

*** THE QUEENSTOWN COURIER ***

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QUEENSTOWN AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY (INC)

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Cromwell Gorge

2.

NOSTALGIA

A day in the Cromwell Gorge - Saturday 28 April, 1979 (Pat Dennis)

Friday night - torrents of rain and dire predictions.

Saturday morning - not yet daylight and momentous decision to be made before 7 a.m. To be or not to be, that is the question.

Time for telephoning a cancellation of 4ZB has passed and we are committed to our Historical Society outing as planned. Will anyone turn up? We make our way to the Frankton corner willing the dark clouds to lift and are soon picked up and piled aboard smart red Avis vans full of excited explorers not daunted by the prophets of doom from the weather office. Ably driven by Les McAndrew and Christine Ward, we head through the Kawarau Gorge where the rising mists of morning lift their sunflecked curtain giving promise of the drama of the day ahead. We are met at the Cromwell Information Centre by Neville Ritchie, a young Archaeologist seconded to the Ministry of Works, who is to be our guide, philosopher and friend for the day. We spend time with him at the Centre familiarising ourselves with various facets of the area and the overall concept of the proposed dams and see a series of slides which help us to comprehend the magnitude of the project. Neville assures us that what we will see during the day is not necessarily the most important of the areas he is documenting, but is being given priority because of the imminent danger of flooding and road works.

Our little cavalcade, now augmented by his landrover and several people who had driven through to join us there, set off on a back road from Cromwell to Bannockburn. Vast, open, beautiful Central, all tawny browns and splashed with the brilliance of autumn; hills eroded with the sluices of the past and tempered by wind and weather into fairy castles; stately rows of golden poplars pointing russet fingers to the past that gave them their hold in this hard land.

We turn off this road just beyond the old stone bridge standing strongly still, a monument to pioneering skills. Golden willows line the river bank dappling the water with gold from the triumphant sun and we view this strange land where miners sluiced away great hills and turned them into valleys in their quest for gold. We marvel at the distances the pipelines traversed and the ingenuity of

the men who built the fan shaped rock walls to divert the water, along with the gold, through supplicating fingers of stone to the central collecting channel which trapped the precious metal. We see the miles and arid miles of tailings from the gold dredges which ate their gravelly way upstream spewing forth their undigested spoil into the Clutha. From a vantage point on the hillside above the Kawarau River we see two partially submerged gold dredges of the past.

We see a great orchard somehow drawing sustenance from the washed out soil and hear of the Maori artifacts which had been wrested reluctantly from the stony land there to provide an historic link with the past. We were later to see where present day historians had marked the site earlier habitation of a transient nature attributed to the Maori as he used the great rock caves for shelter and trod the green-stone path to Fiordland.

Lunch is a companionable picnic time to compare notes and ask questions. It is strange to have only the river between us and the main Cromwell Gorge road with its constant stream of traffic and yet feel as remote from the pressures of the modern day as the Chinese who inhabited this strange rocky fortress, so little changed in all the intervening years.

The afternoon is spent in exploration, checking these strange caves and rock dwellings and marvelling at the fortitude of those who called them home. Strange brooding craggy grey rock heads stand sentinel above us as the changing sky mutes the strong golden light that touches their faces and we turn our backs reluctantly, immensely glad of our opportunity to have spent such a wonderful day sharing a little of our not too distant past, and saddened that there would not always be other times when we could people the solitude with figures from the past before our insatiable appetite for power lays waste this unique area.

We set off for home thankful that the right die had been cast and the Gods that guard the gaunt grey hills had smiled on us and revealed some of their treasures to fill the quiet moments in our lives in years to come.

It becomes evident once more on viewing this treasury of Central Otago history, that we should still strive to preserve this area,

especially as our Government is realising that it may have over-estimated our future power requirements, and that the Clutha River project may not be entirely necessary.

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Chinese Miners

CHINESE MINERS - 'MUCHEE FINE FELLOWS'

Ah Soo, Wong Gong, Ah Wak, Ah Mee, Ah Gum, Ah Tye, Ah Nue, Ah Lum all these and hundreds of other pig-tailed Chinese were part of it on the early goldfields of Central Otago.

