

PRESIDENT'S REPORT .. Year Ended 30th September 1984

Once again another successful year has passed and we have enjoyed more of the Society's trips. In November the Society visited the Five Rivers homestead and looked through the house, and Ron Gordon guided people around the Nukomai Valley. In February, another visit to the Mavora Lakes was successful this time, and Mt Nicholas Station was reached after a look at Old Nicholas Cottage. Most people travelled back to Queenstown on the "Earnslaw". In March, the Society went to Manapouri and enjoyed a tasty old-fashioned lunch at the Grand View Hotel prepared by the Murrells, who showed everyone through their hotel and told some of its history. The second half of the day was spent at Takaro Lodge, where Harold Clarke showed everyone around. In April, the Society travelled along the Matukituki Valley to Mount Aspiring homestead, where Mr Aspinall was most informative and took many people quite a long way up the valley. The trip back along the Lowburn Valley was punctuated by a visit to a Pottery.

In October, representatives of the Historic Places Trust visited numerous houses in the district, and many have since been classified. Also, the Arrowtown Museum opened it's new wing, and the B.N.Z. established its branch in the Museum in the style of an old Bank.

The Summer Festival tour of local places, which included a visit to the newly excavated site of Chinese Miners' buildings in Arrowtown was not well patronized; it does not seem to be what people want any more.

Prizes were given to winners at Wakatipu High School and James Hargest High School, the winners' entries being printed in the Courier.

Together with the Tramping Club, the roof on Greengates hut was repaired again, a new window installed, bunks recovered and generally cleaned up.

The Society submitted suggestions for the Queenstown Gardens, and the Lions Club of Sorrento, Australia, requested a plan of our Rees Memorial, which they would like to copy.

At last, a Plaque was firmly fixed to the Edith Cavell bridge, stating its name and dates of the last two bridges, together with the names of the people connected with them.

Lastly, in August Mr Neville Ritchie gave a most interesting talk, accompanied by slides, his subject being Chinese Miners in Central Otago during the last century.

The past year has been a most enjoyable and informative one, and we look forward to an equally worthwhile one.

ROMA McANDREW
President

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS .. for Year Ended
30th September 1984

Bank Balance 30.9.83	831.68	Advertising	42.90
Donation S.S.B.	200.00	Couriers	383.96
Bank Interest	163.55	Subscriptions	60.00
Donations	10.90	Trips	2158.87
Advertisements	5.00	Plaque Shotover Bridge	337.20
Sale Maps & Couriers	64.90	Sundries	226.45
Winter meeting	20.70	Term Deposit	600.00
Trips	2887.00	Bank Balance 30.9.84	989.28
Subscriptions	614.93		
	<u>\$4798.66</u>		<u>\$4798.66</u>
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Bank Accounts:

Current Account	989.28
Term Deposit	1200.00

\$2189.28

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The following well-researched article by Grant Sherriff is reprinted from the Otago Early Settlers Museum's Newsletter No.25 of March 1984 with the permission of the author and the Museum. We are grateful for their assistance. The Otago Early Settlers Museum is a wonderful institution which is in need of financial support. Any interested member can help by taking out a subscription. Address is 220 Cumberland Street, Dunedin.

HOMeward BOUND BATTERY ..

Homeward Bound Battery - Macetown

Gold bearing, or auriferous quartz reefs are found in several areas of Otago, and these were worked extensively from 1863 to just prior to World War I.

Quartz mining involves the removal of quartz from the ground, then crushing the material by machine so the gold mixed with the quartz stone can be released and recovered.

Auriferous quartz reefs were first located where reef outcrops were noted on the surface. These were then mined, often to deep levels with both shaft and tunnel. In some places these workings were very extensive, for example at the Glenrock mine at Macetown, the tunnel or adit reached 1300 yards just before the mine's closure in 1906.

As the amount of gold obtained from payable quartz averaged between $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 oz per ton, sometimes more, often less, it meant large quantities of quartz had to be processed. It was therefore most desirable that the crushing plant be located as close to the mine as possible.

In a typical mine the quartz was taken from the mine face and transported by trolley down small tram tracks to a storage bin or "paddock" to the crushing plant.

The Battery was comprised of a large quite massive wooden framework mounted over a heavy cast iron base. The wooden framework held a number of perpendicular steel shafts with stamps or weights on the lower ends. These shafts were lifted a few feet by rotating cams, then allowed to free fall onto the quartz at a rate of 60 to 80 blows per minute. The quartz was wet crushed into very fine fragments, and this mixture of water and powdered quartz was known as "the pulp", the next operation being to separate out the gold.

