

The Queenstown Courier

Lake Wakatipu Mail

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The Official Publication of the

QUEENSTOWN AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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EIGHTEENTH ISSUE - NOVEMBER 1976

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Treasurer: Margaret Templeton, 18 Hallenstein St."

Committee: Gladys Reid, Mona Hood, Margaret McDonald, Beatrice Haworth, Joan Cooke, Lindsay Reid, Keith Grant, John Newman, Grant Hensman, Dick Hill, Bob Rose, Eric Norton.

BULLENDALE

The following two articles give personal accounts of the life at Bullendale. Little has been published about this remote settlement, and the Historical Society welcomes further contributions at first hand or documentary material for inclusion in the Courier.

Bullendale - Prosperity to Oblivion

This article is from the Dunedin 'Evening Star' 17 October 1959 page 11, by Mrs M. Glennie (nee Hughes) who spent her childhood in the now abandoned mining community there. She attended the Bullendale school, until the age of 11, when both the mine and school closed down in 1901.

"Nestling beneath a background of high mountains (Mt Aurum 7315ft) were the homes and mining activities of Bullendale. Peaceful - yes, with the kind of peace only high mountains can give. Two hills had an easy enough gradient for homes to be built in the virgin bush of black pine and birch.

A third hill nosed in at a lower level and was too steep for building, but it was over this hill and around its rocky face that water was piped from a source high in the hills to the mine for electricity and to the battery house where the quartz washing was carried out and the sand accumulated on the green baize mats under the continual flow of water.

The approach to Bullendale from Skippers Point was up six miles of shingle roughage in a deep gorge, between towering hills and mostly through the waters of the creek, which was built up from other branches, until a waist-high volume was often the result.

This was the only means of access. All merchandise was transported by pack-horses and this was, especially in winter a dangerous and difficult trek, when deep snow and ice spread over all except the running water.

These faithful and hardy horses on which our very sustenance depended would at times have the icicles hanging from their mouths and manes.

The heavy timber for the mine was dragged one log at a time by big draught horses from a timber mill some five miles away in what was known as the left-hand branch. The attendant, holding

long reins, walked beside the horses and, I fancy, sometimes had a ride on the knowing old faithfuls.

Often, as a tired little girl in the fruit-picking season, I was hoisted 'up-top' by a kindly driver and was glad of the bare back ride home.

Although we were far from market supplies as we know them today, nature had provided many of the needs of man in this remote region.

One was an abundance of early small fruits, thus ensuring a plentiful supply of home made jams. Gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, red and black currants grew wild around the inhabited area but down the creek larger and better patches grew, probably from the old gardens of one-time prospectors.

In fancy I can see my mother, with a pillowslip of fruit on her back, taking her long trek from her favourite 'patch' known as the Barracks, and I often accompanied her with my bundle of fruit too.

I remember one extra large patch of raspberries grew in the centre of about two acres of beautiful sweet william on the hillside near the mine. That was just everybody's garden.

There were just two apple trees in Bullendale. They were the lone representatives of the later fruits and grew unfortunately in front of what was known as the Barracks, and the living quarters of some of the bachelor 'heads'.

Needless to say the colouring of these apples was closely watched by the youngsters and many a spanking was meted out to the 'brave' who climbed the tree while the 'fielders' went in all directions. Nevertheless they could run like goats.

Now, talking of goats, they were there in abundance and we all fared well on the beautiful rich goats' milk, the cream of which does not rise as in cows' milk. I can remember my mother milking nine goats and she supplied the milk to many of the old bachelors. All the goats responded when called by name and contentedly chewed a piece of bread while being milked. They had to be fed during winter as then the only natural food available to them was the low leafy branches of the birch trees.

Now and again a herd of wild goats would come down within striking distance of the habitation, headed always by a long-bearded, evil-looking and smelling billy-goat equipped with a pair of horns equal to any emergency.

We saw him only through the windows. Protective measures were necessary because of the possibility of the tame goats being lured back to the hills.

The winters in Bullendale were exceptionally severe and falls of snow up to 6ft have been known, but up to 4ft was the average during the three winter months. So, between thaws, frosts and snowfalls we lived during that time in perpetual snow.

