were used as evidence of the benefits of irrigation. Visiting politicians were persuaded by being taken to Mr Lee's farm. The *Lake County Press*, published in Arrowtown, was a vigorous promoter of irrigation from the start and throughout the long process.

The Arrow River Proposal

Years of Lobbying the Public Works Department

In 1908 the Lake County Council applied unsuccessfully to the government for £10,000 (about $600,000 today) for irrigation on the Arrow Flat. At this time the government was pouring money into irrigation schemes, with Central Otago a major area where water would be of great benefit.

Lobbying continued, spurred on by seasons of drought, and in 1910 it focussed on the Arrow Falls, about five kilometres upstream from Arrowtown. The Lake County Council set up an irrigation committee, and the District Engineer, Mr F.W. Furkett, came from Dunedin to investigate. A preliminary survey of a proposed scheme from Arrow Falls was made, but the Public Works Department prioritised Central Otago.

Another sticking point was that farmers were wary of the cost both of the construction for the local councils and the ongoing pricing of the water for the farmers. Without a sufficient number of signed-up landowners, the government would not proceed. Once it was made clear that the Government would fund the construction, and the pricing of the water was explained, farmers became more willing.

By 1914 it seemed that the scheme might happen fairly soon, but during the war, the topic was shelved.

Approval and Design

From 1920 a renewed process of lobbying occurred with the added impetuous of the Otago Progress League. As the Central Otago Public Works irrigation schemes were completed, the opportunity would arise to move expertise and manpower to the Wakatipu. Many of the workers were returned soldiers in need of employment.

In 1924 the Minister of Public Works, Mr J.G. Coates took up the cause for a scheme, provided that the majority of the farmers signed the necessary agreement. Optimism abounded. At a public meeting described in the *Lake Wakatip Mail* as 'enthusiastic', Mr Tennant, the Government Instructor in Agriculture, explained the scope of the intended scheme and 'delivered a short lecture on the possibilities of irrigation, illustrating same with a series of lantern slides.'

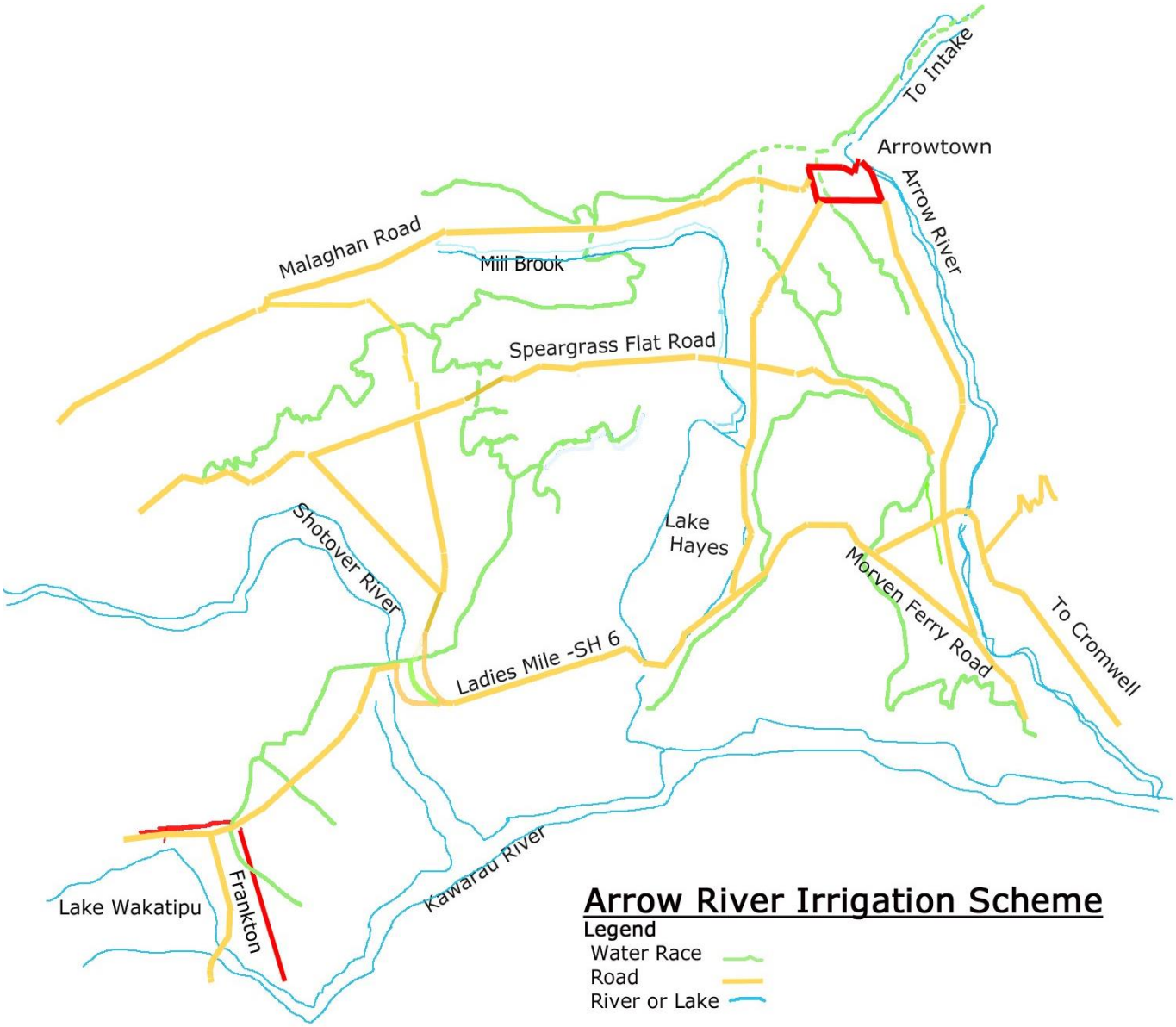
By mid-year almost all landowners had signed, contracting to receive water at a set price per acre, starting with one shilling in the first season (while they set up their distribution systems), and increasing each year up to £1 a year after four seasons. These charges later became a subject of dispute during the Depression.

