

Drill Hall - Beach Street Queenstown

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DRILL HALL ...

This year 1987 marks the centennial of the building of the Drill Hall which for many years stood in Beach Street about where the entrance to O'Connell's Hotel used to be. It was in use until purchased and demolished to make way for the hotel. As the only hall of any size it was used for almost every public function.

In December 1886 the Queenstown Volunteers decided to build the hall in stone the size being 80 by 40 feet, with walls of 16 feet and equipped with a stage. The cost was to be £700-800 and £300 of this was expected from government subsidy and the value of their existing site.

The foundation stone was laid on the 9th of February 1887 and to show the importance of the event a half holiday was declared. The stone was laid by the brethren of the Masonic Lodge the Master being Brother Morgan. The choir of the Anglican Church took part as did the Queenstown band who led the procession to the site. They were followed by the Volunteers and the big gun (Waterloo 1815) and then the Foresters of Lodge Pride of the Lake, the Oddfellows and the Masons. Mayor Reid addressed the assembly following which the stone was laid. Coins and newspapers were placed under the stone. The contractors were Pettigrew and Aitken. The formalities were followed by a banquet and speeches at McBride's Hotel.

The opening of the hall was an even grander affair. It was held on the birthday of Queen Victoria, the 24th of May 1887, and 'M' Battery turned out and fired the usual Royal Salute on the old Waterloo piece which weighed $15\frac{1}{2}$ cwt and was muzzle loading. There was a ball in the evening attended by 60 couples and wonders of wonders the hall and the adjoining Harp of Erin Hotel were lit by electricity supplied by Messrs Evans of Bullendale. The band was present and Lt Col Wales the architect made a happy address after which Mayor Reid formally opened the building. Dancing went on till 5 am.

Gold Mining in new Zealand John A Miller 2nd installment

GOLD MINING IN NEW ZEALAND ...

The second instalment of the article Gold Mining in New Zealand by John A. Miller which appeared in the Southland Times in October 1886 follows :-

The foregoing historical sketch was drafted to illustrate the difficulties which beset quartz reefing in New Zealand, and to show the pluck and energy displayed by a gentleman who single handed bore the expense - amounting to about £90,000 - of proving the payable nature of the Skipper's reef, which is an act that stands, I believe, alone in the mining history of these colonies, and may well be pronounced as phenomenal. Not a word has been said about the climatic drawbacks of a district like Skipper's, where snow and frost prevail for 4 or 5 months every year to such an extent as to make all outdoor work impossible, which is in itself a very grave consideration. It may here also be mentioned that during the seventeen unsuccessful years Mr Bullen never lost faith either in the ability or the integrity of his manager, though incited by envy and other motives, a number of pretended friends of the former, either openly or anonymously, tried to advise him or poison his mind against the manager so long and so completely trusted. But Mr Bullen lent a deaf ear to all such advances, and the result proves that his confidence has not been misplaced.

It might not be altogether unprofitable to moralise upon the relation of employer and manager under such as the above conditions, as all the world over many mining specs are damned by a want of the proper confidence which should always exist between mine owners and their managers. However, it must suffice here to mention the quoted instance in a pointed manner, as it is clearly impossible that a satisfactory result could have been arrived at had there been many changes in the management. Besides the present case serves as an aid in understanding Mr Bullen's motive in keeping the mine going in the face of all drawbacks and difficulties. So little was this motive understood by the residents, amongst whom he expended such large sums, that it was generally held Mr Bullen carried on the mine for the whole and sole object of giving employment to a great number of men, when in point of fact he was rendering the colony of New Zealand a service, the value of which is not easy to estimate. That, however, Mr Bullen is influenced by philanthropic motives to some

extent at least, is shown by the fact that he has, entirely at his own cost, erected and furnished a large building at his reef to serve the purposes of a miners' institute and library, and is prepared to subsidise all subscriptions raised at a £ for £ ratio for the purchase of books. It is also understood that he intends to appoint at his own expense, an ordained clergyman to minister to the spiritual wants of the miners, who have at present only very rare opportunities of attending divine service; and as the population at the Skipper's reefs amounts to about 200 all told, more than one half of whom are in his constant employ, this intention shows that profiting by the proceeds of his mine is not Mr Bullen's only and absorbing object.

