

## Rees and Von Tunzelmann the first Settlers

### THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

On a warm day in February 1860 two men, urging on their tired horses and accompanying pack mule, came to a point high above present day Arrowtown where before them lay a breath-taking view. Below the two young men, William Gilbert Rees and Nicholas Paul Baltasar von Tunzelmann, stretched a broad valley hemmed in with high country and bordered by three rivers, the Arrow, Kawarau and the Shotover. In the middle distance Lake Hayes glistened in the sun and in the far distance lay the wide waters of Lake Wakatipu with a backdrop of rugged mountain peaks.

They had come searching for land for pasturing sheep and on that day found an area which even from the distance they knew could not be better suited for their purpose and surrounded by unsurpassed beauty. The search for pastoral land had been going on for some years fanning out from Dunedin on the east coast and Invercargill on the south. Rees and von Tunzelmann on this day came to virtually the extreme limits of suitable land. Beyond lay mountainous country with heavy bush and so it largely remains today.

The organised settlement of Otago started with the arrival of a handful of immigrants on the ships John Wickliffe and Philip Laing in 1848. The settlement was planned to occupy a comparatively small coastal strip. For some years after their arrival all were fully occupied in surviving in difficult circumstances and little thought was given to the hinterland. In the early 1850's with the need for more land for the increasing population enterprising and adventurous people were penetrating further and further from the coast. The great reconnaissance surveys by the Chief Surveyor, J.T. Thomson, in 1857 paved the way for settlement of large areas suitable for pastoral use in Otago and Southland. By 1859 several men had reached Lake Wakatipu from the south and west but little was known of the area, until the two explorers looked down with wonder on a scene which fulfilled their most optimistic hopes.

Rees and von Tunzelmann, both in their early thirties, were members of a party of five, seeking land. The party, fully equipped for their task, left Dunedin on the east coast and travelling up the Waitaki River approached Wanaka from the Lindis Pass. They had been received with kindness and hospitality at the various sheep stations they passed through but at Wanaka Station they knew they were at the edge of the area of settlement and what lay ahead was unknown and unpopulated. Having satisfied themselves there was no suitable land to the north the party struck up the Cardrona Valley and after two weary days discovered the area to their west to be snow covered mountains. The rigours of the journey from Dunedin lasting several weeks and the disappointment of not finding pastoral land, was too much. The other members of the party decided to return to the coast leaving only Rees and von Tunzelmann to continue. This they did after a couple of days rest at Wanaka Station, with the result which has already been described. Rees and von Tunzelmann descended from the high country to the broad valley they had seen and set their horses' heads in the direction of the lake they knew to be Wakatipu. There was no bush or trees to be seen in any direction but their progress was slowed by vegetation consisting in the main of large speargrass and matagouri bushes, the latter aptly described by them as 'Wild Irishman'.

Rees later described this part of the journey - "our trousers were from the thighs downwards filled with blood and it was with the greatest difficulty that our poor horses and pack mule could be urged forward".

Thus late in February 1860 Rees and von Tunzelmann rode up to the waters edge at present day Queenstown. Making camp they forgot about their weariness and pain in the wonder of their surroundings and their satisfaction at having discovered their pastoral land.

Their next task was to build a raft to explore the northern arm of the lake as they rightly guessed it would be difficult to do this by land. They spent some three days fashioning a crude



raft from driftwood and koradis and a further three days waiting for suitable weather to venture out on the lake. Fine weather was essential as their craft consisted of merely floats which had to be straddled and it was neither comfortable nor stable. After several days of extremely slow progress the two men left their raft to climb to a summit from where they were at last able to get a picture of the area towards the head of the lake and satisfy themselves there was a large area available which was suitable for grazing. From this point too von Tunzelmann was able to look across the lake and reassure himself that the area he had applied for in Dunedin before the start of the journey appeared to be suitable too.

Their return to Queenstown Bay and across the Shotover was a spectacular journey. Bracken, fern and grass had flourished and died for countless years leaving an immensely thick carpet of dead vegetation making it almost impossible for them to pass. In some parts they found the easiest way to travel downhill was to roll on top of the growth. Everything was tinder dry and with a view to making future progress easier the men set light to the undergrowth. The two found they had unleashed a monster for with a northerly wind the countryside was soon alight. A hurried journey back to Queenstown Bay and across the Shotover was necessary to avoid their being caught by the flames.

It was two very tired and travel-stained men, Rees nursing an injured leg, who returned to Wanaka Station after almost a month's absence, but the success of their journey more than compensated for their trials and suffering. On his return to Dunedin Rees wrote a letter to the Otago Witness describing their journey, and the previously unknown areas they had explored. The Editor wrote a leader on the subject which as a prophetic statement has few equals. It read, "The information indicated that the country around the Wākatipu is in all probability a gold bearing district ..... should the precious metal be discovered the 65 miles of inland water carriage would be such an immense advantage that in all probability the country would be extensively wrought.

But apart from any consideration of wealth to be derived from the mineral resources of the country, the existence of such lakes as are to be found in Otago, will we have no doubt, at some future day, cause this part of New Zealand to be extensively visited for the mere purpose of viewing the grandeur of the same ..... no doubt the day will come, when a visit to the Lakes of Otago will be as general by our neighbours of Australia as is that from the Home Country to the Lakes of Switzerland ..... The Lakes of Otago will become lions in the southern hemisphere we fully believe."

Rees on behalf of his partnership which included two others, William Lewis Grant and George Gammie promptly sought approval from the Provincial Government to occupy Run 356, which roughly covered the Queenstown/Arrowtown basin and Run 346 on the eastern side of the lake including the Head of the Lake. This was granted in early April 1860 and Rees now had the daunting task of getting the area stocked as this was a requirement to retain the licence to occupy and use the land.

The nucleus of the stock for the Wakatipu had been shipped from Australia where Rees had spent some six years sheep farming, on the east coast, in northern New South Wales. This stock was held at Shag Valley a few kilometres inland from Palmerston, north of Dunedin. Additional stock was purchased locally from various sources over a period of several months and brought to join the Australian flock at Shag Valley.

While this was being done Rees set about establishing a station at Queenstown and to this end bought a five-oared, forty foot whaleboat at Bluff. Two carpenters, George Washington McGaw and another simply known to history as 'Chips' were engaged, together with a boatman named Bob Fortune and one other, Henry Posselthwaite.