In November the scheme made its way into the government's budget estimates. At last, the action could begin.

Survey work began in January 1925 when Mr G.S. Paterson, the engineer for the Public Works Department, arrived in Arrowtown with ten engineers and surveyors. They were based at the Lake County Council Office and housed in a camp set up on mining reserve land. The survey and design work took until the end of October.

See the next page for what they designed, along with some facts.

Source: Central Otago Irrigation Map No 7, redrawn by John Borrell



*Intake: Arrow River from a weir 5 kilometres up the Macetown Road from Arrowtown.
*Gravity-fed with pipes, races, tunnels and river crossings. Crosses the Shotover River underneath the Lower Shotover restored bridge.
*About 14 kilometres of pipes and 70 kilometres of races.
*Capacity: 1700 litres of water per second.
*Pipes: The original pipes were made from plates cast in England and shipped to Dunedin where foundries rolled and riveted them. They were sent by rail to Kingston to a lake steamer to Frankton, or to Cromwell where they were loaded onto trucks.
*Construction cost: £130,000 ($14 million today)
*Construction was completed in 1931
*Land irrigated: When first opened, 1700 hectares.
*Season: 1 September – 30 April

Construction

1926 was a year of great activity. Materials started arriving. A main camp for the construction workers and a large storage shed were built at the top of Merioneth Street,.

In early April, the *Lake County Press* reported that 80 men were employed, and more were arriving daily. As work on the races spread across the basin, another camp was built at Millers Flat, and presumably others elsewhere.

By the end of September, 192 people were employed. We can imagine that this increase in population and jobs was very welcome in the district.

Accidents

The steep, narrow Arrow Gorge in particular was a dangerous work-place. The one fatal accident on the scheme occurred there in May 1926 as reported in the *Lake County Press:*

Mr Robert Frew, a well-known resident of this district, met with a serious accident on the Macetown track on Sunday last. Frew… was on his way to his camp, and when near Pincher's bridge he left the track to recover a parcel which had been dropped by a fellow-workman on the previous day. He slipped and fell down a steep embankment, a distance of about 50 ft [15 metres], *landing on the brink of the river. The accident was witnesses by some of the workmen, and the unfortunate man was carried to an adjacent camp. Dr* [William] *Ferguson, who was quickly in attendance, found that Frew had been seriously injured. He was conveyed to Arrowtown, and thence to Cromwell by motor car. An examination under the X-Rays showed that the sufferer had sustained a fracture of the vertebral column.* He died in the Cromwell Hospital shortly afterwards. He had lived in the district since 1898 and was aged 48.

The *Otago Daily Times* also reported this accident and added:

This is the third accident that has occurred within a fortnight to men engaged in the irrigation works. On April 26 a man named William Johnston slipped and fell from the track over an embankment, fracturing two ribs. Another man, Septimus McNamara, was struck on the head by a piece of rock while engaged in blasting operations, a nasty scalp wound being inflicted.

Even the daily journey to and from Arrowtown had its dangers, and William Laloli, a timekeeper, fell while crossing Brackens Gully, suffering severe bruising and a facial injury.

A gelignite explosion partly destroyed the lower part of Robert Pye's face, and he lost his sight in one eye, but was reported to have otherwise made 'a good recovery.'

Delays

After September 1927, as the water-races were completed, further developments were delayed until funds became available. Tenders for the manufacture and supply of the pipes weren't called until March 1928. This caused frustration and resulted in hardship for some workers. Unemployed married returned soldiers, being the group considered the most in need of employment, were shifted to do relief work on the Kingston Road and on irrigation schemes near Alexandra. This seems to suggest that unmarried men and those who were not returned soldiers would have had no work.