As the plant upon the mine is perhaps the most complete in these colonies, though perhaps not the most extensive one, so far as actual crushing power is concerned, a short description of the machinery already erected, or in course of erection, will not be out of place in this article. The crushing machine is one of 6 batteries, each of 5 revolving stampers, weighing 8 cwt, the batteries having grating with 149 holes to the square inch. A peculiarity is that no quicksilver whatever is used in saving the gold, except in the amalgam barrel. This allows of crushing being carried on during periods of frost, when under ordinary conditions silver would become inactive. In fact, here as elsewhere, the silver process is being gradually discarded. Another peculiarity is that the machine drives the camshaft by a vulcanised belt, which is substituted for the usual connecting rod, to ensure smooth working, and prevent jarring of the machinery, as a fly wheel at Skipper's is an undreamed of luxury. The motive power is supplied by a turbine wheel, when water is available, at other times a steam engine of 14 horsepower drives the stampers. Self-feeding boxes are provided at all the batteries, and a stone crusher, to reduce all lumps to a given size is now in course of erection. So far these self-feeding boxes have given every satisfaction. The whole of the machinery is covered in a house measuring 45 feet by 85 feet, and the turbine wheel is sunk to a depth of twenty feet below the floor of the engine house, in order to obtain additional pressure. In the machine house there are also a complete turning lathe adapted for wood, iron, and steel turnings, complete engineer's and carpenter's shops, provided with circular saws, boring machinery, etc. which can be driven by either steam, water or electricity. The whole of

the house and all its subdivisions are lighted by electric lights, the electricity being generated by a Pelton wheel of $2\frac{1}{2}$ horse-power with a head of 170 feet of pressure, generating sufficient electricity to light the machine-house, the library, and the manager's residence, with in all 20 lights of 16 candle power each. Two compressed air engines are in course of erection at the mouth of the low level adit, where a shaft has been commenced and is now down 82 feet. These engines are of 20 horse-power each, and are intended for haulage, pumping and driving rock drills. The air to work them is to be compressed by steam. In addition to this machinery there are two powerful British dynamos erected in what is known as the Left Hand Branch Creek, each of which is calculated to generate electricity equal at 96 horse-power. The dynamos are driven by two Pelton wheels propelled by a head of water of 180 feet vertical pressure, and distant from the machine house - they are intended for driving the stampers - about two miles, the electricity being conducted along a copper wire equal to No. 8 fencing wire in thickness. The motor is a Victoria machine made under the supervision of the late Professor Fleming Jarkin. This electric apparatus has now been at work for several months, and has given entire satisfaction. The stampers have been driven at the rate of from 75 to 80 blows per minute, with the greatest ease and regularity by electricity.

The works and offices are all connected with each other by telephones and telephonic communication has been effected with the station at Skipper's Point, and through it with the telegraphic system of New Zealand. The telephone from the reefs to Skipper's Point has been erected at Mr Bullen's cost, the distance being seven miles. The same kind of copper wire above described was used and was here introduced for the first time in the Australasian colonies for the purpose. The wire is so thin that with the sky for a background it is invisible.

From the above it will be seen that all the different kinds of motive power are applied at the Phoenix mine. Water, wind - in the shape of compressed air - steam, and electricity may be here seen in daily application for all purposes connected with the mine, but of these the latter promises to supersede all others wherever applicable, and the only exception where this is not the case is where dampness prevails.

Mr Bullen being the first to apply electricity to mining at the suggestion of his manager, Mr Evans, and the new motor having stood the severest test with satisfaction, a short glance at its usefulness to the mining industry under peculiar circumstances will not be out of place here. The great advantage which electricity has over all other kinds of motive power, is the exceedingly easy method it affords in its transmission; nothing but a length of wire being required to conduct any number of horse-power over distances in which a few miles more or less is no consideration. Unlike water it is independent of levels; it will travel up hill with the same ease and rapidity as down hill. It is in this latter quality where electricity recommends itself to all mountainous and broken countries, such as Lake Wakatipu district, parts of Southland, and the greater portion of the Middle Island of New Zealand. The dynamics may be placed wherever there is a sufficient stream of water to generate the required amount of power which may then be conducted to any point no matter how high or how low, where it is required. This advantage is so great and self apparent that it is useless to enlarge upon it. It only remains to publicly record the fact that mining in such districts as just referred to, and where it has hitherto lingered in a precarious state, has been made profitable by the introduction of electricity as a new motive power. It may here also be prominently mentioned that the gentleman to whom the mining industry is indebted for having made its profitable production independent of physical and climatic difficulties, which have but in too many cases prevailed against the development of mining to such an extent as to justify the opinion that mining could never cope with them, and place in the front rank of mining reformers the names of Mr G.F. Bullen and Mr Fred Evans, who after unusual pluck, perseverance, and energy, first undertook to prove the existence of payable reefs at Skipper's, and then introduced the best and up to the present only means of working them with advantage and profit.