For Otago batteries it was common practice to pass the pulp over blankets, allowing the heavier gold to settle out and be caught in the blanket material. This method was however inefficient as it allowed all the fine gold to escape.

The better method was to allow the pulp to flow over copper plates coated with mercury. The gold in the pulp was retained by the mercury to form an amalgam which was scraped off the plates periodically, the amalgam being distilled to separate the mercury which was recovered for use, and leaving the gold "cake".

Also most batteries were equipped with a Berdan, a large round rotating cast iron bowl in which pulp and mercury were placed to be ground together to form an amalgam.

A further improvement in gold recovery techniques came with the introduction of cyanide extraction in the 1890s. The pulp was mixed in vats with potassium cyanide, the cyanide reacting with the gold, removing it from the solution. As oxygen must be present for this reaction to occur, the solution was aerated in the vats by agitation, often for up to 9 days. The resulting mixture, now known as the pregnant solution, was passed over zinc, in powdered or shaving form. Cyanide has a greater affinity for zinc than gold, the resulting reaction with the zinc precipitated out the gold to be recovered and smeltered.

This was a most efficient method of gold recovery with 95½ of the gold present in the pulp being recovered. One interesting aspect of cyanide extraction is that on the ground where these plants were situated nothing has grown over the past 80 years. Spillage of cyanide solution from the vats has made the ground quite sterile.

To power a battery much energy was required, and in Otago this was normally supplied by water power acting through a water wheel. Where an adequate supply of fuel was available, steam would be used, and later electricity, notably at the Phoenix/Achilles, Bullendale and the Glenrock mine at Sawers Creek, Macetown. In both cases the electricity was generated by water power near the battery site. Oil and gas engines were also used in the years just prior to 1914.

The actual amount of gold produced from quartz mining in Otago, while substantial, was really quite little when compared to that recovered through dredging, sluicing and other alluvial means.

What makes quartz mining so noticeable these days is the large machinery that can be found rusting on the old workings. Quartz batteries were of little use for anything else, and being situated in places where access was always difficult, the plant was abandoned when the mines closed, no one bothered to cart the equipment away.

One battery which is still in existence, reasonably complete and able to be viewed by any reader so interested, is the Homeward Bound battery at Macetown.

The history of this battery starts at Waipori where in 1862 the first quartz reefs found in Otago were discovered by six Victorian miners. As these miners originally came from the Shetlands, it has been known ever since as the Shetland reef.

A Company to mine the reef was formed called the OPQ (Otago Pioneer Quartz) Mining Co., and a battery installed. Unfortunately operating costs exceeded the value of the gold recovered and the company failed.

Over the next 30 years several companies took over the OPQ lease, but again all failed, in most cases with substantial losses, gold yield from the reef being very irregular.

In 1897 an English Company took over the lease on what was almost an abandoned mine. However it was felt rich returns were possible, and they decided to re-equip the mine.

Early in 1899 the new battery arrived in Dunedin from England, installed on the Waipori site and was ready to run in October the same year.

An imported machine was unusual, other quartz batteries in use were manufactured locally, much equipment coming from foundries such as Kincaid & McQueen, A. & T. Burt and Cossens & Black, all of Dunedin, and A. & G. Price, Thames.

The battery was manufactured by Coppack and Weigh Foundry, Queens Ferry, Sandycroft Chester, England. Media reports of the time considered it the biggest battery in the South Island, if not the whole country.

The wooden framework was of the highback type and contained a 90 ton capacity bin into which ore from the mine was placed. A Blake type stone breaker was installed to break up the larger quartz pieces for easier feeding.

From the storage bin Challenge automatic ore feeders transferred quartz to the mill automatically. There were 10 stamps in two groups of 5, each stamp weighing 1230 lb. The stamps were lifted by rotating cams and allowed to free fall at around 80 beats per minute, and each group of 5 worked in a cast iron mortar box that weighed 6 tons, 19cwt 1 qr, which held the quartz being crushed. The whole assembly sat on 16 foundation timbers each 15 inches square, 12 feet set on end.

Gold recovery equipment comprised copper plated mercury coated in the mortar boxes and the outside plates were electroplated with an ounce of silver per foot. One amalgamating pan or berdan was used in conjunction with the mill.