It was a wonderful sight after a still, silent night to wake in the morning and behold a glistening white world with the trees bowed down to the ground by their laden branches of snow. Then the brooms and shovels would be out - first to clear the roofs, then a road to the store and to the neighbours.

The road to school was hilly and dangerous - in some places only steps in the hillside - and as a result younger children were not expected to attend.

Everyone wore spiked footwear, with three one inch metal spikes driven into the heels of boots. In addition, old socks were pulled on over the boots and tied at the top.

Advance storage for winter fires was a must. The wood had to be cut and carried from the bigger timber bush. So severe were the frosts that wood not housed would become encased in a block of ice.

Even water left in the kettle over night would be ice in the morning. Clothes would hang frozen stiff on the line for days at time so limited were the hours of sunshine.

But winter for us kids had its brightness and fun too. The skiing grounds were the roads and these were often a sheet of ice, extending over the bank - but then there was mostly a wall of snow to cushion the tumble.

There are many stores of what happened to some of the old chaps who met around the corner by someone on a flying tin plate. I can remember one small boy who tried to go between the legs of one old

chap. He got through all right but somehow the old chap lost his footing and he was not too polite about it.

The means of transport embraced a wide variation of flat objects that would easily slide - a slab of wood with a rope through the front, a bit of tin or the lid of a pot or billie; (minus the handle) being the lid of Mum's oven boiler which she used for boiling the washing.

In those days a home was built from the bush free - no rates or kindred commitments were involved. All were aware of one another's needs and helped with whatever they had to give. Women tended each other at childbirth and prepared all the food till the mother was about again. One's troubles were everyone's concern. There existed a true brotherhood.

If a miner or anyone was seriously ill the mine closed down and the patient was carried out, sometimes all the way to the Frankton Hospital as many as 200 men taking part.

I cannot remember any personal law being violated. It was a place of peace and tranquility.

The focal point of this mountain village was Cotter's Store, which was a combination of all services - post and telegraph, grocer, butcher, draper, hardware and the rest.

Saturday night was mail night and the busy night at the crowded shopping centre. In winter it was often a long wait for us, and a dark and cold journey for the hardy horseman and his packhorse from Skippers Point. But everyone waited and gave him a cheer on arrival.

He also brought the 'Otago Witness', a weekly paper and our only source of outside news.

For those who stayed at home the bush telegraph would indicate that the mail was in by the bearers of lights wending their way to their homes. A light on the path was a 'must'. A lantern was mostly a clear glass bottle with the bottom cut off and a half candle inserted in the neck. A most effective light it was.

There was one hotel and I suppose it met a vital need in that capacity. Although it had free rule, law and order were

generally well maintained. Pay-day was fortnightly and wages for that period were £7, so there was not much left for the family man to spend at the hotel. There were seven in our family and in some families up to 10."

BULLENDALE SHOWED THE WAY

This article was contributed substantially to the 'Otago Daily Times' July 9 1966, by Catherine I. Fyfe who grandfather, Mr Fred Evans and father, Mr James H. Evans both managed the Phoenix mine at Bullendale.

"Six miles or so up the shingle bed of the creek beyond Skippers, and perhaps 25 miles from Queenstown, a goldmining community was buzzing with excitement.

It was the year 1886, and history was about to be made: the use of electricity to drive mining machinery for the first time in N.Z., and possibly the world, from one of the country's earliest hydro-electric plants.

The place was the Phoenix mine at Bullendale, nestled on the western slopes of Mount Aurum, about 2800 feet above sea level in wild and difficult country.

This mine was one of the richest of its time and a great deal of gold was taken out, but the difficulty of access and labour trouble brought heavy expenses which finally forced its closure soon after the turn of the century.

By 1886 when the electric power plant was introduced, the mine had been worked almost continuously for 23 years and while for a great part of this time the work was more of a prospecting nature, in the last 10 years or so some very rich quartz had been found.

In the early years it was thought that the first lode found had run out, but then it was discovered it had merely broken and moved across to continue up the mountain.

Reporting the renewed life for the mine, the Daily Times in 1875 said the stone "is very hard and compact, blueish in colour, and after every shot fired, before the quartz becomes discoloured by exposure to the atmosphere it shows gold very thickly, it being impossible to pick up a piece not thickly intersected with the coveted metal."