The electric engineers who superintended the erection of the electric plant were Messrs B.E. Fletcher and Co., of Dunedin. A very touching incident is connected with the work. Mr Walter Prince, a member of the firm, was entrusted with the erection of the works. Under his care the work was nearly completed, and a public demonstration had partly been arranged for, in order to celebrate the successful introduction of electricity as a motive

power into mining, when Mr Prince, while returning from Queenstown to Skipper's was thrown from his horse. Falling on his head, the injuries he sustained were so serious, that his life was despaired of, however being a comparatively young man, he survived, but only under the terrible dread of having his reason permanently destroyed. In this condition he was placed in a private institution near Dunedin, and late reports hold out hopes of his soon and perfect recovery in body and mind. The said occurrence created a deep impression, not only amongst his more intimate friends, but also amongst the whole of the residents in this district, who were as deeply interested in the electrician, as they were in the important work he supervised. It will therefore be understood that the gratification felt at the glad news of the prospect of his complete recovery, is as deep felt and widespread as was the sorrow at the accident Mr Prince met with.

KINLOCH BUSH FIRE ...

Kinloch Bush Fire

Another event of 1887, the effect of which can still be seen today, was the bush fire at Kinloch in January. It commenced at Birrell's on the Dart and with a strong northerly wind destroyed all the forest consisting of beech and totara as far as the Greenstone, some ten miles. The sawmill and hotel at Kinloch were saved with difficulty but the fire ruined the timber industry affecting 80 to 100 men. The fire raged for a week and it was said it was a remarkable sight to see the entire mountain side in flames. The effect of the fire is still clearly to be seen on the high slopes behind Kinloch.

THE SECOND GOLD RUSH

Second Gold Rush in 1930's

The depression sparked off a gold rush which though a shadow of the original involved many people. The government introduced a scheme providing for a nominal weekly payment to any who would search for gold and as there was no work or any prospects many took up the offer. The nominal payment was hardly sufficient to meet the cost of food and finding some gold was necessary to survive. Some discovered claims which gave a good return and some like Bell and Hooper near Cromwell struck it rich. Most merely survived until times improved and many of these were mining in the Wakatipu area.

A feature of the time was the number of mining ventures which were the subject of public floats particularly as all other business was stagnating. Where gold is concerned there are always people who are convinced that they can find gold where others have failed and generally they are able to get sufficient people gullible enough to put up the capital to follow their dreams. The Arrowtown Museum recently received a parcel of 'prospectus' for mining ventures during this period which make interesting reading.

They included the following :-

The Lower Molyneaux Gold Mining Co. Ltd of March 1934.

Bell Hooper Cromwell Ltd.

Waipapa Beach Gold Dredging Co. Ltd of June 1934.

Adams Flat Gold Mining Co. Ltd of Lawrence of June 1932.

The Wetherstone Gold Mining Ltd of September 1932.

Bendigo Rise and Shine Gold Mining Co. Ltd of May 1934.

However it was in the Wakatipu where more schemes were dreamed up than most other areas. Some brief details follow and it is remarkable how one promoter would follow another in the same area where his predecessor had failed. It is also remarkable how the same assets from an unsuccessful venture were sold to the next promoter even though it was obvious that at least some were entirely worthless. There is one plus from all these failed schemes and that is features of the area which remain after man had tried, failed and departed. The bridge over the outlet of Lake Wakatipu, the Wye Creek power scheme and the picturesque suction dredge lying on the

bed of the Shotover are the tangible results of three of these schemes.

On the Shotover there is a prospectus for the Shotover Consolidated Ltd an Oamaru promotion with a capital of £80,000. It was proposed to buy from Kawarau Gold Mining Co. Ltd water races, rights and plant and operate on 7 miles of the Shotover for which a wardens application had been granted and 2 miles of options between Arthurs Point and The Branches. It was proposed to operate a suction dredge similar to that of the Shotover Gold Dredging Co. of Australia which was just finishing constructing their dredge at Maori Point. Power was to be generated by a Pelton wheel and the operation was to be electric. What the fate of the company was is not known though no doubt Peter Chandler could give the answer but presumably it never got off the ground as the dredge of the Shotover Gold Dredging Co. failed completely and it is this company's dredge which lies in the river at Maori Point. This failure would no doubt frighten off subscribers to an identical venture.