The delay coincided with the driest season on record in the district, and farmers anxiously awaited the completion of the scheme.

Pipes Arrive

In December 1928 8 tons of bolts arrived in Arrowtown, and pipes began to be unloaded at Frankton jetty. The Cromwell firm of Hannah and Rance were successful tenderers for the cartage from Frankton. Their name can be seen on the trucks in some photos.

There were 2000 large gauge pipes up to one metre in diameter. In addition, there were 20 miles of smaller pipes.

From this stage, the manpower was increased with men being transferred from the Public Works schemes on the Kingston Road and at Makaroa.

Throughout 1929 pipe-lines and river-crossings were constructed, and the intake structures in the Arrow Gorge were begun.

The *Lake Wakatip Mail* in May reported, *'In connection with the Arrow River irrigation works, the gorge from the township is a hive of industry at the present time. Several gangs of men are engaged in placing the pipes in position, while another gang is driving piles at the various crossings where the pipe-line is to be taken over the river.'*

Completion

In October 1930, with the intake dam completed, water was turned on into the races. The Scheme was in operation.

In mid-1931 the remainder of the men were paid off, apart from five permanent race-men. (See next article.)

Over to the Users

Now that the water was at their boundaries, the farmers had a lot of 'spadework' to do to prepare their pastures and construct distribution systems.

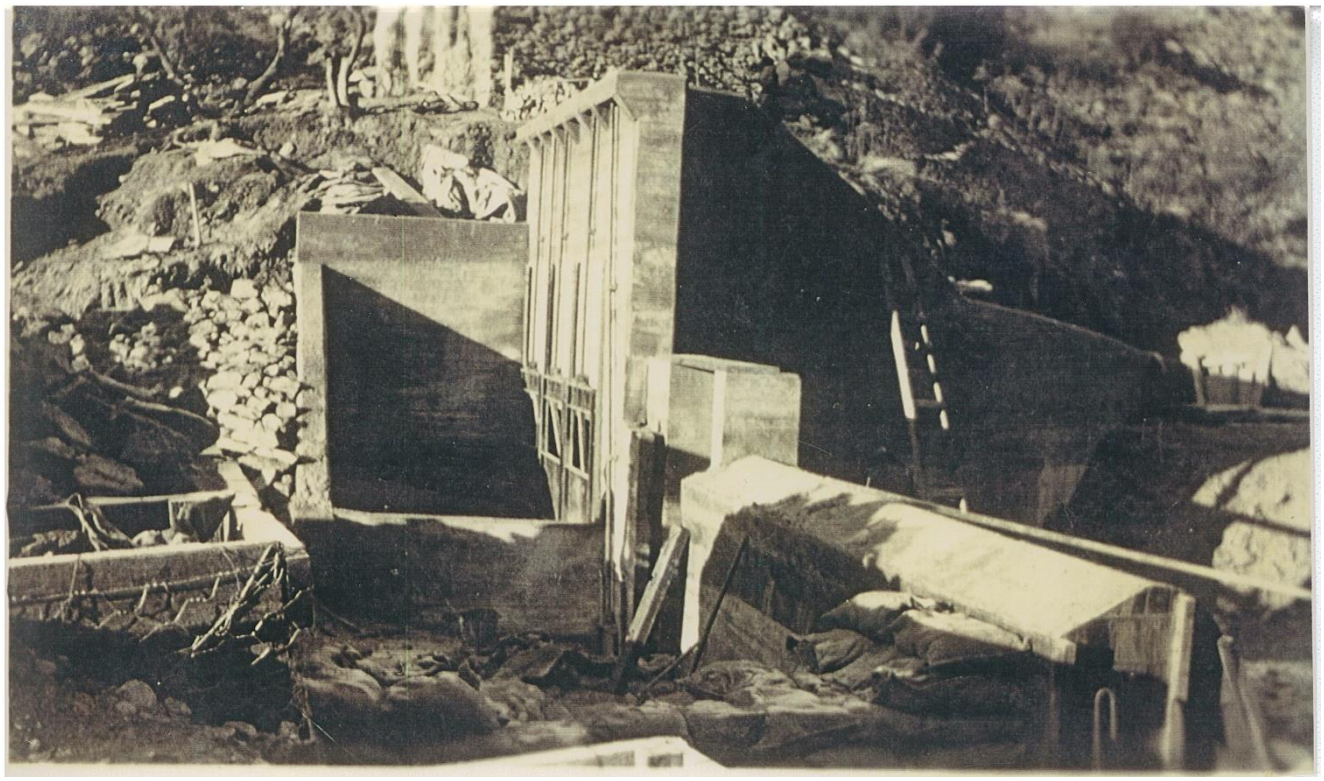
The Arrow Irrigation League, which had Mr R.M Paterson of Ayrburn Farm as chairman, held meetings of farmers and users. The M.P. for Central Otago, Mr W.A. Bodkin, who was very knowledgeable about irrigation schemes, was able to give advice about the operation of the system from the farmers' perspective.