The party which included Mrs Frances Rees and Mrs McGaw set out from Bluff for present day Kingston at the south end of Lake Wakatipu. The whaleboat was mounted on a sledge pulled by bullocks and stores and provisions were carried on a dray.



Here the whaleboat now named the Undine, was sailed to Queenstown and the erection of the station buildings commenced on the foreshore of the bay. The first building was a futter, a storeroom on poles designed to protect the stores from the ravages of native rats which abounded in the area and proved to be particularly destructive. A long narrow hut of three rooms was erected to provide living accommodation while further building proceeded.

With the preliminary work underway Rees returned to Dunedin to prepare for the formidable task of driving a large flock of sheep over one hundred kilometres of virgin country with many natural obstacles in the way. After the flock was shorn the trek began in December 1860 with seven men, twelve horses and one mule. The route was over the present Pigroute inland from Palmerston across country to present day Clyde. Here the sheep were swum over the mighty Clutha River with the intention of proceeding up the South bank of the Kawarau. This route proved impossible and almost ended in tragedy. On Christmas day 1860 the stock was swum back across the river, a difficult and dangerous task. The party then proceeded north to the Wanaka Station and then west up the Cardrona Valley to follow the route taken by Rees almost a year before.

Early in 1861 Rees was established in Queenstown Bay with a large flock of sheep, some cows and other stock, and besides the original three roomed hut had a wattle and daub house for his family, a wool shed, milking yard, calf shed, stockyard and two foodstores. In the bay rode the Undine, with other boats being built on the foreshore to provide transport on the lake for supplies from the south. Staff were engaged in tending sheep in the Lake Hayes area and the Head of the Lake, while in Queenstown Bay permanent buildings were being erected. The station was a busy settlement but conducted at a pace in keeping with the tranquillity and beauty of the area.

Rees marvelling at his good fortune in having discovered good pastoral land in such a beautiful area never tired of extolling its beauty to the point where many referred to "Rees Promised

Land". He had however one major concern. Gold had been discovered in Otago and he was uneasy that the rush which had developed would in time extend to the Wakatipu.

## GOLD

### Gold discovery in Otago

The first settlers who arrived in Dunedin came under the auspices of the Free Church of Scotland. It was planned the settlement would be a model one based on Church going, hard work and sobriety and their leaders Captain William Cargill and the Rev'd Thomas Burns were well qualified to set an example. They were dour and pious and could see very little good in anyone who did not measure up to the strict code of conduct they themselves followed. Unfortunately the immigrants were a typical cross section of the Scottish and English population and included a fair share of lazy, dishonest, drunken and generally undesirable characters. They were however much better behaved and law abiding than the gold miners of Victoria on the other side of the Tasman. Tales of rioting, drunkenness and immorality were received with dismay by the leaders of the settlement who in turn feared the discovery of gold in the province would immediately introduce the same problems locally. These fears induced them to play down the material benefits the discovery of gold would bring and the population was even warned "Flour is more necessary than gold and may be more profitable".

Several small finds of gold were made in the 1850's which did not involve more than a small number of people and hardly produced a ripple in the quiet pool of Otago. However when Gabriel Read discovered gold in large quantities near present day Lawrence on the 20th of May 1861, it was like a spark in a dry forest. Gold fever affected almost all the population with men walking out of offices and factories, off farms and ships hoping to make their fortunes as others had done in California and Australia in the past. Many not engaged in fossicking for gold swiftly realised there were riches to be made supplying the miners needs, and packers, carters, merchants, hotel-keepers, bankers and others were soon in the field. So too were the camp followers in the form of thieves, prostitutes, swindlers and sly grog sellers who gathered like



jackals around a carcase. The news of the richness of the field soon crossed the Tasman and thousands of frustrated miners in Victoria packed their swags, took ship to Dunedin and joined the rush. In September 1861 one thousand people arrived in a two-day period. The town which had been denuded in the early days of the rush now became a busy, thriving place with large numbers of people and frantic business activity.

Those arriving represented a cross section of the entire world's population. Although some groups were large, like the Irish driven from their homeland by famine and persecution, there were individuals and groups from the remotest corners of the world.

As the hordes of miners arrived and found all the best ground taken, they fanned out further afield, all intent on finding a prospect and being first in the field.

In this way many new fields were found and immediately word of a new find was received, a wave of miners followed. Rich claims eluded most miners and word of a new field was all that was necessary for almost everybody to migrate from one area to another supposedly more promising. In August 1862 an announcement of an extremely rich field near present day Cromwell was made by two men, Hartley and Reilly, and immediately the Lawrence area was largely deserted in favour of the Dunstan, or present day Clyde.

The speed of a rush is illustrated by the experience of William Fraser the owner of a station near Clyde. He was in Dunedin when word of the discovery by Hartley and Reilly became known. Realising the rush would be to his property he promptly left Dunedin by horseback. Though he wasted no time he was unable to head off the van of the prospectors before he reached his home, even though he was mounted and they walked. The tide was coming closer to the Wakatipu.



Towards the end of September 1862 a party of three men one by the name of William Fox appeared at the Queenstown Station having followed the Kawarau River up from the Dunstan in search of gold.

### William Rees and the first Gold miners

William Rees sold them provisions and they departed to prospect the Arrow River. A few days later another party of four men, one of whom was named McGregor, appeared at the station and they too began prospecting in the Arrow River. The gold in the Arrow was extremely rich and the miners determined to keep the field a secret as long as possible. Other parties arrived and William Fox became the unofficial leader of the group deciding the size of claims and other matters normally the province of a warden. He had the physique to reinforce his decisions. Rees, fearing a rush when he was about to start shearing, played his part by supplying the miners with mutton and essential stores. When Rees was unable to supply flour, a visit to the Dunstan was necessary to renew supplies, and Fox must have been indiscrete in some way as it became known he was onto a rich claim. Being tracked back to his claim presented Fox with problems and on one occasion when he could not throw off his followers he made camp, settled down and then departed in the night leaving his tent standing. The interest in finding Fox's claim was intense and many miners left their claims to look for the illusive Fox. In these circumstances it was inevitable the Arrow field would be discovered and with discovery came the usual wave of miners and others. The town which sprang up was first known as Fox's, later the Arrow and now Arrowtown.

The ground was extremely rich and the gold initially easy to obtain. Those who were early on the field were rewarded with riches beyond their greatest dreams. Keeping the secret paid off as Fox's party got 40 lbs weight of gold in two weeks while McGregor's party got 82 lbs and Cormack's party 110 lbs in four weeks.