Probably the most ambitious venture was that of Skippers Ltd a Dunedin based company with a capital of £75,000 which proposed to dam the Shotover, run the river through fluming and mine the river bed by hydraulicing. It was proposed to purchase the mining claims of A.E. Smith and Smith and Murray together with races, rights and a power scheme from a dam on Davis' Terrace with water from Stoney Creek. It was intended to divert the river by temporary dams in 2000 foot sections and to operate in favourable water conditions with the dam to be demolished in floods. The fluming was made up of 4 foot square steel sections bolted together. Strangely the derelict suction dredge of the Shotover Gold Dredging Co. was to form part of the assets taken over.

The company was successfully floated and the river was diverted but problem followed problem and after some years the company wound up. Some gold was won but the venture was a financial failure. However there was a plus for the locals who salvaged the steel sections of the fluming which were used to build sheds, etc. throughout the area. There is a good example in the form of a garage in Man Street Queenstown which is completely built from the sections except for the door. Details and photographs about the company can be found in 'Let There Be Light'.

The Kawarau River had its share of schemes and the best known one is that of the Kawarau Gold Mining Co. Ltd of Dunedin which proposed to dam the Kawarau at the outlet to Lake Wakatipu and thus expose the bed of the river. The capital of the company was £10,000 and the work on the dam commenced in November 1924. The river was divided into 126 claims each worth £1000 and the gold won was to be divided 80% to the lessee and 20% to the company after paying wages. The engineer for the company was E.J. Iles who had been the engineer for the Cromwell Development Co. which was responsible for the weir at Ripponvale which was hardly a roaring success. Dreaming on the company proposed to follow the project by damming the Shotover and later lakes Wanaka and Hawea to accomplish dewatering the Molyneaux. The scheme failed and the only plus was the dam which provides a solid, if narrow, bridge over the river which is likely to be in use for a long time to come.

The next proposal on the Kawarau was that of the Amalgamated Kawarau Gold Mining Co. Ltd of Dunedin formed in 1933. When the Kawarau dam was first closed it was found difficult to conduct worthwhile operations with the fragmented control. The government was approached in November 1930 and a bill was passed empowering the amalgamation of the claim holders and the parent company, the new company being called the Amalgamated Kawarau Gold Mining Co Ltd with a capital of £150,000. Following advice by Professor Hornell of Sweden it was proposed to construct a concrete dam and diversion tunnel immediately below the Arrow Junction about Chards farm. This was the venture the prospectus was issued for.

Presumably the company failed to sell its shares as no dam was built which is probably just as well for any prepared to back the scheme. If it had gone ahead we would probably now have a solid bridge direct to Chards farm. Very convenient for Phil Hunt, the owner.

Another venture on a grand scale was promoted by the Kimihia Gold Mining Co Ltd in June 1956 which involved the Shotover. Dams were proposed at Big Beach and The Branches both in gorges with large ponding areas upstream. The dams were to be 35 feet high and the bed of the river could be worked until the ponding area was filled when the waters would be released and the process repeated. The company proposed taking over the rights of the Shotover Kawarau

Consolidated Ltd and their license which included dividing the Kawarau into 258 claims each about 9 chains and to sell them at £320 each, plus 10% of the gold won. At the time of the issue of the prospectus it was recorded that £11,000 had ALREADY BEEN SPENT AT Fig Beach and signs of this work can be seen in the steep rocky banks of the river at the south end of the beach. Apparently that is as far as the scheme went.

Another scheme which has left a permanent reminder is that of the Golden Terrace Extended Gold Dredging Co. Ltd an Invercargill company with a capital of £100,000. It was floated in 1926. The proposal was to build an electric dredge to work the Shotover from the gorge below Big Beach to the Lower Shotover bridge. The power was to come from a power station at Wye Creek. This area had been worked to an extent by a dredge in 1898 which won 2475 ozs in 501 days. One remarkable feature of the prospectus was the guarantee of Mr J. Holloway of Invercargill, the chairman, to hand over to Jasper Calders City Mission £1000 if the shares in the company did not realise £2 on the stock exchange one year from commencing operations. As the company was not successful it would be interesting to know if this promise was honoured. The plus from the scheme is the power station at Wye Creek now the property of the Otago Central Electric Power Board. The pontoon of the dredge lies on Fig Beach where it finished its active life. Once again full details can be obtained from 'Let There Be Light'.