With the Depression biting hard, some irrigators didn't pay the fees they'd contracted for. The Government understood this, but needed them to pay enough to maintain the scheme. Some farmers felt that they were paying even for land where irrigation wasn't suitable. Negotiations ensued. Some land was reclassified as not in the scheme, and the government reduced the payments overall. These measures certainly helped the farmers. The government, however, found in 1936 that over the whole country the irrigation charges did not cover the cost of interest on the money spent on the schemes.

The Arrow water was used also for three hydraulic mining claims including the Golden Arrow below the town.

By 1936, the Arrow Irrigation League had fulfilled its mission to assist users to set up their systems, and it ceased to exist.

A photo-stop in the Arrow Gorge
Note the boy in the first truck with the driver sitting on top of the pipes.
The driver of the second truck is doing a headstand on the cab. *(LDM EL0660)*



The intake dam under construction *(LDM EL4180)*

Benefits

Reliable water through the summer enabled different farming methods to be tried. Dairy farming, fat lamb production, and the growing of grain and grass seed added to the district fortunes. Alan Hamilton, (see photo on page 26), reports that production of grass for summer grazing and winter feed increased by 50% on his family's farm 'Doonholme' at Arrow Junction as a result of irrigation and associated fertiliser. These developments were just what the proponents of irrigation had predicted from the early 1900s, and had come about through a combination of lobbying and eventually government support.

More Recent Times: The Arrow Irrigation Company

The Ministry of Works ran the Arrow Scheme until 1984. At that stage the maintenance costs of the scheme exceeded the income and the government was keen to divest itself of them. Besides, major maintenance was needed. The Arrow scheme was on the verge of collapse.

Here, the opposition to closure was strong. Just as the initial lobbyists had persevered to have the scheme built, a group of determined local farmers chaired by Max Robins, took the risky step of forming the Arrow Irrigation Company which still runs it today. This was a huge undertaking as the scheme was in bad shape physically and financially. At that stage the scheme supplied water to about 60 farming properties, but this number declined to about 30 by 2000 when Tony Strain became the Chair. It was a struggle to maintain it as a number of old pipes needed replacing, and it seemed that it wouldn't be financially viable.

The Great Flood of 1999 wreaked havoc throughout the district.

Photos courtesy of the Arrow Irrigation Company.

Pipes brought down, below Britannia Terrace in the Arrow Gorge

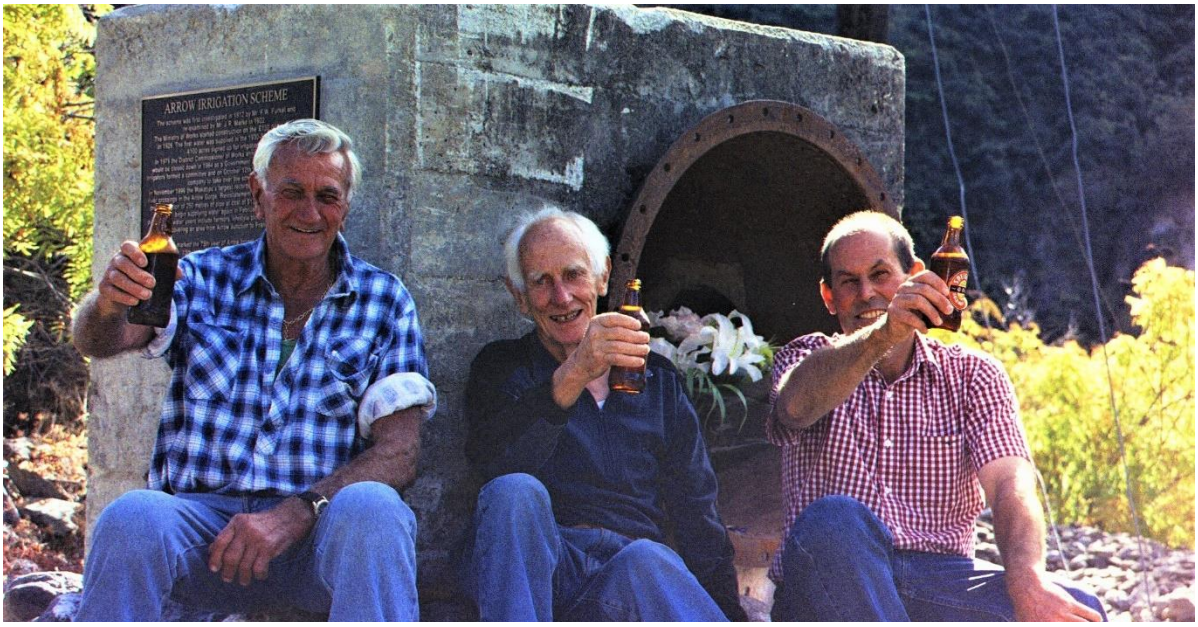
The third crossing up the gorge was brought down.