At Waipori the battery was powered by a single cylinder steam engine with a 9 foot flywheel, steam being supplied from two Cornish Boilers, each weighing $9\frac{1}{2}$ tons.

The new mine was formally opened with much fanfare on the 18th October 1899 to a gathering of local dignitaries and with most of the Waipori residents in attendance. As the OPQ had 44 workers on the payroll then, and being the largest local employer, much interest was shown in its operation.

All present, including the media, spoke in glowing terms of the wonderful future ahead for the new company, past failures having been conveniently ignored.

Unfortunately history could but repeat itself, the gold in the quantities expected by the shareholders just was not there and in August 1901 all hands were laid off, except for 2 or 3 to man the mine pumps, as a "temporary" measure while the Company was "restructured". Operations were suspended until on 7th February 1904 it was formally announced that the mine would not reopen, and the machinery offered for sale as it stood.

This was a bad period for Otago quartz mines, and in 1906 the Glenrock mine at Macetown closed. While the Glenrock was one of the few large operations to show a consistent profit, further capital expenditure was required to sustain its operations, and not without justification the English shareholders felt their capital was better invested elsewhere.

At the turn of the century, New Zealand mining gained a bad reputation

with English investors. Too often projects had been presented on the English market somewhat over-enthusiastically, and the number of failures, the OPQ failure being but one of several, made capitalists wary of further investment.

Other moves however were underway to resume work on the Macetown mines. Mr W.J. Farrel, who had a history of involvement with Otago quartz mines, floated in 1908 a new company with all English capital called "The United Gold Fields of N.Z. Ltd". This company was to develop two mining properties at Macetown, the Homeward Bound (71 acres) and the All Nations (81 acres).

The Homeward Bound was an old mine that had operated off and on with indifferent success since the mid 1870s. The mine entrance was high above the battery situated on the valley floor, and the quartz had been conveyed down by aerial cableway.

As it was many years since the mine last worked, the equipment was in a state of complete disrepair, so considerable capital was invested in new plant. In January 1909 a start was made on erecting a new aerial tramway (cableway), the cableway material being supplied by Sparrow Foundry, Dunedin.

The aerial tramway was completed by May 1909, allowing mining operations to get underway. A major problem was lack of an up-to-date battery, and in August 1909 the United Goldfields Company purchased the large Waipori machine that had been idle since 1901.

It was not until March 1910 that workmen were sent to Waipori to dismount the OPQ machine and arrange its despatch to Macetown. It was originally intended to work the battery with electricity, the power to be generated on the falls in the Arrow situated above Macetown. This idea however never eventuated and water power was used instead.

Work commenced on erecting the battery on its Macetown site in May, 1910, and it was ready for operation early September the same year. The battery was powered with a pelton water wheel, the water coming by pipe from a point $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles upstream at the confluence of the Richburn and Advance peak creeks.

Crushing was underway by the end of September 1910 with the cableway supplying 50 tons of ore per day to the mill, and 20 workmen were employed. The battery, while situated at Macetown, never operated to its maximum capacity as the water available was never sufficient

to power more than 5 stampers, half of the plant's capacity.

With the quartz quality not living up to expectations, the mine closed in March 1911 after only 6 months' operation. During this period 740 tons were crushed for a return of only 11 dwt per ton, just over half an ounce, not an economical return for an Otago quartz mine.

Over the next three years operations were suspended. The Company retained its protection, or mining rights, and much prospecting took place to locate a richer portion of the reef.

In September 1914 Mr Bernard, a representative of the English company owning the mines, (Mr Farrel died in the U.K. in January 1913) arrived in Macetown from the U.K. on an inspection tour, and it was hoped more capital would be made available.

The final act of the United Goldfields Company was to purchase early in 1915 a 10 stamp battery from the old Glenrock mine at Sawyers creek and erect this at Sylvia Creek, a mile or so from the Homeward Bound Battery. With the outbreak of the First World War however, all mining operations gradually came to a halt, and the mines abandoned for the last time.

The Homeward Bound Battery still remains at its final working site. Originally it was housed in a corrugated iron building. However the iron was removed in the 1920's and the weather has, needless to say, caused considerable deterioration since then.

Other than the Polton wheel and its water supply pipes, all removed long ago, the battery is still reasonably complete. Some damage has been caused when the stone breaker mounted on the top edge of the ore bin broke away, or was pushed to crash down through the back of the machine.