By the mid-eighties the lode was still good and there were plenty of miners available to work it, but to keep the 20-stamper battery going with a fluctuating water supply was a real problem. It could be worked only in spring and summer when the creek was fed by the snow covered peaks above.

The manager, Mr Fred Evans, and his son, Mr James H. Evans, who later succeeded him, subscribed to the scientific magazines of the day and watched with interest the progress being made with electricity. It was not long before Mr Evans realised he could use it right where he was.

He discussed the question with Mr Prince of Fletcher and Co. a Dunedin electrical engineering firm. After some negotiating, Fletchers finally undertook to instal the machinery to drive the crushing battery. The cost was later reported to have been £4,000 to £5,000.

How the power plant was installed was a triumph, and the story is well told by the inspecting engineer, Mr. H.A. Gordon, in a report to the Government in 1886:

"This company experiences great difficulties in getting water to work their crushing battery at the place where it is erected, and in order to remedy this they are at present making arrangements to drive their battery by electricity.

"At the time of my last visit in November they had two of Polton's wheels erected in the left branch of Skippers Creek which will be worked by a head of water equal to 186ft having two 7/6-inch jets playing on each wheel. These wheels are 6ft in diameter and 10" in width on the face.

"They are erected at the bottom of almost a perpendicular cliff 186ft in height, where the water is brought in at the top by means of an open cutting from Skippers Creek and thence down the cliff in two wrought iron pipes on to the water wheels.

"The pipes leading the water down to the hurdy-gurdy wheels are 22" in diameter at the intake and tapering down to the nozzle two and a quarter inches in diameter at the bottom.

"This large amount of motive power is to be employed to drive two brush dynamos, each of which is calculated to be capable of transmitting 36 horse power.

"These dynamos are situated about two miles from the crushing battery, and the current is to be transmitted by a No.8 B.W.G. copper wire from the dynamo to a Victorian motor, which is placed in the same building as the crushing battery, and from this motor the stamps are driven.

"It being the first crushing battery that ever has been attempted to be driven by electricity, great interest is taken by the mining community in the erecting of the machinery.

"Should it prove a success it will open up a new means of utilising the mountain rivers and streams for motive power."

In extracts from a later report on the mining industry in 1888, Mr Gordon said:

"This company has succeeded in perfecting the electrical machinery to such an extent that the dynamos when driven at a speed of 800 revolutions per minute now register 40 amperes, whereas at the time of my former visit they only registered 15 amperes, when the two dynamos were working conjointly, and the electro-motive force registered is now 1200 volts.

"They now work thirty heads of stamps, 10 of which are 800 lbs each and 20 are 650 lb each, lifting 76 times a minute, having a drop of about 7". This requires about 30 horse power.

"They also drive an air compressor and a stone breaker which are calculated to require 20 horse power. Therefore, the total power given by the dynamos is equal to 50hp."

Later a dredge at the Sandhills was worked by electricity and became the first in the world to have this distinction.

When one realises the actual position of Bullendale in its relation to Skippers and the nature of the terrain involved, one marvels at the courage, vision and tenacity of everyone who lived there.

Bullendale could be reached only by horseback up the shingle roughage of Skippers Creek, a deep gorge between towering hills, and riders had to cross and recross the winding stream 86 times on a single journey!

It was a tight, friendly community where one man's trouble was everyone's: if a miner or anyone else became seriously ill the

mine was closed and the patient carried out to Queenstown, as many as 200 men taking part in the trek.

Through Skippers to Bullendale was the only means of access and everything depended on the packers and their horses.

Indeed the packers were the real heroes in that cruel country. Mr F.W.G. Miller, writing his story of "Golden Days of Lake County", has said: "The jaded appearance of both man and beast as they were seen descending with cautious steps the precipitous rugged paths slippery from frost or rain, as they tracked over the creek bed, or wound along the narrow mountain ridges on the road to Skippers, with gorges and ravines on either side, where one false step would precipitate both into the frightful abyss below, proclaimed the life one of severest toil and smallest comfort. The horse, be it ever so good, was within three months unfit for further service."