Fox invested some of his wealth in an hotel in Arrowtown and on a vessel engaged in the lucrative carriage of goods on Lake Wakatipu. McGregor and his partner Low opened up as merchants in Queenstown for a short period and subsequently became rural property owners. McGregor later returned to Scotland and the family distillery in the Strathspey. Scotch whisky was just becoming known outside Scotland and John McGregor returned home to enjoy the prosperity created by the world acceptance of Scotlands national drink.

In November with the sheep mustered for shearing Alfred Duncan, one of Rees' shepherds, was despatched to the Nokomai a field south of the lake to engage some shearers. Though men were available none seemed anxious to accept hard work and it was only after some difficulty two down and out named Thomas Arthur and Harry Redfern were engaged. The men were so disreputable, that Arthur, when he arrived at Queenstown Bay and learned there were women at the station, refused to land from the boat until he could be provided with a pair of trousers to replace the revealing ones he was wearing.

### **Arthur and Redfern**

In mid November on the first Sunday after shearing had started, Arthur and Redfern went fossicking in the Shotover River at present day Arthurs Point some eight kilometres from Queenstown. Here too gold was rich and easy to obtain and in a few hours with primitive tools they obtained several ounces. Though the two had given Rees an undertaking to finish shearing before looking for gold they were now possessed with gold fever and Rees, realising the futility of trying to hold them to their undertaking, paid them off and provided them with stores. In the next two months their party secured £4000 worth of gold.

Like Fox at the Arrow, Redfern decided to invest some of his wealth in selling liquor and for a period he operated in Queenstown a successful music hall which was a de facto hotel without the disadvantages of providing accommodation.

As in all previous fields, the later arrivals fanned out into the surrounding countryside in search of fresh ground and once



## Shotover Gold discovery

again many were successful but in countryside more rugged than any had previously had to cope with. The richest area was the Upper Shotover where the river ran through a deep gorge for many kilometres and produced almost unheard of returns. This was no place for the faint-hearted and those prepared to descend steep cliffs to the river and endure extreme hardships were richly rewarded. It is recorded that at Maori Point two Maoris, Dan Ellison and Hakaria Haeroa in swimming the river to rescue their dog found a beach which was virtually paved in gold. On the first day they obtained three hundred ounces.

Access to the area was by way of narrow tortuous tracks and keeping up supplies was difficult and often dangerous. It was considered one in every three in a party would be involved full time in packing supplies. Crossing the river before any bridges were erected presented problems. Ferries of tree trunks roped together to form a rough platform relying on a rope to restrain the craft in the turbulent river were common. That there were accidents goes without saying and the Wakatipu contributed to the large number of deaths from drowning in early New Zealand history.

The richness of the early claims is illustrated by a letter from one John Wildridge to his friend John McCubbin of Dunedin in December 1862. It read :-

Dear Jack,

I have written for my brother and brother-in-law to come here as early as possible. I am sixty miles from a bank or Post Office therefore cannot forward cash. I would like you to let them have as much as will bring them here and I shall remit same to you first opportunity. Jack I am making my pile fast - £100 a week. This is the richest river in the world. I walk in up to the waist in water, put down the shovel and sometimes bring up five or six ounces in the shovel. When the river is down I

don't know how much gold I shall get.

Yours truly,

John Wildridge.

With rich fields at both the Arrow and Queenstown almost at the same time there was a tremendous influx of miners into the area with canvas towns rising overnight. Initially supplies were difficult to obtain as the only transport from the Dunstan was by pack animals. Rees with his flock of sheep and small vessels on the lake to ferry supplies arriving by dray at the south end of the lake was the main supplier and his co-operation, albeit at a price, prevented outright starvation. Sheep were sold at a price of one ounce of gold plus half a crown, the whole being equal to £4. Flour was in extremely short supply owing to the difficulty of getting it to the station and often Rees stood guard with a revolver to prevent a rush while one of his staff doled out flour at half a crown a pannikin full to each hungry miner.

At the Arrow the township sprang up on the banks of the river and in the case of Queenstown on the flat immediately surrounding the station buildings in Queenstown Bay. The Provincial Government had had a year's experience of dealing with the problems associated with gold rushes and legislation and regulations were in place to provide for orderly local government. However in all rushes the miners always headed off the arrival of local government and the Arrow and Queenstown were no exceptions. With the first wave arrived those who travelled light, the affluent by horseback, the less affluent, who were the majority, on foot. It is recorded that miners flocked into Queenstown at the rate of three to four thousand per week until there were many thousands in the Wakatipu Basin.

The early arrivals very smartly pegged out claims in likely positions and the later arrivals further afield. With the vanguard came the Provincial Police, a para military force created to maintain law and order in the gold field areas.



They were efficient, honest and dedicated but their operations were hindered by their lack of numbers. With only a token force, many of whom were busy with administrative tasks and gold escort, investigation of serious crime was often too late or neglected. Claim jumping with violence, theft with violence or murder were not infrequent but often those guilty failed to be apprehended. Gold field towns were rough and ready with drunkenness, violence and disorder common, but many of these offences were accepted as normal because the police had insufficient staff to cope. The police worked hard and initially lived hard. The headquarters or 'Camp' in each place was a series of tents with comforts or lack of them equal to the citizens they were protecting. In the heat of summer and the intense cold of winter these flimsy shelters were their home and headquarters for their arduous duties. In 1863 the Provincial authorities were astounded and disturbed to learn that upwards of £100,000 lay in saddlebags on the floor of a small tent in Queenstown Camp with only an orderly who did the cooking, to stand guard. Though the Police handled huge quantities of gold, in many instances without proper record or verification, only one serious loss is recorded in which one of the force was implicated.

In August 1870 the gold escort spent the night at Clyde according to custom and as usual the gold was lodged in a cell overnight. One of the Clyde constables named McLennan had planned with a man named Rennie from Arrowtown to steal the gold and to this end had made a duplicate key to the cell. Rennie was able during McLennan's period on watch to open the cell and depart with the entire amount, to a value of £14,000. Rennie set out on his return journey to Arrowtown but the distance his horse had to travel and the great weight of the gold carried proved too much for the horse and it broke down short of his destination. In hiding the gold and disposing of the horse's saddlery Rennie drew attention to himself resulting in the subsequent arrest of himself and McLennan. Both were brought to trial but while Rennie received a stiff sentence by some quirk of justice McLennan

was acquitted.