In 1977 the Government passed legislation setting up a Goldfields Park administered through Lands and Survey. This was a somewhat belated move to protect what was remaining of Otago goldfields relics etc.

At Macetown the Reserve area was extended up the Richburn to include the Homeward Bound Battery site. Goldfields staff have made a start on some restoration work, but there is much to be done to restore this rather unique machine.

Should any reader be in Arrowtown, a trip to Macetown is recommended. The track, a 3 hour tramp one way, can be negotiated by 4-wheel drive vehicles and trail bikes with little trouble providing the river is not too high.

Unfortunately the Homeward Bound battery is a further 30 minutes' walk from Macetown, making it a little far for the average person to walk there from Arrowtown and back in one day. It is no problem, however, if you drive in. Please note that there is no vehicle access, this includes trail bikes, beyond one kilometre of Macetown. You must walk up the Richburn Gorge to the battery site.

For any person walking or driving in to Macetown, it is recommended they obtain some of the excellent publicity material available from Otago Goldfields Park, Lands and Survey. These publications are most informative and are almost essential to carry on such a trip so the history of the area can be fully appreciated.

HYDRO-ELECTRICITY AT THE PHOENIX MINE .. Hydro-electricity - Phoenix mine

In February 1885 Mr Fred Evans manager of the Phoenix Mine, Skippers announced that arrangements had been made with Mr Prince, electrical engineer, for the erection of electrical apparatus to work a 20 head stamper at 70 blows a minute and to keep the whole in working order for nine months, the owner of the mine Mr G.F. Bullen, to provide water power to drive the apparatus. The contract at a cost of £2,200 had just been signed and provided for the machinery to start six months from signing.

This brief announcement signalled an important event in New Zealand, namely the first production of hydro-electricity in the country. Unfortunately Mr Prince did not measure up to the terms of the contract and it was not until a year later that the plant came into operation. The centennial falls in 1986.

Mrs Ruth Horn of Dunedin, a granddaughter of John Aspinall of Skippers, has researched the family history and we are privileged to be able to include it in the Courier. Mrs Horn was born at Skippers and was present when the bridge over the Shotover at Skippers was opened.

Aspinall Family Crest ancestry

THE FAMILY CREST AND COAT OF ARMS OF ASPINALL OF PRESTON, LANCASHIRE ..

Arms: Or (gold) a chevron between 3 griffins' heads erased, sa (sable).

Crest: A demi-griffin erased sa (sable), winged, beaked and legged or (gold).

Motto: A Egis fortissima Virtus (Honour is the strongest sword).

1309-27 (King Edward II) During the 14th Century, in the reign of Edward II, the Aspinalls were granted the Right to Bear Arms, and display their Coat of Arms. This privilege is normally bestowed for services to the Crown or State, and this Right remains with the family for ever. The name Aspinall is of Saxon origin, then spelt "Asp-Dene-Halle" (the house near the field of vipers) with French overtones, and was displayed over the door of "The Boathouse Inn" at Eanam, close to Blackburn, Lancashire, and which was occupied by Great Great Grandfather, William Aspinall in the later years of his retirement in the early 1800s. His former occupation was carriage and wheelwright business, beside "The Boathouse Inn".

1485- (Henry VII) This family had been for several centuries
1509 seated in the Parish of Whalley (Lancashire), and held Standen during the reign of Henry VII.

1600- In Queen Elizabeth's time and James I the Aspinalls held a
1700 small Freehold in Lower Darwen, and resided at the Messuage or small village which is still named "ASPINALL FOLD" from the 16th and 17th centuries, but the property has now passed out of their hands. We have acquired copies of some of the ancestral Deeds written in the old English which are almost impossible for amateurs to "Interpret" correctly. And of course, there were the industrial riots later when the

workers lost their livelihoods when the machines were introduced into the factories and they starved! Some of the oldest Deeds are written on sheepskins parchment and very fragile.

1628 (Charles I) A Thomas Aspinall, son of John and Mary Aspinall, appears as a Governor of Blackburn School, and in consideration of a marriage already had between Thomas Witton and his wife Mary, daughter of Thomas and Anne Aspinall the sum of £120 was paid to him beforehand, being the marriage dowry of the said Mary!! This would amount to a considerable sum in those days, but a modern "Miss" would NEVER sanction that to-day! They must have been "well-heeled" in those days!