Trotting nimbly one behind the other, they would sing-song their way up into the remote gullies of the Arrow river each day to fossick for gold and to work their claims, and back down they came again in the evenings, sing-song, one behind the other. What was then known as 'China-town' was to the left of the green willow picnic area where Bush Creek burbles into the Arrow river.

Through the willows and to the left is a long low hill, and on it and in this, the Chinese had their shanties, caves and lean-to homes. Like strange rabbits they disappeared into these each evening, and at crack of dawn they crept out of them again and disappeared into the hills once more. They were inoffensive, hard-working men and kept very much to themselves.

Ah-Lum was a favourite with the children of the area - they held him in great awe because he was a hero - a Chinese hero. A white miner had fallen into the flooded Shotover river, and Ah Lum had dived in after him and caught him by his short collar just as he about to sink, and saved him from certain drowning. Ah Lum's rep to the white miners when asked how he had managed to save their mate - "Catchem queue (pig-tail)".

Ah Lum lived in a European house by himself, close by China-town and it was here that all the Chinese miners brought their problems. Ah Lum wrote their letters for them and transacted all their business.

The Chinese gold-diggers first arrived on the goldfields in 1866. They were a hard-working, industrious crowd, and at one time numbering as many as 2000 on the Arrow and Shotover diggings. T

22 April 1879; or Wyndom Douglas Buckingham and William Joseph Dalton, both of whom were only four months old when they died and were buried on 31 December 1879 and 8 November 1874 respectively.

By contrast, heart disease, then as now, seemed to claim its victims in middle age, or in the 60 to 70 age group. James Stenhouse, 42, hotel keeper of Glenorchy, buried 5 November 1908 and Thomas Saunders 64, barman, buried 20 January 1872, fall neatly into these two groups; but more, they had in common an occupation suggestive of a predisposition towards the disease.

And besides these four major killers? Well, the breakdown of causes of death in the next table has a mixture of the familiar and the not so familiar - and some that might even suggest pure guess work on the part of the certifying doctor; like 'Old Age', 'Senile Decay', or even 'General Decay'. Or how about 'Inanitation', or 'Sudden' and when all else fails 'Visitation of God', and 'Found Dead'.

Table B - Causes of Death (Decreasing Frequency of Occurrence)

<u>Cause of Death</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>	<u>No.</u>
Consumption	24	General Debility	5
Bronchitis	22	Tuberculosis	4
Heart Disease	17	Morbis Cordis	4
Drowning	14	Old Age	4
Accidental	13	Influenza	4
Cancer	11	Inflammation	4
Congestion of Lungs	9	Jaundice	4
Senile decay	8	Blood Poisoning	3
Apoplexy	7	Tumour	3
Pneumonia	7	Encephalitis	3
Convulsions	7	Dropsy	3
Diarrhea (sic)	6	Natural	2
Bright's Disease	6	Epispalia	2
Peritonitis	6	Dysentry	2
Paralysis	5	Inflammation of Lungs	2
Heart Failure	5	Brain Concussion	2
Whooping Cough	5	Phthleisis	2
Phthisis	5		

<u>Cause of Death</u>	<u>No.</u>
Premature Birth	2
Purpura	2
Aneamia	2
Typhoid	2
Asthma	2
Suicide	2
Hepatitis	2
Diphtheria	2
General Decay	2

One case of each of the following causes of death is recorded:

Strangulated Bowel .. Brain softening .. Brain congestion ..
 Exposure .. Gout .. Burns .. Fit .. Gangreen .. Pleuritis ..
 Pleurecy .. Fall from horse .. Congestion .. Inanitation .. Chro
 Cephatitus .. Gastroenteritus .. Hythophalus (sic) .. Suffocatio
 Hernia .. Visitation of God .. Sunstroke .. Exhaustion .. Brain
 Abcess .. Liver Tumour .. Liver Complaint .. Found Dead .. Tonsi
 .. Internal Haemorrhage .. Laryngitis .. Sudden .. Inflammation of
 Brain .. Epilepsy .. Rheumatic Fever .. Rheumatism .. Lung Disea
 Colic

Coroners Inquest - 41. Not stated 147.