One member of the force made a name for himself in the Wakatipu. He was Sergeant Major H.W. Bracken. Bracken was in charge of the first small detachment at the Arrow finding complete lawlessness. There was serious crime including murder and claim jumping with violence and the situation was almost out of hand. Bracken, who was known for his efficiency and fearlessness at earlier fields, soon exercised his authority in controlling the worst outrages and made it relatively safe for law-abiding citizens. Within a few months he realised there were easier and more lucrative jobs than the Police and resigned to engage in hotel keeping.

One of the early problems was the total lack of somewhere to lock up criminals and logging was resorted to. This consisted of a metal staple securely attached to a stout log and those under arrest were chained to it. There is an apocryphal story told of an immensely strong Irishman logged for drunkenness at the Arrow whose thirst was not entirely quenched. He hoisted the log onto his shoulder and adjourned to the nearest hotel where the law found him continuing his carousal.

With the police, or soon thereafter, came the officials appointed by the Provincial Government to administer the Gold Field Regulations. The chief official was the Resident Magistrate and Gold Fields Warden and he, in addition to dispensing justice in both criminal and civil cases, largely carried out the work of local government until it was established later. He was assisted by a Gold Receiver and Mining Registrar in addition to a clerk and a bailiff. This small team had the responsibility of administering justice in wild towns populated with thousands of miners many of whom had a great capacity of offending against the law or got themselves involved in mining disputes. Like the police, the arbiters of justice lived hard with initially tents for living quarters and court houses. A contemporary description of the first Vardens Court in Queenstown has been left to us. It



reads, "A stately pile of calico 18 feet by 12 feet with walls five feet high and with no windows the door alone admitting air and light. On an earthen floor stood a plain deal table while the bench was represented by a wooden form".

Many mining cases were dealt with on the site which involved long travel over difficult and dangerous tracks. With the cost of owning or hiring a horse often beyond a Warden's means walking was the only way to travel and tramping ten to twenty miles, holding a full days court and returning again, made for a long and tiring, but not exceptional day for these hardy officials.

Following closely behind the first wave of miners came the merchants, hotel keepers, bankers and other tradesmen supplying the miners needs. As not one tree grew in the immediate vicinity, all premises were tents or canvas over timber frames. Almost all the miners were young without women or responsibilities and many earning in a day more than they had previously earned in a year. In a day when heavy drinking was the norm, in mining towns it reached gigantic proportions and the suppliers of liquor were early on the scene to ply their wares. Setting up an hotel was a simple operation in the early days of the rush. A canvas area mounted on flimsy wooden supports with an earthen floor became the building. A rough counter with some gin, brandy and glasses was the bar and in a separately screened area some tables and chairs formed a dining room. At night the dining room doubled as a bedroom but using the bar for other than drinking was not practical as opening hours were based on customers' needs and these were demanding. Miners who struck it rich showed their generosity in the only way open by shouting for the bar. Entertainment in various forms was part of hotel activities and travelling musicians and singers were extremely popular. So too were card games, billiards and bagatelle. Even boxing and ratting in a pit were featured to attract custom. Drinks were dear at one shilling each and meals were basic and expensive because of the primitive kitchens and the high cost of food. Some

hotels and music halls, which were hotels without accommodation, had dancing girls and because they were few in number their services were in demand not only for dancing but for the occupation generally associated with their work, prostitution.

Licensing laws were extremely simple and probably the most expensive part of setting up an hotel was the licence fee. A publican's licence cost £40. Some omitted this expensive formality and sly grogging was quite common. In Arrowtown a famous or infamous hotelkeeper was Captain William "Bully" Hayes an unscrupulous opportunist who had lived a life of crime. He had cheated and been responsible for many crimes associated with the sea including black birding and was an unsavoury character. Early on the scene Hayes realised hotel keeping was less onerous and in many instances more profitable than mining and was soon operating the United States Hotel. His stay was comparatively short and the reason for his departure reads like fiction. Hayes had been caught cheating at cards during the Californian gold rush and the penalty imposed by the miners' rough justice was to have an ear cut off. Hayes and his reputation became known in Arrow but because he wore his hair long final proof in the form of a missing ear was not possible. His hotel competitors offered a \$5 reward to anybody who could reveal Hayes was minus an ear and a bold barber finally cleared up any doubts by cutting Hayes' hair revealing his deformity. Hayes blustered, lied and threatened but finally could not stand the contempt and derision he received and left the area. In Queenstown William Rees, quick to take advantage of a situation where he had a head start over everybody, turned his shearing shed into an hotel in conjunction with Sergeant Major Bracken and opened the Queens Arms. An hotel still exists on the site now named Richardts after a later owner.

The merchants and shopkeepers too set up in canvas shops and their arrival meant the spectre of starvation disappeared. The choice of foodstuffs was fairly basic with flour, tea, sugar, salt and oatmeal the main items of food. Picks, shovels and pans, the working tools of the miners, were in



demand and for clothing, boots, moleskin trousers and Garibaldi shirts were everybody's garb. Most merchants sold wines and spirits too.

One of the early merchants in Queenstown was Bendix Hallenstein who was of German birth. He was a clever businessman and quickly amassed a fortune from his commercial activities. Hallenstein took a prominent part in local affairs and was the second Mayor of the Borough. In keeping with his position Hallenstein built a large house halfway between Queenstown and Arrowtown which he named Thurlby Domain. Here Hallenstein lived like a squire. The stone house has long since gone but the magnificent stone stables remain to remind us of the original owner who first made his name in Queenstown. After he left Queenstown Hallenstein continued to further develop his business activities and founded Hallenstein Bros the large nationwide clothing firm.

Where there was gold there were gold buyers and they were on the scene at the Wakatipu with the van. Some were employed by banks and some were self employed but all used the police to hold their purchases and escort them to Dunedin. With a truly rich field the banks followed quickly as profit on gold purchases and associated transactions formed a large part of their business. The Union Bank and the Bank of New Zealand opened premises in Arrowtown and these two plus the Bank of New South Wales and the Bank of Otago opened branches at Queenstown. The Bank of New Zealand opened for a short period a branch at Maori Point a remote and desolate area in the mountains where mining activity had fanned out from the main centres with a promise of permanence. Here the bank joined a few storekeepers supplying the miners, a police station and a large number of shanties called hotels. Just how short-lived this township was can be judged from the fact that within a year of the discovery of gold the Provincial Government proclaimed the cancellation of six publicans licenses at Maori Point because the parties had left the district. One of these ramshackle, fly-by-night hotels had the exotic name of The Coast of Africa.