1707 (Queen Anne) A description of Aspinall Fold when it was sold! "The great meadow, the little meadow, the calf croft, the spout bank, the short, the nearer acre, the further acre, the several messuages, etc."! "Oh Dear, no blocks or sections, no acres! What detail and not very clear! All documents were signed by the several Aspinalls in a completely legible hand, so they must have had a considerable education even in those days of 80% illiteracy.

1658 (Charles I) Records were started to be kept then, and births marriage and deaths were registered from 1843 (Queen Victoria).

1707 - From about 1707 (Queen Anne) when "Aspinall Fold" farm in Lower Darwen, Lancashire, finally left the family, there is a gap of information about the Aspinall family. A lot of documents were burnt or destroyed during the riots, fires, etc. in the towns and villages when machinery was introduced into the factories, displacing the workers who were dismissed and starving with their families during the "Hungry Forties".

1775 The earliest written record of our "modern" branch was the Death Certificate of WILLIAM ASPINALL, my great, great Grandfather, January 6th, 1845, aged 70, thus born in 1775. His wife, MARY, died April 10th, 1840, aged 61. Her Death Certificate, born in 1779. Their THREE CHILDREN were MILES, born 1807 - married ISABELLA WILSON, WILLIAM 1808, married JANE DARBYSHIRE, and ANNE who married HENRY RATCLIFFE.

G.G. Grandfather was a Wheelwright and Carriage Builder with

all the appurtenances, horses and stables etc., and was near the Leeds-Liverpool canal and waterway traffic. This also included a small Inn called the "Boathouse Inn" here at Eanam, and very close to Blackburn. With the death of Grandmother Mary, and also Miles and his wife, G.G. Grandfather William was left to care for the three orphan boys William, John and Daniel of 3, 5 and 7 years until his own death in 1845! The boys then joined their Uncle William's large family of seven children! They all lived at "Mouse House Farm" which adjoined the "Aspinall Fold Farm". The Census of 1851 (every 10 years) included the two boys, John (grandfather) aged 15 and Daniel aged 13 who was still at school, but John was in Liverpool working as a clerk in a warehouse, and William aged 17 was an apprentice with an ironmonger. Some years later the three boys decided to relinquish their interests in the "Boathouse Inn" Properties, and with so many businesses closing down, William decided to join the Gold Rush which had started in Victoria, Australia. He had married his cousin, Elizabeth who was his age, and from then on he was nicknamed "Bill the Bushranger". They had no family. Shortly afterwards letters from William to John fired his imagination, so that he too decided to join William.

1860 John left Liverpool on December 27th, 1859, (the day after Christmas) after settling up all his affairs, on the sailing ship "The Empire of Peace" arriving in Melbourne on the 1st May 1860, age 25, single, unassisted, labourer, English. He joined his brother in Bendigo only for a short time, finding the place swarming with prospectors, so he decided to go to New Zealand, and arrived in Auckland and then to the diggings at the Coromandel - found it over-run so onto Dunedin. He had taken out a Miner's Right in Melbourne - No. 181, 18th of May 1860. Armed with this he set off for the diggings at Gabriel's Gully, found the place swamped too, so headed off to the Dunstan.

1861-- A similar situation, so finally made his way up the Kawarau by a rough trail and arriving at "The Camp" which was changed to "Queenstown". His trail took him over Ben Lomond saddle, across Moke and Moonlight Creeks and across the terraces to

Stoney Creek and up the Shotover, prospecting in likely places, but eventually found the junction of the Skippers Creek and the Shotover very promising indeed! It was so good he sent for his brother William in Bendigo and gave him one third share. They set up their tent on the spot, and in about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years the brother headed back to Lancashire and retired on a handsome competency! Grandfather John carried on and hired labourers.

Grandfather built a cottage down at the foot of "The Claim" at the junction of the Shotover and the Skippers Creek, and the six eldest children were born there. A lone poplar still stands near where the house had been.

1882 The family later moved to the top terraces to Bordeau's old home which Grandfather bought after one of Bordeau's bankruptcies. It was a large, roomy stone and mud brick store with old fashioned dormer windows on the second storey. The large kitchen had a double oven in the middle of the floor - a lovely warm family room. The stables and barns, etc. were across the road which finished right there, and the track to Bullendale started here 6 or 7 miles up the Skippers Creek all the way! No roads, of course, just the creek bed wet or fine. Grandfather had a splendid orchard and garden, with a heated greenhouse - a real luxury - Southland coal must have cost the earth! He erected his "smithy" and made his own pipes for the water races and dams for sluicing. Some of the races were cut out of the solid rock and were always being repaired floods or snow - it kept his men and himself very busy. The winters were very cold indeed - snowed in for about six weeks and very deep - the daily task was clearing the snow on the paths. The climate is very much milder today. The family made full use of the dams for skating.