Two other local schemes which were the subject of a prospectus deserve brief mention. The first was the Oxenbridge Shotover Gold Ltd a Dunedin company in 1933 with a capital of £12,500. The proposal was to take over existing rights in respect of the Shotover and Moke Creek and included a dam on Moke Creek at a cost of £3400. Presumably this scheme got off the ground as there is a concrete dam on Moke Creek near the junction with the Shotover which is the only tangible reminder of this venture.

The Nokomai Gold Mining Co Ltd was floated by Dunedin interests in 1932 to take over the assets of the Nokomai Sluicing Co Ltd owned by Kum Poy of Queenstown, the son of the well known Sew Hoy. The proposal was to mine the Nokomai Valley by means of a huge drag line scraper operated by electricity and costing £12,750. James Fletcher who was later knighted for his services to the building industry was

the promoter of the giant drag line. The scheme came into operation but was not a financial success.

NOTE ...

Crofts - Queenstown Borough Counciller

The following note has been received from Mr Cedric Crofts Benzoni of Cromwell. Mr Crofts must have been an early arrival as he purchased a section in the first sale in January 1864. It was in Shotover Street about where the Trusteebank Southland now stands. At a later date he bought a section on the eastern terrace which is now part of the Hulbert House property. Mr Crofts took a prominent part in the public life of Queenstown and served as Borough Councillor.

"It may be of interest to you to know that my mother was born in Queenstown. She was the daughter (one of 11 or 13 children) of Mr and Mrs J.T. Crofts.

Mr Crofts, we always understood, was the first accountant for Hallenstein Bros who apparently commenced their business in Queenstown and now have 69 branches in N.Z.

Mr Crofts later took his family to Invercargill and settled there being appointed accountant to Roofe Bros Brewery."

Signed: Cedric Crofts Benzoni
22 Alpha Street
Cromwell

WOMEN ON THE GOLDFIELDS ...

Women on the Goldfields

Bridget Ingley

Briggita Ingley

The following essay by Briggita Ingley of James Hargest School Invercargill was chosen to receive the William Rees Memorial prize awarded by the Society for 1986.

Women were almost non-existent on the goldfields during the first few months of operation. The first ladies to see the Wakatipu area were either the young wives of early runholders, or women imported by hotel proprietors to serve as barmaids and dancing partners to the miners. In later years when regular towns were set up, women accompanied their husbands to the fields to set up house, often bringing their young children with them. Most were very young, fresh from their homes in England, Scotland and Ireland, or were arrivals from the Victorian Goldfields. They faced extremely harsh and often lonely lives in a society dominated by rough male miners. Many were, however, hardworking and uncomplaining, striving to provide their husbands and families with comfortable homes in the new country.

As hotels and saloons were established to accommodate the needs of the miners, jobs became available for barmaids, housemaids, dancing girls and entertainers. Hotel proprietors saw the great attraction of having females in their establishments and young girls were hired, firstly from Australia then later directly from England to come and work in the goldfield towns. When a new set of girls arrived in a mining town, the miners dressed in their best clothes to meet them. Because of the great imbalance between the sexes, young ladies were in great demand, to make brides for the lonely miners. Many were married off within a week of their arrival and publicans had a great problem maintaining staff levels! One desperate hotel proprietor called for the ugliest girl to be found and brought to serve his customers. His wishes were granted and the girl lasted all of two weeks before she was married off! Obviously even the homeliest were in a position to pick and choose with one lass declaring she had had as many as fifty marriage proposals in one week.

The first dancing saloon appeared in Tuapeka and the idea quickly spread to other goldfields. Hotelkeepers paid young women to dance with miners and encourage them to buy drinks. If a sufficient amount was spent by the men on liquor, then the girls received a commission. Alcohol and drunkenness were in fact the most common vices of both males and females in the goldfields, and groups of drunken men and women could be found singing and generally acting in a raucous manner until the early hours of the morning. As licensed and unlicensed outlets sprang up, so too did houses of 'ill-fame' and brothels. Men were not the only ones who desired to 'get rich quick' on the goldfields. Women too found easy money in barmaiding and prostitution in towns where men were desperately short of women folk. In 1865 for instance, barmaids in Hokitika were receiving as much as Six Pounds a week which was an exceptionally high wage for the times.

But dancing girls, barmaids and prostitutes were not the only women to come to the goldfields. Many respectable ladies came either to join their husbands, or to find a suitable marriage partner while working as domestic servants. As one famous quote says :-

'When a young man immigrates, he does so to get work, but when a young woman immigrates, she does so to get married'.