Damage caused by a slip.

The company's fortunes changed as a result of rural living or lifestyle blocks in the Whakatipu Basin. There are now about 225 connected properties, and new users continue to join the scheme. Income has increased and old pipes are being replaced.

Recent extensions include to Lake Hayes Estate and Shotover Country residential areas. The scheme supplies Millbrook and The Hills golf courses, both of which would probably not exist without it. As Alan Hamilton, one of the farmers who fought the closure, remarked to the *Southland Times* at the 75th Anniversary of the scheme, held in 2005, 'These days irrigators are chasing golf-balls instead of sheep.'

During the anniversary celebrations, a monument and bronze plaque were unveiled at Britannia Terrace.

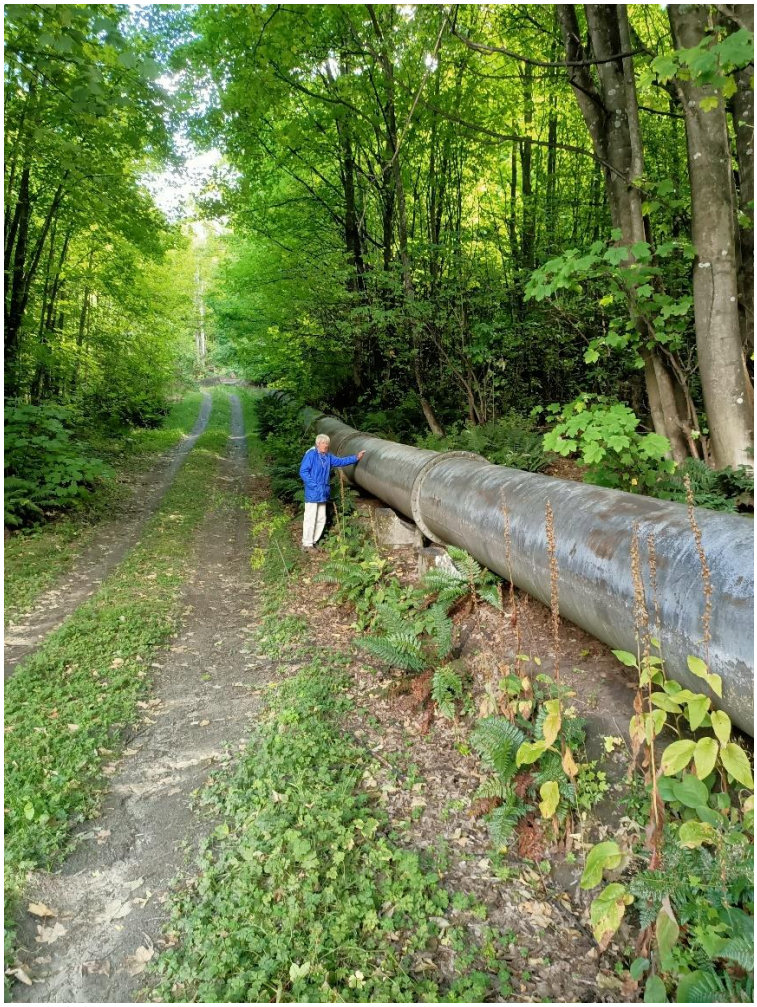


Alan Hamilton, Keith McLeod and Tony Strain in front of the monument.
(Photo probably taken by Sue Fea for the Southland Times)

Today

Throughout the district as far as Frankton we are often driving, biking or walking over underground pipes or beside watercourses. Along the hillsides we can discern the horizontal lines of the races. These all unobtrusively continue to deliver water from the Arrow River to pastures and crops, gardens, reserves and golf courses. For 90 years, the Arrow Irrigation Scheme has contributed to the productivity and well-being of the district, and there is capacity for further extensions to the network.

The discharge structure from pipe into water-race above Butel Park



Size of the pipeline as it rises above Bush Creek and discharges into the race in the previous photo.

Water flows up the hill after crossing Speargrass Flat. Note the irrigation sprayers in the paddock.

Above and below: Pipes cross the Shotover River beneath the old Lower Shotover bridge.

Then continue around Ferry Hill and into the lake below Frankton Road.