Like all the early arrivals the bankers set up business and lived under canvas with few comforts and little security. Lying on a pile of gold and bank notes in a tent was not conducive to sound sleep. Gold buying was very competitive and a banker who was not prepared to open for business when it was sought at nights or weekends lost out to his competitors. Much gold buying was done by touring the claims involving journeys on horseback over dangerous tracks frequently in difficult conditions. The ever present possibility of being stuck up and robbed was a further fear and though armed themselves they had little chance of escaping injury or death if attacked by a gang.

All the other essential services required by a population of many thousands soon appeared including doctors, dentists, lawyers or their non professional equivalent, the mining agents. Tradesmen of all kinds were in demand as was the supply of essential building material. Timber from the Head of the Lake filled the great need for building material and proved to be a very durable product. Some of the very earliest wooden buildings are still in use today.

Shops selling a wide variety of goods soon followed and in a few months the towns though primitive, unsanitary and generally lacking in comfort or refinement, were operating successfully and fulfilling the needs of the thousands drawn by the lure of gold.



## THE EARLY YEARS

### Queenstown surveys

Many thousands of men arriving in a remote area almost overnight presented many problems in addition to the maintenance of law and order. With a large canvas town being formed some elementary town plan was necessary. Presumably, until the arrival of the government surveyors, the police and the Resident Magistrate on whom fell the burden of local government in the early days laid down the areas which could be occupied and those that should remain clear to provide thoroughfare. That they were only partly successful was evident when the survey was properly made, for many of the buildings impinged on the roads. The Wesleyan chapel was found to be in the middle of Ballarat Street. It was a rough canvas building and the problem of its siting was neatly solved when it blew down in a gale. The survey was not completed until January 1864 when sections were sold by the Provincial Government at 10/- per foot frontage and 12/6d for corner sections. At first the government refused to grant pre-emptive rights for those occupying sections but to everyone's relief relented before the sale. The price of sections ranged from £6.0.0. to almost £30.0.0. and realised a large sum which no doubt helped the Provincial Government to find the £10,000 they agreed to pay William Rees as compensation on revoking his pastoral lease of the settled areas.

The original survey reflected the way in which people had arrived, pitched their tents and settled in. The sections were extremely small particularly in the business area, some merely the size of a large room. Some were oddly shaped indicating the surveyors' endeavour to meet the status quo and avoid survey lines going through an existing occupied area.

Another early problem was hygiene caused by the congregation of large numbers of people and animals in a confined area

and the pollution of Horne Creek and the lake edge which was the water supply. The personal problem was not easy to solve but the thousands of horses which fouled the entire area with their dung attracting swarms of flies, were restricted to an out-of-town area.

The extremes of climate were a trial. In the last 100 years there has been a gradual change in the climate with wetter summers and less severe winters. It is now hard to realise the hardships caused by the extreme cold in the winters and the intense heat in the summers. Heavy snow-fall and hard frosts were normal for winter with all but the major rivers freezing over. Living in a tent or a galvanized iron building in an area where fuel was scarce made life a misery. The only relief came when the sun shone and in the mountain areas this could be fairly brief. Deaths from lung diseases were common. Prior to the first winter in 1863 the authorities issued a warning recommending people not fully prepared to leave the area for the winter. The lure of gold overcame most fears and few took the advice. The summer heat too caused its problems and keeping food from going bad was difficult. A cave dug into a bank was the usual substitute for modern day refrigeration.

#### **Natural disasters in Queenstown**

Natural disasters added to the trials. In June 1863 a violent gale played havoc with towns largely made of canvas. At Queenstown, Arrowtown, Arthurs Point and Kingston almost every hotel, the largest building, was either destroyed or damaged. Shipping too suffered damage or was driven ashore. In the following month of July sudden floods wreaked havoc and caused many casualties. Hundreds of men were camped in or close to rivers and streams and the flash floods took most by surprise. Many were swept away and drowned and the damage to camps and mining gear was widespread. It is recorded that the Shotover River rose thirty feet in one night.

Late in October 1878 came a flood which is still spoken of. Fortunately it involved no loss of life. All the rivers in the area were affected and Lake Wakatipu rose, entering the



town to half way up the present Mall. The town creek flooded over its banks scouring Beach Street in a direct line to the lake. Timber from timber yards floated free and with a wind which arose caused severe damage to a number of buildings. Virtually every bridge in the area was damaged or washed away presenting a tremendous problem for the Lake County Council then only two years old.

Although most of the miners lived from day to day with their ambition to strike it rich, there were many responsible people concerned for the well being of the town, who considered some local authority to deal with problems should exist. In October 1863, a year after gold was discovered, the Queenstown Improvement Committee came into existence. The committee, elected at a public meeting, was charged with obtaining funds by subscription to be used for the public good in street cleaning, essential in a town with many horses, providing a night watchman and similar services. The committee convened a public meeting at which a fire brigade was formed, a very necessary organisation in a town where every building was a fire hazard and all lighting, heating and cooking was by naked flame. The committee also made numerous representations to the Provincial Government about postal services, roads, bridges and like matters. Like all voluntary organisations its success depended on the energy of the committee and the support it received from the public and this varied from time to time. It continued its work until 1866 when Queenstown became a borough with a Mayor, and councillors being elected.

### **Early Transport**

Transport in a remote area without roads was extremely difficult and the cost of goods at the gold field was very high. The easiest supply route was by dray to the south end of the lake and thence by boat to Queenstown. For a short time Rees' whaleboat was the only vessel on the lake and it was hopelessly inadequate to supply the demands of the many miners. Other small vessels soon made their appearance, being dragged to the lake or built locally, to meet the demand. Small steamers followed as ship owners

were quick to cash in on the need for lake transport. One, the 30 ton Nugget which was originally built in Melbourne, dismantled and shipped to Dunedin for use in that port, was once more dismantled and transported to the Wakatipu to become the first steam vessel on the lake.

It was quickly followed by the paddle steamer Wakatipu built on Pigeon Island at the Head of the Lake and the Victoria which like the Nugget had been built originally in Australia and twice dismantled and rebuilt. Later larger vessels were required and the Antrim a wooden paddle steamer was built at the Head of the Lake in 1869, remaining in service until 1920. It was followed by the screw steamer Jane Williams, later named the Ben Lomond, built on the foreshore of Queenstown Bay in 1872. The Ben Lomond was active for eighty years. The present steamer T.S.S. Earnslaw came much later. It was built in Dunedin, dismantled, re-erected and launched at Kingston in 1912. It has seen almost eighty years service like the Ben Lomond, but promises to exceed that record by many years.