Colonial leaders were certainly eager to provide a more even balance between the sexes and widely encouraged female immigration. They thought that without women's calming influence, the men would fall rapidly into the 'slough of sin and wickedness' with such pursuits as alcohol, smoking, bad language, gambling and sexual vices. Women were seen not only as useful for child-rearing and home management, but also as agents of moral standards and comfort of society. Most women made a career out of marriage and colonial marriage prospects were good for any woman. Mary Sawinson of Wellington provides an amusing example of marriage prospects in New Zealand.

'Fancy, the mother of a woman I had for a month had a wooden leg, a son of 22 and six children. Yet has just been married again!! No one need despair after that I think.'

As the towns become established, more and more young brides and mothers followed their husbands to the goldfields. Most were in their late teens or early twenties and came ready to tolerate the inconveniences of their adventures alongside their husbands. Life was often lonely in their isolated hillside homes far from friends and relatives. The distance from towns and lack of roads in many areas provided a virtual prison for the young housewives while their husbands were out all day mining. Many came from their homelands with absolutely no idea of back-block living. Some had never ridden a horse before and had to rapidly learn, often on their honeymoon, as horseback was the only means of access to their new homes.

The days were long and filled with hours of monotonous and very physically demanding work. Shops were not always adequately stocked even when they were close at hand. Many households had to buy a year's supply of commodities at one time or make their own supplies of certain items. Most women had to make their own butter and cheese cure hams and bacon, brew, make candles and soap with lye derived from wood ashes. All these tasks took a great deal of time and were often dangerous.

Washing day was usually on a Monday and was the most strenuous day of the week. It started early in the morning when the mother rose to start the fire to heat the washing water, and often did not end until four or five in the afternoon. Clothes were long and heavy made of tough serviceable material, victorian fashion dictated ruffles, tucks, bows and lace, all of which were a nightmare to keep clean and well pressed. The clothes were washed in huge tubs and scrubbed against a corrugated wooden board, often skinning knuckles. The soap was usually homemade and very harsh on hands. Then after the clothes were washed and dried, many were starched before ironing. This task often took more time than the actual washing. The huge flat irons the women used were heated on hobbs beside the fire. They were extremely heavy and hard to manage. Many a burn was suffered during ironing as the irons had to be repeatedly heated during use. Little wonder that washing day was an ordeal to be dreaded each week.

Water had to be carried bucket by bucket from a stream or well every day for all basic duties such as washing, cleaning and baking. Saturday night was bath night for the whole family and more water had to be carted in and heated for this purpose. A big tin bath was set

in the middle of the kitchen and each family member would take his turn usually in order of seniority. On top of all the every day tasks there was the endless round of sewing, mending, darning, tatting and embroidery. With few shops and little money to buy new clothes nothing could be wasted. Many women brought sewing machines with them to their new homes in the goldfields. These were a marvellous help with the sewing.

Although few women actually worked on the goldfields (some helped their husbands from time to time) their lives were just as hazardous as the miners. Fire was a constant threat in the dry Central Otago conditions, and many homes were lost due to accidents with the kitchen fire. Childbirth was also a major difficulty. There were few doctors in the isolated goldmining fields. Midwives were invaluable but often new mothers had to rely on neighbours, husbands, older daughters and at times passing strangers for assistance in childbirth. Many women died young, either in childbirth or from sheer overwork as a result of their very demanding lives. Still others lost their husbands in mining accidents or through falls in the steep and treacherous country. They were forced to bring up their young families (often consisting of fifteen or more children) alone. The oldest children would be sent out to look for work, the boys mining or as farmhands, the girls as serving maids or housekeepers. Many women had to support their families by taking in sewing and washing, selling butter and eggs, selling knitting and sewing or cleaning. There was little aid for such widows, so they had to manage as best they could.

The women who came to the goldfields were on the whole a courageous and hardworking group with a sense of true pioneering spirit. They endured terrible conditions with little assistance to rear a generation of determined and capable youngsters. They were a minority in foreign surroundings yet they made the most of the conditions and got on with the task at hand, usually in a cheerful and uncomplaining manner. It is true that the men had to suffer atrocious conditions on the actual goldfields, but the women had an equally tough task in rearing their large families and maintaining a comfortable home for their husbands to come back to at night. They are to be admired for their contribution to the history of the goldfields and to the early days of Central Otago.