Sources

Lake County Press, *Lake Wakatip Mail* and *Otago Daily Times*, accessed from https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers

Lakes District Museum, Arrowtown archives and photos

Thomson J.B., 'Early Irrigation Schemes Brought Prosperity to Area', *ODT* 28 December 1968

Tony Strain, current chair of the Arrow Irrigation Company

Sue Fea and the *Southland Times*

Life Beside the Water-Race: The Boyd Family of Slope Hill Road

The *Southland Times* on 26 March 2005 contained an article by reporter **Sue Fea**, using material from interviews with her father **Doug Boyd** about his father Bill Boyd who worked on the construction of the scheme and was one of the original racemen. To this is added information from a phone interview in February 2021 with Doug's sister, **Hazel Spencer,** who also provided four of the photos.

Hazel, now aged 93, recalls her upbringing in the cottage with great clarity and fondness. Her father was Bill Boyd and mother Violet. The children were Doug (born 1923), Thelma (1926), and Hazel (1927). She was aged three when they shifted to Slope Hill Road.

Bill was a returned soldier who had been wounded at Passchendaele. When in hospital in England, he met Violet Bass, an English Red Cross nurse, and they became engaged. Bill returned to New Zealand after the war, and three years later Violet was able to join him. At first they lived in Dargaville where Bill worked digging kauri gum.

When work began on the Kawarau Falls dam, they moved south. Bill was responsible for the explosives. They lived in a wooden-floored tent in the works camp on the present site of the airport. Thelma and Hazel were born there. After that they lived at the Public Works camp in Arrowtown, again in a tent, while Bill worked on the Kingston Road. He would set off on his bicycle very early on a Monday morning to go and work for the week. Becoming employed on the irrigation scheme was better for him and the family.

When the scheme was finished, Bill was one of the five men in the construction gang 'fortunate enough' when work was scarce to get a fulltime job as a raceman. The Boyd family of five moved from Arrowtown to Slope Hill Road.

Doug recalled, 'We camped for at least one winter there in the paddocks by a spring while the Public Works house was being built.' Hazel believes a Public Works office was moved from Cromwell and refurbished as a house. It was the first actual house the family had lived in, and was to be their home for the next 17 years.

Bill managed the Speargrass Flat to Frankton Flats section of the scheme. (Photos pp.27-28) He patrolled the pipes and race daily on his horse, releasing the required amount of water to each farmer. Doug explained, ‘The farmers used to leave my father notes in tobacco tins up by the boxes for the outlets or they’d phone with how much water they needed.’ Fortunately, Bill was known for his patience. ‘We were on a party line of 12 or 14 people and it was terrible at times trying to get on. My father read the figures over the phone maybe twice a week to the Ministry of Works office in Alexandra.’

In a taped interview for the Lakes District Museum in 1993, Jim Wilcox, whose father was also a raceman, described the winter work, which involved crawling into the large pipes to scrape and tar the insides.

Violet with Doug, Hazel and Thelma at the pipeline

Doug explained how emergency phone calls in the night often had Bill scrambling out of bed and riding off into the darkness to attend to washouts on the race. Burrowing rabbits would erode the race banks and the water would be turned off until repairs were complete.

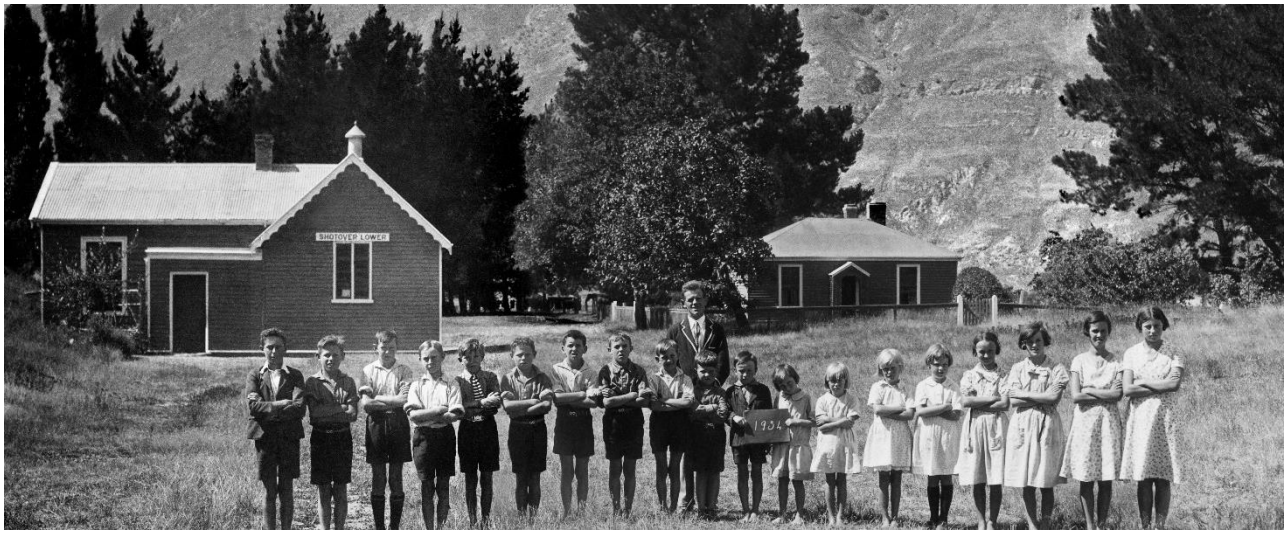
The family's pet pig, Dennis, would follow Bill along the race, guarding his lunchbox in return for a few crusts. Little did Dennis know he would fall victim, along with the children, to a masterpiece of deception: 'Dennis was (supposedly) swapped with a pig that Jack Allan [Senior] had down the road and my father brought Jack's pig home to eat, but I suspect we actually ate Dennis.' Times were tough then and a good pig reared for bacon could not be wasted.