1882 - The Shotover Gold Rush was now in full swing with about 4,000
1883 to 5,000 excited miners scouring the river and the beaches in increasing numbers. There were tents springing up everywhere. The first gold was scattered like corn on bare reefs while the river was very low, and the first implements were picks, shovels, knives and spades, billies and tin dishes to wash the sand and gravel. The excitement was tense! Price of gold was £2.10, rising to £3-17 an ounce! Think of that to-day!

Queenstown was just a tent city, and wood or even boxes beyond price! Pamikin of flour 2/6, tea 5/-. Dunedin population was increasing every day - Dunedin was the largest city in New Zealand in 1863!

1851 "Otago Witness" first published 8th February, 1851, - then a Daily Newspaper issued on November 15th, 1861. "Lake Wakatip Mail", 2nd May, 1863 - twice weekly after. There were 1,000 horses turned out to graze in the Queenstown Gorge! The Shotover was the richest river in the world at that time, and Skippers Creek and its tributary Butcher's Creek was the richest creek with the most regular returns. Skippers Creek yielded an average of 100 ozs to the dish! Largest nugget found there was $12\frac{1}{2}$ ozs.

1867 For FIVE years from 1867, the Terraces 1500 feet above the Shotover at Skippers Point were worked by tunnelling through the schist to a false bottom, containing extremely rich deposits. After 1872 hydraulic sluicing was introduced, and this method became completely successful when iron pipes were packed in by pack horses, but very expensive, so grandfather then made his own pipes so much cheaper in his own "Smithy". The "Claim" was worked for well over 50 years successfully. This new method was followed in other "Claims" very successfully too. Five of John's neighbours left their "claims" totalling about £17,000 well satisfied and sold their interests to him, and went back overseas. Even the narrow beaches of the river yielded very rich gold. Four miners at Maori Point (a mile or two below the bridge site) washed 127 POUNDS of gold in one day!! It was very dangerous work though with other diggers working above them in the gravel from the steep and narrow walls of the Terraces.

1862 Grandfather John Aspinall was 27 when he finally arrived at the Shotover accompanied by his bulldog which was later drowned in the River. (Yorkies always had a bulldog). His friends called him "Little John" - he wasn't very tall and he had very striking curly auburn hair, which fortunately, he passed on to his only three daughters - Isabelle, Helen and Ruth. Grandfather was 36 when he married Elizabeth Craigie, (19), in the Anglican Church Queenstown (Licence No. 17) on July 22, 1871. She had come out from Montrose, Scotland to live with her

sister Ellen Southberg whose husband was Swedish. He and his partner discovered the Achilles Mine which later became the Bullendale 8 miles above Skippers and on Mt Aurum. There were 9 children in the Aspinall family, 3 boys (Miles, John and Daniel), 3 girls (as above) and another 3 sons (William, Henry and Ralph). They all attended the Skippers School in succession, and the 3 eldest boys finished their education as boarders at the Southland School at Invercargill.

- 1888 - In the eighties grandfather was the Member for the Shotover
1890 Riding of the Lake County. He used to ride down to Queenstown monthly, and for company he used to take Isabelle (my future mother) with him. They stayed at Eichardt's Hotel, and on the down and up the road Grandfather would not dare to pass the Long Gully Road Hotel without having a nip with the proprietor, while the landlady always took a glass of raspberry out to mother on her horse! No lady would dare to go into the pub!
- 1867 The first Lease in the district was granted to John Aspinall, otherwise a Miner's Right yearly was the only necessity to have authority to mine.
- 1863 "The Wakatip Mail" was the first paper issued and thence bi-weekly.
- 1870 The Skippers School and master's residence was contracted for in stone, and 9 weeks was allowed for the completion of same!
- 1863 A disastrous flood in the area must have drowned a large number of miners who lived and mined right on the river's edge. A huge slide smothered and drowned 12 men up above the bridge. There were over 2,000 miners between Macri Point and Skippers Point.
- 1880 Piano arrived at the homestead by sledge from Queenstown! Who tuned it?
- 1883 Telephone from Queenstown to Skippers connected up. That IS progress!!
- 1866 First bridge on the Shotover at Skippers, 20 feet above the river - cost £2,375!!
- 1901 The new suspension bridge was 300 feet above the water. Grandmother cut the ribbon to open it. Big crowd, and Uncle

Miles taking plenty of photos. Big ball at night after a sumptuous dinner at the hotel. Queenstown all lit up by electricity to celebrate Queen Victoria's long reign. The dynamo from Bullendale mine brought down for the occasion - a stupendous feat down the roadless creek bed of Skippers Creek and narrow and dangerous road!