The completion of the rail link to Kingston at the south end of the lake in 1878 connecting with the lake steamers, made it possible to travel to Invercargill in one day making Queenstown much more accessible. Tourism, now the main industry of the Wakatipu got underway with this event.

The diet of the early miners consisted almost exclusively of mutton and damper, a crude type of bread or scone made without leavening. Even when more varied supplies began to arrive there was an absence of fresh fruit and vegetables. Living hard on this diet caused scurvy and other deficiency diseases and many were affected. The first winter with its severe weather caused much sickness, with pneumonia and frostbite common. These and other illnesses and the injuries from accidents had to be treated in the homes, or in the cases of miners who were carried in from their claims in the mountains, in hotels. The need for a hospital was acute and several public meetings resulted in subscriptions



being raised to fund such an institution. The hospital opened in Frankton in August 1863 providing a place where nursing care could be provided, this being the only treatment for many illnesses.

Amongst the miners were many dedicated Christians seeking, despite the restlessness and materialism of the times, to follow their religion. At first small groups gathered together for worship led by laymen. The Anglicans had William Rees the first settler to lead them assisted by Richmond Beetham the Resident Magistrate. A visit by Bishop Harper in March 1863 did much to strengthen and encourage the faithful. The Bishop who had travelled by horseback from Christchurch to Riverton in the south, returned to the north by way of Queenstown, a remarkable journey by today's standards.

### **Bishop Harper**

Following the Bishop's visit, funds were raised and the building of a church commenced on the present site. It was almost finished when the town was struck by the great gale in June 1863 which flattened the building.

Disheartened though not deterred, the congregation started a second time and had the building ready for use in November. The number of clergymen in the country was limited and the congregation carried on with lay readers until the Rev'd Richard Coffee was appointed in 1869.

The Vicarage built to accommodate him and his family still stands beside the church and is now almost 120 years old. The first wooden church remained in service until replaced with the present stone building in 1932. The old building was taken down, and re-erected in Omakau where it still serves the local parish.

There was a strong Roman Catholic element in the early population and as early as February 1863 Father Phillippe Martin travelled from Dunedin to attend to the spiritual needs of the miners throughout the gold fields. He was the first clergyman to come to the Wakatipu. Later in the year, in September, the Church of St Mary, a small wooden

## Early churches

building, was erected in Church Street. It was the first church in a permanent form built in Queenstown. Services were held here until 1883 when the present Convent and School in Lalburne Street were opened. At that time the Church Street site was sold and services were then held in the School. The impressive Church of St Joseph was built in 1898.

Otago with its Free Kirk background had many Scottish people and there were many Presbyterians in the community. In 1867 the Rev'd Robert Telford was appointed minister in the Wakatipu but his stay in the area was short. Some two years later the Rev'd Donald Ross was appointed. He was to remain for some 22 years during which he came to be something of an institution as he travelled the entire Wakatipu basin on horseback ministering far and wide. A wooden church was built in the Mall in 1870 and this building was demolished when the present church was built in Stanley Street in 1967.

The Methodists had a presence from the earliest days though their numbers were not great. A resident Home Missioner, Joseph Flight, was appointed in 1866 and the first clergyman, the Rev'd B.F. Rothwell, took over the parish in 1887. A church was built in Camp Street Queenstown. As the population dwindled when mining wound down, the congregations became too small to support a minister and the building was sold. It is now owned by the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army were later in the field, arriving in the country in 1886. Queenstown soon followed with a corps founded in 1887. The church is still active in the area.

Lodges, an important part of the community last century, were soon formed. The Masonic Lodge of Ophir No. 85 had a building erected and the lodge established as early as July 1863. Early records of the lodge indicate an intense interest in membership with a waiting list of candidates. The rather quaint building on its waterfront site was built without windows but the battering of the walls with logs in the 1878 flood persuaded the brethren to install windows rather than



rebuild the walls. The building is still in use by the lodge.

Benefit lodges, an important feature of life before pensions, workers' compensation and free health care came into existence, were soon formed. The inevitable Oddfellows Lodge together with a Foresters Lodge were established and later when prohibition became a predominant theme in public life, a branch of the Good Templars flourished for a time. The Foresters erected their own building in the early 1870's and it still remains, a somewhat dilapidated garage in Ballarat Street.

### Hotels

Hotels flourished in the early days of the rush as heavy drinking was indulged in by a large section of the population and there was not much offering in the way of entertainment and recreation. For a short time there were over twenty hotels in the town with many at regular intervals of a few miles apart on all the surrounding roads. After the first flush of mining and the reduction in the population, the canvas covered hotels disappeared to be replaced with a fewer number built in wood. When the need to build in brick or concrete became mandatory in the 1880's the number was finally reduced to four in Queenstown. Two of the original buildings, Eichardts 1872 and the Mountaineer, 1885 remain still serving the public. Another now no longer an hotel is Eureka House in the Mall, once Powells Family Hotel built in the 1870's.

### Banks

The banks which had been extremely active in the hectic days of the rush soon found business declining. In a short time only the Bank of New Zealand remained in both Queenstown and Arrowtown. In both towns substantial buildings were erected. The Arrowtown branch closed in 1916 and the building which was erected in 1875 was later donated to form a home for the Lakes District Centennial Museum. In Queenstown the bank has had four different premises to accommodate its expansion over the years.

The canvas structures of the early towns were a temporary expedient though the Borough Council considered a by-law to prohibit canvas buildings as late as 1866. Though timber was not available locally there were vast forests of red beech at the Head of the Lake and soon timber was being milled to provide more substantial buildings. A firm, the principal of which was the first Mayor, Mr J.W. Robertson, erected a mill at Kinloch powered by a 30 foot water wheel and became the main supplier. As the same firm also ran their own ships on the lake their business prospered. With the supply of timber, wood quickly replaced canvas and the town became more settled and permanent. With there being a ready supply of stone for building purposes, more substantial buildings began to appear. The stone masons' art of the time is still visible in some of the older buildings. Good examples are the Queenstown Supermarket of 1879 in the Mall, the James McNeil cottage of the 1880's in Church Street and the bridge over Horne Creek of 1882. The corner of Ballarat and Stanley Streets has fine stone buildings on both sides. On the south the Malaghan Library and Court House of 1876 and the Lake County Council building of 1870 on the north beside the Forester's Lodge. Another notable early stone building is the Trading Post in the Mall, it was erected in 1872 as a Town Hall.