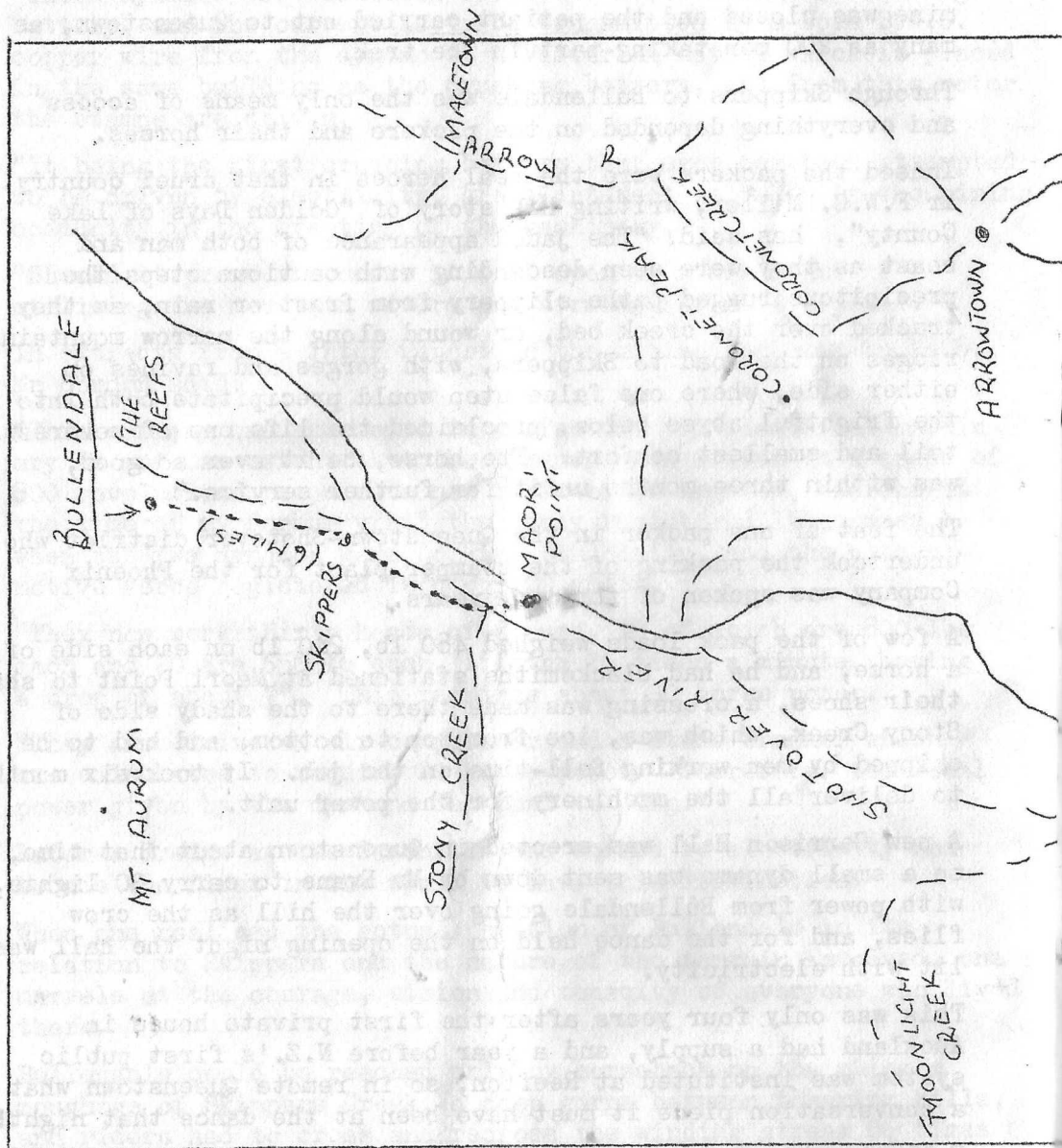
The feat of one packer in the Queenstown-Shotover district who undertook the packing of the stamper plant for the Phoenix Company was spoken of for many years.

A few of the pack loads weighed 480 lb, 240 lb on each side of a horse, and he had blacksmiths stationed at Maori Point to sharpen their shoes, a crossing was made there to the shady side of Stony Creek, which was, ice from top to bottom, and had to be chipped by men working full-time on the job. It took six months to deliver all the machinery for the power unit.