1902 Grandmother and Ralph left Skippers for Dunedin where the two older boys Bill and Harry had been sent to board while they attended the Albany Street School. Ralph and two other children were the last pupils at Skippers!

The men folk worked the "Claim" for a few more years, but shut down in the winter, and away back for the summer, finding everything safe and sound - very, very different from to-day's standard of living. Nothing was ever lost, not even tools and such. Years afterwards when the place was abandoned, Tripp Brothers sluiced the whole place and homestead away following up a gold seam.

Aspinall Family

Aspinall Family

Mother Aspinall very wisely, for herself and her daughter Isabelle, a late teenager and extremely keen learner, sent her to a dressmaking shop in Dunedin for about six months, where she boarded with 3 or 4 similar girls, with an elderly spinster who looked after them very well indeed - all work during the week, but all tasks finished by Saturday night. Shoes all cleaned ready for church service (two on Sunday). No sewing on Sunday! My mother had never experienced Sunday School up in the wilds of Skippers! The family was Anglican of course, but everyone attended church at Skippers school for every service, not necessarily weekly, no matter what denomination - Presbyterian, Catholic or Anglican, etc. So when Isabelle came home, she decided that the family needed tuition badly in religious instruction. She thought the younger girls and boys were young heathens, and wouldn't protest like the eldest ones. So she got down the huge Family Bible (I still have it!) with all its fascinating pictures and scenes, and tried to interest them with the stories and their morals. Young Ralph listened intently to the story of the whale swallowing Jonah, then stood up with such an intense look of disbelief on his face and said: "What a blooming lie!!" My mother said many years later that she never forgot that scene. Session ended abruptly in

disorder!

We had quite a few Chinese diggers who followed up the original miners, and worked their "cradles" on the Shotover and adjoining creeks. They were quiet and very well behaved. They bought their requirements at Bordeau's store, and grandmother bought brassware, ginger jars and Soy sauce which came from China and Hong Kong. They worked away busily through the old "tailings" hundreds of feet below the terraces. The boys would talk and call to them from the high tops of the track above. The set up proved too tempting one day. The boys found a huge loose rock which they pushed over the sharpe edge, and saw it bounce just as Ah Wong looked up from his "cradle". The boys didn't wait to see what happened, and tore for their lives back home. They hung around the house all week watching the track desperately to see anyone coming down for stores, scared stiff in case their rock had hit its mark. Suddenly, "pitpat, pitpat", bare feet and puffs of dust - Bill out of breath, charging down to the house - "Quick, quick, Ah Wong has just done down to the store"! The relief was astounding - no murder charges, etc. Mother was still wondering why the boys hung around the homestead - too quiet! She never knew!!

When we came back south from Rotorua to live in Dunedin, we two (my brother and self, about 8 and 9) used to holiday on a farm on the main road to Arrow, right under the Coronet. Jack had an urge to go up to Uncle Miles Aspinall's home at Skippers so it was arrange that he would pick up Bordeau's "coach" (euphemism for the 4 wheel buggy) near the foot of the Skippers road turn off. I accompanied him over the paddocks to the road, no sign of the "coach" - we were very early, we knew. So Jack started up the hill, and I went back to the farm house. Jack made history that hot day by arriving at Skippers before the coach. Must have been about 12 to 14 miles. Not a soul on that then lonely road. He by-passed the Long Gully Hotel. They would probably not see him. No, he was not scared - he was busy watching for the "coach" at every bend of the road. He quenched his thirst at several creeks, otherwise he had nothing to eat. He arrived none the worse for his lone journey.

A snippet from the "SOUTHLAND TIMES" dated February 2nd, 1884. -

"A telegram informs us that Mr Aspinall's claim at Skippers has washed up FOURTEEN POUNDS weight of GOLD!"