In the early 1930s the Golden Arrow mining claim below Ramshaw Lane in Arrowtown was a major client of the irrigation scheme. Doug recalled at age nine going with his father to collect the Ministry of Works' takings – measured on how much gold the miners retrieved. 'They put all the gold in a pickle bottle, it might've been half full. I remember this guy says, "Feel that, laddy, look at all that gold." It was about 118 ounces and extremely heavy.'

Hazel recalls with pleasure many details of daily life – the marvellous, crisp winters and the sledge their father made for them to ride on all three at once; the garden where they grew almost everything they ate; and the house cow which provided cream and butter to be sold to the shop in Arrowtown.

Thelma and Hazel with older cousin Marie on the ice

They went to Lower Shotover School in Old School Road, where Jack Allan (Junior) was Hazel's contemporary. In the winter when the ink froze in the inkwells, they would start the day with exercises to warm up, and their mother gave them pies for lunch which they heated on the top of the pot-belly stove.



1934 School Photo *(Lakes District Museum EP2810)*

Doug is 5th from left, Jack Allan holds the sign, and Hazel and Thelma are the blonde sisters.

Doug, Thelma, Violet, Hazel and Bill

Although times were hard during the Depression years, Hazel says that it was a wonderful life for the kids. The Boyd family had 17 good years in the Raceman's Cottage in Slope Hill Road. Bill and Violet retired to Invercargill in 1946.

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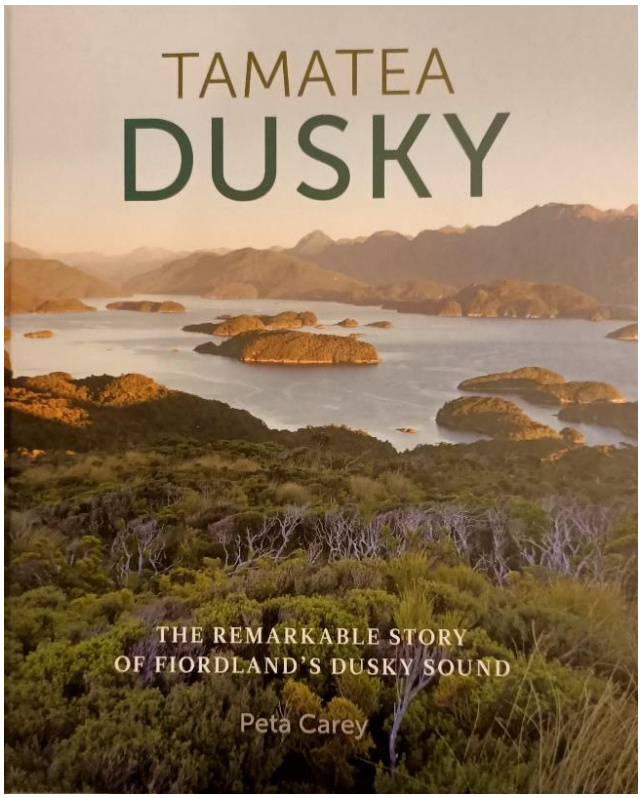

Tamatea Dusky – the Remarkable Story of Fiordland's Dusky Sound

By **Peta Carey**

Published by Potton & Burton,

256 pages, $70

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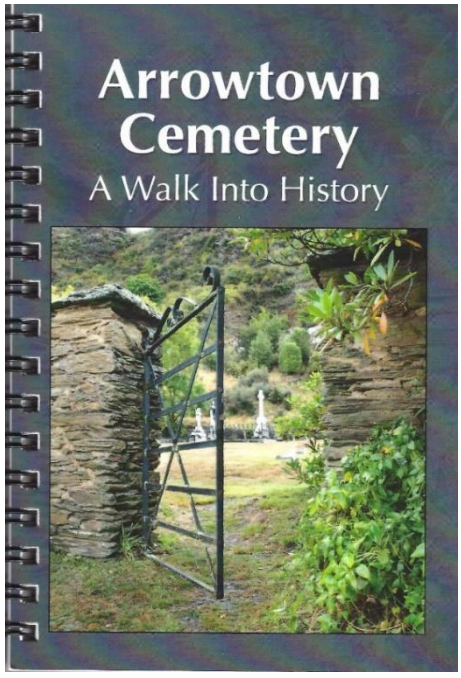