And what of those tales we are accustomed to hearing, of the ripe ages of the pioneers of the Wakatipu? Table C indicates that for most, ripe old age never came - half of the deaths occurring before age 36, with nearly 20% (1 person in 5) not living till their first birthday. Three quarters of all burials recorded were of persons less than 60 years of age. Life for most, was nasty, brutal and

Table C - Deaths within Age Groups

Stillborn	14	
Less than 1 yr	84	
1 - 10 yrs	41	
11 - 20 yrs	24	
21 - 30 yrs	52	Median age at time of decease: 36
31 - 40 yrs	41	Average age at time of decease
41 - 50 yrs	52	(excluding still birth) 40
51 - 60 yrs	49	
61 - 70 yrs	44	
71 - 80 yrs	38	
81 - 90 yrs	17	
Over 90 yrs	1	

Hugh and Malcolm McKenzie of Martins Bay

9.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HUGHIE AND MALCOLM?

An excerpt from Lower Hollyford Museum records ..

The Queenstown district was celebrating its Centennial in 1962 and relics of Martins Bay settlement were on display in the old Queenstown Garrison Hall.

One afternoon, a stocky figure viewing the collection suddenly pointed at a display and blurted out "I made that horseshoe!" It was Archie Sutherland of Caples Station, who had made the shoe for 'a horse with seedy toe', from a plough-share.

Back in 1918 in Okuru, South Westland, Helen Cuttance was worried about her brothers, Hugh and Malcolm McKenzie at Martins Bay. The brothers were the last of the settlers at Martins Bay and spent long intervals alone. Nothing had been heard of them for several months.

Helen finally persuaded her husband, Joe, to set out and look for them. This meant journeying through the Haast Pass by horseback to Wanaka, the motor coach to Queenstown, a trip across Lake Wakatipu to Elfin Bay and a wait at Mavora Station while Archie Sutherland shod the seedy-toed horse.

After the shoeing was finished, Joe rode with much haste up the Greenstone Valley through to the Howden divide, then down the Hollyford river valley to Martins Bay. The pace caused the horse to founder near the Bay and shoes were taken off and thrown in a corner of the McKenzie home.

Joe found no trace of the brothers-in-law on the Hollyford tracks and worriedly returned to Okuru. He was surprised to find Hughie and Malcolm already there.

After some Army-shirkers left Martins Bay, Hughie and Malcolm, were fearful of the police picking them up for harbouring them, and had headed up the Coast from Martins Bay to hide out with their sister for several months.

The constable at Greymouth did come down by steamer to pick them up, but the Patriach of South Westland, Paddy Nolan, persuaded him that the McKenzie brothers, with their lack of knowledge of the outside world, had not realised they were breaking the law by sheltering the shirkers, so he left them alone.

Diary of John Dagg - Voyage to New Zealand

10.

THE DIARY OF JOHN DAGG, WRITTEN ON BOARD THE 'TRIVELYAN', DURING HIS VOYAGE TO NEW ZEALAND, FROM 24.9.1883.

Harry, Jim and I left Newcastle on 24 September 1883, with the boat for Leith. She was advertised to leave Newcastle at 9p.m., but, owing to some other ships mooring too close to her, she could not get out from the quay till after eleven. We were in an awful state as it was arranged for us to meet Father, Mother and Maggie at Edinburgh next morning. They were to leave Newcastle with the 6.10am Fast, and she was due at Edinburgh at 10a.m., and we were told on the boat that it would take us twelve hours to sail to Leith. But, fortune always favours the brave, and we arrived at Leith at 10 a.m. exact time. We caught the first tramcar up to Edinburgh, luckily the Newcastle train was half an hour late, so we were in plenty of time to meet the rest of our company.

We left Edinburgh with the slow train for Glasgow at 11.30am, arrived at Queenstreet Station at 1.30 p.m. We stayed at Duncan's Temperance Hotel, Union Street.

Now this is a part of our journey I will not dwell on. We were all very hardup, 'not one to mend another'. I think that Father was the gamest of the lot at this point. Harry and I were both properly 'sold', I have never felt so uncomfortable in all my life, it rained all the time we stayed in Glasgow. We left St Enoch Station, Glasgow next day 26 September at 11 a.m. with a special train of emigrants all bound for N.Z., I think I hear the bustle and noise at the Station yet, some crying as though their hearts would break, others running, looking after their luggage.