The Queenstown Improvement Committee formed in the first year of Queenstown's existence without any proper authority was only a limited success. All those with a responsible outlook appreciated properly constituted local government was necessary and representations to the Provincial Government resulted in the constitution of the Queenstown Borough Council in 1866. The first Mayor was J.W. Robertson. The Constitution of the Borough Council came at a time when the hectic days of the rush were over. Although gold mining still directly or indirectly involved the entire population life in general was more settled. Those seeking quick and easy wealth had left to seek their fortune on the West Coast goldfields leaving a smaller number content to settle in the area at least for a period. The canvas had



been mostly replaced by wood and the fly-by-night hotels and shops had disappeared. Queenstown had become a settled country town with all the usual amenities and organisations.

### Councils

The first councillors by their actions showed they had faith that the town would consolidate and grow. One of their early decisions was to apply to the Government to have the peninsula, now the Queenstown gardens, vested in the Council for public purposes. When this was achieved the Council embarked on a tree-planting programme and to this we owe the many fine specimen trees in the park. Two individuals who over the years contributed to the tree planting in the town were Francois St Omer a Frenchman from Marseilles who was a baker, and Lewis Hotop a German who owned a chemist shop.

Another Council activity was the stocking of the lake with trout. A hatchery was established in 1869 and trout were liberated at regular intervals. The investment in this activity over the first twenty years amounted to several hundred pounds. Conditions for trout were ideal and soon the lake waters were teeming with fish many growing to large sizes. In 1885 the trout population was so great the local Acclimatisation Society let lake areas for commercial netting.

In 1876 with the abolition of the provincial governments, the Lake County Council came into being. It covered all the territory surrounding Queenstown, reaching south of the lake, west to Milford Sound and north to Wanaka. The first chairman was Mr J.O. McArdell. These two local authorities operated separately until 1979 when the administration of the two was combined and finally in 1986 the two merged to become the Queenstown-Lakes District Council.

An important institution in the town has always been the Fire Brigade and none more so when all the buildings were of canvas or wood with shingle roofs. The Queenstown

Improvement Committee convened a public meeting in 1863 at which a volunteer fire brigade was formed. For many years the efforts of the brigade varied from good to bad depending on the enthusiasm of its members and from time to time required reforming. The primitive equipment and the lack of a water supply meant that even enthusiastic firemen were often unable to successfully fight a fire. Apart from fire fighting there was a great need for a water supply for domestic and hygienic requirements. The Borough Council in 1881 proposed a water supply based on water from the One Mile creek and sought authority by means of a poll to raise a loan for this purpose. The ratepayers, thinking of their pockets rather than their essential needs, voted against the proposal. An event happened in 1882 which persuaded the ratepayers more than the eloquence of the proponents of the scheme, to change their minds. Phillip Waldemann a grocer in the Mall was, like many others in the depressed times of the decade, in financial difficulties. He hatched a scheme to solve his problems and increased the insurance cover on his property. Then on a morning when he departed on the early steamer, he lit delayed action fires in his shop and in his home on the eastern terrace. In the afternoon the shop fire flared up and because the fire fighting equipment was inoperative the fire took a strong hold and spread to nearby premises. It finally destroyed eight business premises representing about a quarter of the entire business area. Despite his absence there was some suspicion of Waldemann and an inspection of his home revealed a delayed action fire nearing the point when it was about due to flare up. Waldemann was arrested in Dunedin and later convicted of arson and sentenced to seven years gaol.

#### Queenstown water Supply

The event was a disaster but it persuaded everybody of the need for a water supply which was installed in 1884. An adequate water supply improved the efficiency of the brigade and although it had its ups and downs for some years to come there were no more disasters like the one of 1882. The brigade is now equipped with modern gear and is an



extremely efficient force.

A newspaper, the Lake Wakatip Mail, was established in 1863 and this weekly publication played an important part in the community by recording the events of the area. It remained in existence until 1947 and for most of the time was owned by the Warren family. Almost at the same time a Post Office was established in an office in the Mall but it was not until 1867 that a telegraph connection to Dunedin was completed.

### Queenstown School

A school was established by the education authorities in 1864 which confirms that even by this early date families were arriving in the town.

The arrival of Chinese miners in the middle 1860's was an innovation which caused much controversy. By 1869 there were sufficient Chinese to support their own store situated in Rees Street. Many considered the Chinese to be dirty, immoral and carriers of disease and resented their presence. That they were often dirty and suffered from illness because of their hard living conditions cannot be denied. They were however law-abiding, kept to themselves and generally presented few problems. For all that they were never completely accepted and in 1872 the Borough Council reimbursed the Mayor for the cost of hiring a hall to promote an anti-Chinese petition. In 1878 the Lake County Council was presented with a problem when Wong A.H. Foon submitted the lowest tender for building the Moke Creek road. After much debate the contract was awarded to the Chinaman but a resolution was passed that in future no tenders from Chinamen be entertained and this fact be publicly notified.

Within less than a decade the frenzy of the gold rush had long been forgotten. Unlike most gold field towns, many attracted originally by gold, were prepared to stay. The town became settled with stable government and the usual activities and organisations of a small country town.

Although small, remote and isolated, Queenstown's lakes and mountains were becoming widely known. The fame of Rees Promised Land had spread far.



## Gold Sluicing

### THE SECOND STAGE

The happy days when gold could be virtually picked up or obtained easily by pan or cradle did not last long. With hordes of miners on the scene every river and stream was soon pegged off in claims and the accessible gold was quickly won. To get at gold in the deeper water, diversions and wing dams were used, but these had limited success particularly in the wild waters of the Shotover.

The next stage involved sluicing. This entailed a large water supply under pressure and to obtain an adequate supply, it often had to be brought long distances by means of a race. Digging races involved some science to ensure the falls were correct but it mostly involved hard work with pick and shovel. Some races took many months to complete. Sluicing was generally concentrated on the terraces above the rivers where the overburden was removed to get to old river beds. The scars left by these massive earth moving operations are still clearly visible. An area which was extensively worked by this means was on the Shotover River between Maori Point and Skippers Point. One claim operated by John Aspinall was worked for 55 years and was still productive when he sold it in 1922. This means of gold recovery was generally operated by an individual or partnership. It required capital to buy the plant needed and to support those involved until the claim provided a return. Most of the capital was provided by the merchants who also supplied the equipment and provisions required, in return for a promissory note to pay on a certain day. A hefty rate of interest was charged and the merchant generally discounted the bill with his banker. When returns were slow it was not uncommon to find principle and interest compounded several times with a fresh promissory note executed for an increased amount each time.