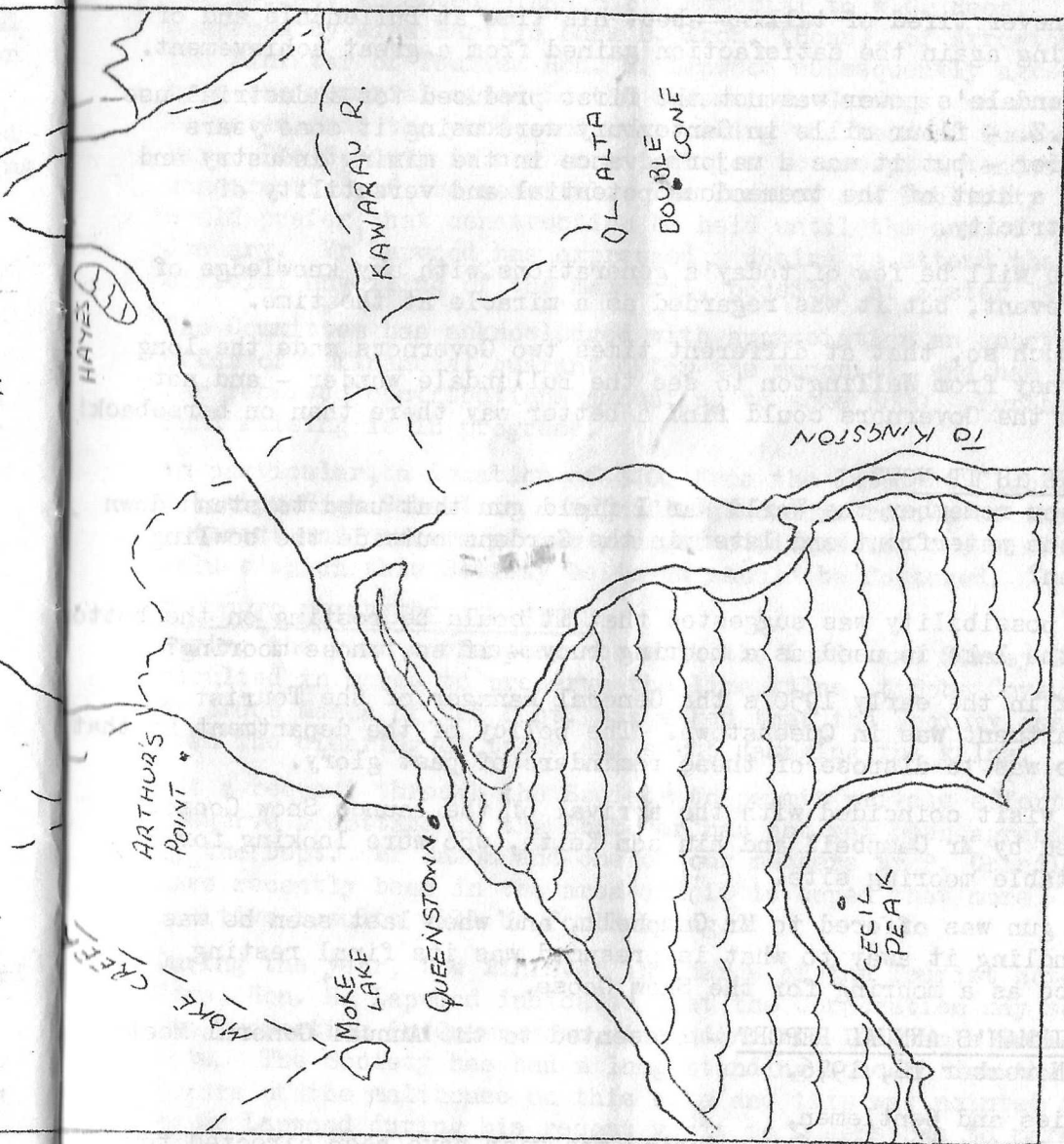
A new Garrison Hall was erected in Queenstown about that time, so a small dynamo was sent down by Mr Evans to carry 30 lights, with power from Bullendale going over the hill as the crow flies, and for the dance held on the opening night the hall was lit with electricity.