We went on board the ship 'Trivelyan' under teaming rain. Father, Mother and Maggie went with the first tug, but we three lads stayed behind to look after the luggage which had not come down from the Station yet. We three got on board about 1.30 p.m.. All was confusion for a time, the ship was not quite ready for the voyage, some of the bunks were put up after we came on board, the joiners worked up till the last minute. We all went to bed in good time the first night, I can remember Carline gave us a tune on his mandolin to help to keep our hearts us.

27.9.83. Fine morning, passed the Board of Trade, and intended sailing that night. We went to bed about 9p.m., but we were all

wakened again about 1a.m. (28th) by the sailors singing and heaving the anchors, I got up and went on deck, it was a fine morning, and we sailed about 2.30 a.m.

We had a fine sail down the Clyde, threw off the tug at Nilsa Craig under a fair wind, but it came on a very wet night, and a heavy fog. The Lookout could not see twenty yards ahead, and, owing to the Pilot giving a wrong command, we drifted 35 miles out of our course, and within a hundred yards of the Irish Coast. They had to let go the anchors; they let one go first, but one could not hold her, so they had to let go the other. It was what I call a 'near thing', rather too near, as the Captain woke all cabin passengers, and told them to prepare for the worst. But we Dogs in the steerage were not worth waking, we got a good night's sleep and knew nothing of the danger we were in till next morning. When we went on deck we were quietly riding at anchor, land about 500 yards off. Mother was the first I met on deck, and she was in an awful state, and Father had been up nearly all night. The Captain would not allow any of the steerage passengers to be wakened as he was afraid there might be a panic if we saw the danger we were in. As the sailors told us afterwards, if we had all got on deck the boat would most likely have sunk, or been wrecked, as we would just have been in their way, and they could not have run about and worked so hard. Most of the young men heard the anchor chains running out, but not being very sure what it was, just turned over and went to sleep again, as I did.

Now, I did not commence to write this till we had been about three weeks out at sea, so I cannot give much of an account of the beginning of our voyage. We got away out of Ballycastle Bay about 3p.m. on Saturday 29th. September, and had a grand trip, or sail, down the Irish and St George Channels, went through the Bay of Biscay at an awful rate. Mostly all on board were more or less sick, though none of us lads were very bad. Mother, Father and Maggie were rather sick for a day or two, but my seasickness was not worth talking about.

I was Captain of our Mess the first week so I had to stir about a good deal. We are all divided into Messes, there are eight in our Mess, and we have to take our turns at Captain, week and week about. The Captain has to look after all the tins, keep them clean and see that all the meat is equally divided. Take the beef or Pork up to the Galley to get it boiled, make the tea and all such jobs as those. All we three Daggs have got our first week over, Jim hands his job

over to Baxter, another young fellow in our Mess. We all have to take our turns in watching at night, our duty is to see there is nothing takes fire, and attend to anyone that may be sick. You have to go on deck every half hour and sing out to the Officer in charge, "All's well"! The night is divided into three watches, from 10pm till 1a.m., from 1a.m. till 4a.m., from 4a.m. till daylight, so you see the first or second watch is the best. Harry and I have been on the first watch, two persons watch at a time, one to keep the other awake. We have any amount of music on board, there are seven or eight fiddlers, four accordin players, and the sailmaker is a first rate player on the flute, so I think we can muster as good a band of music as any other ship. We are divided into three lots, married people are in the Main Hatch, young women in the After Hatch, and single men in the Fore Hatch. There are fiftysix young women, ninetyfour young men, and how many married people I really cannot tell. There are about three hundred on board altogether. Twentyone of a crew before the mast, and a really jolly lot they are. We have a really jolly Captain, and the Doctor will do in a pinch. We have seen a great many flying fish and porpoises, but we have nver caught any yet. We sighted a ship about a week ago, I cannot remember where she was bound for, but she was from Madiera, laden with fruit.

October 19th. We killed a shark this morning, it was grand fun hauling him on deck. He nearly struck Mother when he came over the rail onto the poop, she was standing close to the side, and when he was over the rail onto the poop he landed close to her feet and gave one awful wollop. You should have seen them clear out, our Jim and two others fell down the poop stairs in their hurry to get out of the way. The carpenter cut its head off with an axe, Smith, one of the sailors, cut its backbone to dry, and then make a walking stick with it. Some of it was cooked, Mother got a bit of it, she says it tasted 'first rate'. We have had two deaths on board, both children about seven months, one died on 12 October, and the other on 13th, it is rather a melancholy thing a funeral at sea, the body is sewn up in sailcloth, and the Doctor reads the burial service.