(Per: Mr A.J. De La Mare)

Aspinall Family Chit Chat :

Picture two small Aspinall boys (8 and 6), and their ambition to "make" some money! The site - the school grounds. A deputation of two approached the School Committee Meeting - could they please have permission to trap rabbits on the school Glebe? After explanations, consent given. Away home to colkot grubber, traps and peper. Next snag - mother insisted on Ralph (aged 4) being included to share the profits! W-e-l-l, (doubtfully), but he'd have to earn his share by "helping". Bill made the scrapes with the grubber, Harry set the traps and paper (an "iffy" job), and small Ralph would carry each carcass home. Freezing cold weather - real Skippers! Ralph, of course, would drop the rabbit in his stiff little fingers, so the other two would stop and pick up the bunny and prise his frozen fingers open and wrap them around the rabbit's legs, and drag it along the ground. Thus slow progress but fair division of work, according to Harry!!

P.S. Ralph became Otago 'Varsity' material and later solicitor. Good training? He lived to his 90th year and one of his sons Lex, has followed in his profession.

Family grumpings at the breakfast table - mother impressing the boys (6 of 'em) on how lucky they all were - plenty of food and to spare, a luscious orchard and farm - not like her childhood in Scotland. Up pipes our Harry, "Gosh, mother, aren't you glad you are living with us now?"

One very bad day Isabelle and sister Nellie (10 and 8) felt their mother's dis-pleasure while doing their monotonous, daily chore of dish washing. They broke the FAMILY TEAPOT!! Council of war! The two decided to leave home. So filched some old dishes, tins and a pot, and commandeered some eats, and away up the paddock to a small hut. Meanwhile, Ruth, the youngest, (about 6) was devastated, and became a self-appointed courier between their mother and the bellig-

erents, as she sobbed herself to exhaustion. Very late in the afternoon, the weeping courier arrived from mother - the defiant occupants had to get off her property! Gosh! After much heavy discussion and night coming on, an ultimatum was finally arranged - the two culprits would go over to Bordeau's Store, and buy an ENAMEL (unbreakable!) teapot with their "pin money" savings. Empty pockets but peace reigned once more.

Three little girls (7, 9 and 11) dressed alike, with conspicuous, curly auburn heads, in Queenstown for the day, were approached by two tourists, man and wife, asking directions to the Public Gardens, and Isabelle (my mother) directed them. The lady turned to her husband, very interested, and said "Oh, they're Scottish!!" Thereupon, Ruth, the youngest, rather indigantly interrupted with, "No, we're NOT, we're Mongrels!!" Their three big brothers used to tease the life out of the girls by impressing on them their English father and Scottish mother - "therefore you are Mongrels" - which Ruth had decided could be a much superior pedigree!! (I'd have loved to know what the tourists thought).

SKIPPERS AMBULANCE .. Skippers Ambulance

We have had two previous items about the Skippers Ambulance and a further one has been found in the form of a letter to the Editor of the Wakatip Mail by Fred Evans the manager of the Phoenix Mine and the originator of the scheme. It follows :-

Sir, - On Thursday last, I took the opportunity of taking the Skippers Frankton Hospital Ambulance to its destination, namely Fisher's Store. As it was the first time I attempted a travelling wheeled conveyance on the Shotover tracks, I selected one of my staunch, slow horses, but after leaving Queenstown at 9 a.m., and getting to Arthurs Point, I began to wish I had selected a faster beast, as the predicted possibility of my "funeral furniture" vanished the further I got on the road; and, as I am usually considered a fast rider, I found that driving, after all, was likely to be the faster of the two. However, I found on taking the track from Miller's Flat main road, that it took an unusual amount of driving, and very little time was allowed for admiring the country below, but

before I got to the top of the Saddle all fear departed, and I drove along as if on ordinary roads, with the exception that a good look out had to be kept for big loose stones which are taken little notice of by one on horseback. Having reached the Zigzag, Mr T. Richards took the handles behind and I went down the Hill just as easy - and more so - as a loaded pack horse would, and finally reached my destination, Butcher's Point, at 3.30 p.m. - just about my usual time of riding that distance. Considering the novelty of the thing, with the many stoppages for persons to have a look, I think I made good time.

As to the utility of the ambulance (barring the Zigzag) I am satisfied that two men and one horse can take a patient from the Reefs to the Hospital with great comfort to the patient, and little labor (beyond the walking) to the attendants, and I do not think any improvement can be made to it. (Mr Aldridge made no alteration to it). I intend to advise the addition of a spring or air mattress to it, either of which will make the thing complete.

I am, &c.,

Fred Evans

Slipners, May 22, 1883.

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