Arrowtown Cemetery: A Walk Into History

Published by the **Lakes District Museum**, 93 pages, $15

A pocket-sized guide including details of 40 grave sites from 1864 onwards. Packed with information about the cemetery and the people.

Text by Pauline Lawrence and Rita Teele
Photos by Jo Boyd and Ben Teele
Project initiated by Owena Frew

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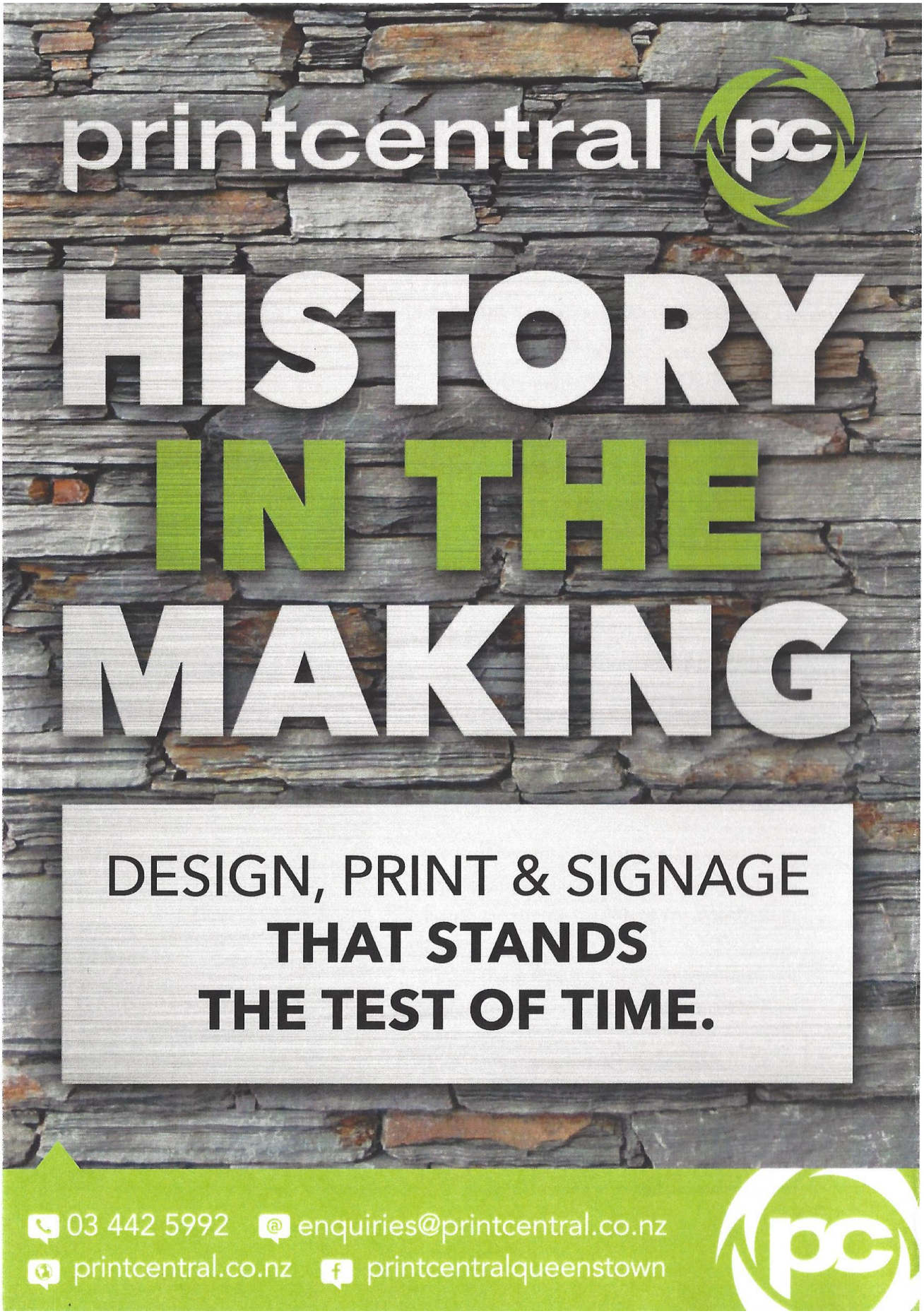
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