We are in Latitude 7 - 29 North - Longitude 23 - 21 West, and we have gone only 55 miles in the past twenty four hours.

It was very wet this morning, some of the young men were up on deck about 4 a.m. naked, getting a good shower bath. There is an awful

rush for rain water to wash with, the salt water will not work at all, the more you wash yourself with salt water the dirtier you turn.

We have great card playing, there are only five or six on board who can play at whist, and last week we played for nearly three days straight ahead when we were becalmed, but I think we sickened ourselves for cards have never been mentioned these last few days. We have made a very quick passage, so far about three days average sailing would take us to the Line.

Now that we are in right working order I will give you a bit of an account of the way we are fed. We got fresh potatoes the first fortnight, but they got so bad with disease we could not eat them, so we have had preserved ones this last week or ten days, they are just like breadcrumbs before they are cooked. We take half a pint an hour before dinner, and the cook makes them ready. They are very good made into hash with the preserved meat. Some like them very well, but I cannot say I care for them, some make potato soup with them, but it does not matter what way to cook them, they are a long way short of fresh ones. We get a small loaf of bread every morning, which serves us for both breakfast and tea. Plenty of oatmeal which we take up to the galley, and the Cook makes porridge in the morning. Any amount of tea and coffee, butter and sugar, but the sugar often runs out before the week is up. The butter was not very good in the warm weather, but after the weather was colder I have got as good butter on board as ever I got in my life. Rice which we cook ourselves, rice is the thing for going through the sugar. Marmalade once a week, treacle as much, or more if we can use it, pea soup twice a week on Mondays and Fridays, flour and raisins every Saturday to make KING DUFF on Sunday, but the raisins have been eaten twice or three times before Sunday comes, so the flour had to be made into cakes. Salt pork twice, salt beef twice, and preserved beef thrice a week. When Harry was Captain he made some of the best scones I have tasted for a long time, he had plenty of butter and sugar in them. There is still fresh potatoes onboard, but they are kept for the Cabin passengers. The Cook has given me a few once or twice, and I have made a pie with the preserved beef, they always have the same fault - too little, Harry could go for the lot himself. The baking is nothing, the job is getting them fired.

We have had Service on the poop these last two Sundays, the Doctor and Captain read the Church of England Service.

October 20th. This has been a great day among us, we have all had our boxes on deck, this is the second time we have been at them. We had some spice loaves in ours, but they have gone mouldy; the nothing, we can eat them, mould and all. Maggie has some sweet hers, and she has promised me some if I will clean her boots, you have not half an idea how anything like that is prized when you have been at sea for a week or two. We ate turnips out of the hold as long as they lasted, but they are gone long ago. There is a good number of ducks and hens on board and there are three or four kept every week for the Cabin passengers, and a sheep once a fortnight. It is very hard to stand and watch the Cook roasting a nice leg of mutton for the cabins, and you have to go down to 'Douley's' Hotel to a piece of salt pork.

We call our compartment 'Douley's' Hotel after a song Smith, once the sailors sing, I will give you the chorus:

I am Mr Douley, a man that's well to do,
I keep a lot of lodgers, they are such a noise.
On Saturday nights they are sure to fight,
and make the neighbours yell,
You ought to see the carry on in Douley's Hotel.

When Smith sings this we all join in the chorus, and you ought to see the carry on in 'Douley's' Hotel, I am sometimes afraid that there will be someone killed, there is many a rough house in 'Douley's'. Of course it could not be otherwise without anything to do for eighty young men, it is a great wonder we have been as quiet as we have. It was awfully warm in bed last night, I awoke about 12 o'clock and could not get to sleep again, so I got up and went on deck. All was as still as death, and bright and starry, some of the young men were sleeping on the top of the fore-castle, and other the life boats. The sailors were all lying about, some on the coops, and some on the dog kennels. I lay and looked over the side for about half an hour, we were not sailing an inch. When I went down our hatch I had to look round, nobody had any bedclothes on them, some of the Irishmen without the shirt.

We sent letters today with an Italian Barque from Rangoon, bound for Cork, she had been four months out. We were not very near to her, we sent a boat out to them and made them a present of a cask of potatoes.

(To be Continued)