This was only four years after the first private house in Auckland had a supply, and a year before N.Z.'s first public system was instituted at Reefton, so in remote Queenstown what a conversation piece it must have been at the dance that night!

Following his father, Mr James Evans became manager of the mine until 1896, when he went to Waihi to take over the management of the Grand Junction Mine, and during the First World War he worked a scheelite mine in Nelson.



This map gives some idea of the remoteness of Bullendale, six miles and watercourses with irregular lines. The track over the last f



mill at Skippers. Roads are marked with continuous lines and rivers
 st flows to Bullendale itself is marked with a dotted line.

He returned to Central Otago to spend the latter years of his life and never tired of talking about his time at Bullendale and of feeling again the satisfaction gained from a great achievement.

Bullendale's power was not the first produced for industrial use in N.Z. - flour mills in Canterbury were using it some years earlier - but it was a major advance in the mining industry and gave a hint of the tremendous potential and versatility of electricity.

There will be few of today's generations with any knowledge of the event, but it was regarded as a miracle at the time.

So much so, that at different times two Governors made the long journey from Wellington to see the Bullendale wonder - and not even the Governors could find a better way there than on horseback!

WHERE IS IT NOW?

Do you remember the World War I field gun that used to stand down on the waterfront and later in the Gardens outside the bowling Green?

The possibility was suggested that it could be resting on the bottom of the lake is used as a mooring buoy - if so, whose mooring?

Back in the early 1950's the General Manager of the Tourist Department was in Queenstown. The policy of the department at that time was to dispose of these reminders of past glory.

His visit coincided with the arrival of the launch Snow Goose, owned by Mr Campbell and his son Keith, who were looking for a suitable mooring site.

The gun was offered to Mr Campbell, and when last seen he was trundling it away to what is presumed was its final resting place as a mooring for the Snow Goose.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - presented to the Annual General Meeting on November 12, 1976.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Society's activities during the year have been directed towards recognition of the place of W.G. Rees as one of the founders of Queenstown, and continued efforts to protect buildings, sites and localities of historic value in the district.

W.G. REES MEMORIAL

The Society accepted plans for a memorial to W.G. Rees, prepared by Miss Marilyn Lusk B. Arch. (Hons), of Arrowtown. The Minister of Tourism Hon. H. Lapwood subsequently agreed to have the memorial sited in the Queenstown Gardens, on a site selected near the pond, and overlooking the head of Queenstown Bay. The Society is now in a position to accept a tender for construction of the memorial. The Tourist and Publicity Dept would prefer that construction be held until the end of January. Mr Lapwood has expressed a desire to attend the official unveiling of the memorial, possibly at Easter 1977.

The Committee has acknowledged with appreciation an anonymous offer of a financial guarantee for the memorial, and has so far received contributions amounting to some \$800. Further fund raising is in progress.

In particular, a donation of \$400 from the Interact Club of the Wakatipu High School is a magnificent demonstration of the interest and concern of our younger citizens for the historic values which this Society believes should be fostered.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND SITES

During the year correspondence with the Lands and Survey Dept resulted in moves to preserve the lime kilns at Bobs Cove. Mr Bruce Mason of the Dept. has asked that the Society assist with the clearing of trees and scrub damaging the kilns.

But a request through the Society to permit private efforts to preserve a cottage in the Shotover has not yet been agreed to by the Dept. Mr Mason and one of our members Mr P. Chandler, have recently been in the area and it is hoped that more positive results will be forthcoming.

During the year, the Minister in Charge of the Tourist Hotel Corp, Hon. H. Lapwood indicated that the Corporation may sell its properties in Queenstown, including the Buckham's Brewery site. The Society has had a long standing concern for the future of the malthouse on this site and this was pointed out to Mr Lapwood during his recent visit to Queenstown to mark the 75th anniversary of the Tourist and Publicity Dept. The Minister merely said he would consider this when deciding what to do with the site. Moves have been made by another organisation in the district to have the site declared a reserve.

N.Z.-wide organisations such as the Historic Places Trust and the Dept of Lands and Survey can be expected to facilitate the establishment of the park within the limits of their resources and priorities. However, it is only through a genuine desire on the part of the people of Central Otago and of members of local bodies with planning powers that an Otago Goldfields Historic Park can become a living and effective reality.