Another phase was quartz mining which flourished from the 1880's into the turn of the century. This involved large amounts of capital mostly raised by promoting public companies. This type of operation was largely concentrated at Macetown on the upper reaches of the Arrow River and at Bullendale on the upper reaches of Skippers Creek a tributary of the Shotover. In both places the reefs were in remote areas accessible only by pack horse in the early stages. Here quartz was mined underground and crushed in massive stamping batteries powered by water. Bringing all the items of plant and equipment to the sites was a major task particularly to Bullendale where Skippers Canyon had to be traversed. The work of the packers in moving extremely heavy items such as the cast iron stampers for batteries, each weighing several hundred pounds, and awkward items such as hardwood baulks of timber 30 feet long and a foot square, is difficult to appreciate in these mechanical times. The access tracks were narrow, making the employment of teams of horses impossible. In many places using levers, jacks and winches was the only way to make progress and in the circumstances gaining a few yards in a day was good going. Ice in the winter made progress even more difficult and at times dangerous. Many loads were lost or damaged by mishaps.

#### stamper batteries

Underground mining and the operation of the stamper batteries required many men and towns were established high in the mountains near the claims. Macetown on the Arrow employed about 200 men at its peak and the town was comparatively large with two hotels, two shops, a bakery, a public hall and a school.

Access initially was a track over high country but in 1884 a new road which could be used by drays was formed in the Arrow valley floor. This made access comparatively easy and about the same time telephone communication was established thus reducing the isolation. Some twenty claims were taken up with varying success and the area was



mined from the late 1870's till 1906. Some of the reefs produced good returns but the high cost of mining and the ever present problem of losing the reef in the broken country meant that many claims were not viable. As the mines closed the population of Macetown drifted away and as it was costly to remove buildings and some of the contents Macetown became a ghost town in its remote valley. With the passage of time little remains today of the town except a couple of buildings re-constructed by the Department of Conservation.

However the massive stamper batteries and other plant such as overhead cable-ways to bring the quartz to the batteries remain as monuments to the past. Most of the area is Gold Fields Park administered by the Department of Conservation which provides protection for the remaining relics.

### **Bullendale**

When Bullendale was first mined, access from Arthurs Point was by means of a narrow track over thirty kilometres long and in precipitous country. Transporting the plant and equipment was a Herculean task. When finally a dray road was completed to Skippers Point in 1889 there still remained some eight kilometres to Bullendale accessible only by saddle or pack horses. At Bullendale a town grew up perched on a high face above the valley floor where the mine and battery lay. In this position the houses got the maximum sunshine permitted by the high country surrounding. The settlement was smaller than Macetown but had the inevitable hotel and hall and was served by a combined grocer, baker butcher shop. Mining was continued from 1866 to 1906 with varying success. Little now remains of the settlement except some of the more substantial pieces of plant. One interesting item of equipment recently reconstructed by the Department of Conservation is the pelton wheel used to generate electricity to drive the stamper battery and other equipment. A lack of fuel and a shortage of water impelled the management of the mine to seek other

means to power the plant, and electricity, a new medium, was introduced in 1886. It is generally acknowledged as the first time electricity was used for industrial purposes in New Zealand.

Life in these small remote towns is hard to imagine. Work in the mines was dangerous and hard. Quartz dust pervaded all working areas and many workers developed Silicosis. The mark of those affected was a constant cough as characteristic of the towns as the background noise of the stamper batteries crushing the quartz. For all this the wages paid were ten shillings or less per day. The houses were small, generally built of corrugated iron, hot in summer and dreadfully cold in the long winter. The only convenience was a black iron range fuelled with wood, providing all the cooking and water heating. Washing and sanitary arrangements were elementary.

### **Skippers**

Looking after a family in these conditions with no certainty of supplies arriving over the long access tracks, was a constant struggle. Sickness and accident far from medical assistance was a constant worry and at Bullendale when the need arose all hands turned out to carry a patient to the nearest road. Such an undertaking could take up to two days and involve scores of men. Apart from the hall used for concerts, dances, card evenings and other entertainments the centre of the settlement was the hotel and the publican was in an unique position. He or she by good management and control could do much to keep the community happy and contented. Failure to do so brought problems for all.

Other quartz mining was carried out at Skippers Point and in the Rees Valley at the Head of the Lake where the Invincible Mine was operated for some years in the 1880's. The relics of this mine are also under the control of the Department of Conservation and include a battery of seven burdons side by side and a unique Cornish buddle.



## Sew Hoy

Every miner working the beaches of the larger rivers thought longingly of the gold resting in the deep water out of reach and many ways were devised to get access to these riches. None were very successful until dredging was developed. Although there had been dredging in Central Otago it had little success until, in 1889, Sew Hoy, a Chinese merchant from Dunedin obtained rich returns from a dredge on the Shotover River. His operations close to Arthurs Point were very successful and soon he was commissioning further dredges. Sew Hoy's enterprise in gold recovery and promoting dredging companies earned him great wealth. Others were spurred on by his success to dredge other likely areas and soon claims had been taken out for huge areas of the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers. Companies were promoted to raise the large capital required to build the dredges. As has always been the case there was no shortage of backers though many were to regret their involvement. The decade of the 1880's was a boom period for dredging and no less than twenty operated on the Kawarau between Cromwell and Lake Wakatipu.

Besides Sew Hoy's there were a number of ventures on the difficult waters of the Shotover. One dredge operating on the upper reaches of the river, called the Sandhills Dredge was powered by electricity from a private scheme. It is generally given the credit of being the first dredge in the world to use this form of energy. Every likely area was dredged including the Dart River and Moke Creek.

As the dredging and quartz mining ventures gradually petered out in the early part of this century the only mining remaining active was in the hands of individuals or partnerships. Some continued to get good returns. Others despite poor returns persevered, their hopes continually buoyed up by a never ending hope of striking it rich.

As the golden days faded agricultural and pastoral pursuits provided the wealth of the Wakatipu. In turn these have been replaced by the rich returns from tourism. The 'Promised Land of Rees' is now the destination for thousands each year who like the miners of old come from every corner of the world.