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W.G. REES MEMORIAL ACCOUNT AS AT 31 OCTOBER 1976

Receipts

By Transfer from Ordinary Account (\$30-M. Miller)	50.00
Donations: N. & E.S. Paterson	24.00
Bank of N.Z.	50.00
N.C. Begg	10.00
Arrowtown Borough Council	25.00
	\$159.00

Expenditure

Morton, Baylis & Morris (duplicating)	20.00
N. & E.S. Paterson (prints of Memorial)	24.00
" (extra prints)	1.50
Cheque book	.50
Credit Balance 31.10.76	113.00
	\$159.00

Statement of Receipts & Expenditure for year ending 31.10.76

Receipts

Credit Balance brought forward	333.47
Transfer from Travel Account	25.88
Subscriptions	190.00
Donations: Southland Savings Bank	100.00
Sundry (2)	2.00
'Courier' Advertisements	30.00
'Courier' Sales	32.96
Historical Map Sales	18.70
Interest Southland Savings Bank	9.10

\$742.11

Expenditure

Buckhams Ltd (A.G.M. and farewell to Millers)	6.32
Alpine Foodcentre (A.G.M.)	3.58
Queenstown Paint & Hardware (gift)	16.95
N.Z. Fed. Hist. Sub 1975	10.00
" " 1976	10.00
Borough Council (use of Athenaeum)	10.00
Postage, 'Courier' No.16	3.60
" No.17	5.25
'Mountain Scene' (advertising A.G.M.)	8.00
'The Imprint' 'Courier' No.16	50.00
Queenstown Agencies (typing 'Courier' No.16)	20.00
Morton, Baylis & Morris ('Courier' No.17)	35.00
K.A. Short Ltd (envelopes - small)	3.45
" large)	5.65
Lake Electrics Ltd (Cassette)	4.39
Rose Electrical Ltd (Tape)	3.29
Petty Cash (Mrs Templeton)	5.00
" (Mrs McCurdy)	10.00
N.Z. Historic Places Trust	3.00
N. & E.S. Paterson (W.G. Rees plan)	3.00
State Insurance (Cassette)	3.73
Transfer of funds to W.G. Rees Memorial (\$30-M. Miller)	50.00
Credit Balance 31.10.76	471.90

\$742.11

JAMES FLINTS DIARY (Cont'd)

Journal kept on board ship 'Silistria' on the outward passage to New Zealand 1860.

August 4

No sail in sight this morning wind still keeping fair making capital sum of it. 12 a.m. two brigs in sight bearing west. Nothing interesting at the present time.

Second Sabbath at SeaAugust 5

Had divine this day at 11 a.m. Nothing interesting occurred throughout the day, weather beautiful and wind still keeping fair passed a ship apparently homeward bound did not hail each other.

August 6

This a fine clear sunny day, weather getting warmer every day. Passed a French barque this morning. Saw some sea fowls diving about. Evenings getting very mild and the heat rather oppressive at night. Nothing of any importance occurring on board.

August 7

This day as usual since we left fine and wind favourable, nothing going but the ordinary occupation of attending to our Mess. 5p.m. wind blowing more fresh this afternoon, saw some flying fish this afternoon. Evening clear and ship making considerable progress. Came on to blow fresh at 10 o'clock tonight.

August 8

A stiff roaring breeze this morning the ship going 12 miles per hour. It was truly a grand sight this morning when I went on deck the wind was free on the ship quarter, every sail rap full, her tall gallant masts bending a little, great commotion on the water large surly dark green waves tipped with white foam rising and chasing each other the Silistria tearing and dashing over them while huge masses of surge and white foam was flying from her sides as she gallantly flew over the mountains of water that threatened every moment to wash her decks. We had a fine laugh this morning on account of some of the passengers who were sitting on the weather bulwark when an angry wave suddenly came dash against the side and gave all who were on that side a good shower bath which made them spring to their feet. The breeze calming down as the sun is getting higher, some of the passengers sea sick today but we are quite well.

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HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND INTEREST.

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Cover by DOUGLAS BADCOCK

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