

Protecting, preserving & celebrating our heritage



Spring 2021



McNulty House Cromwell, Spring, c. 1940

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ABOUT US

The Central Otago Heritage Trust, established in 2008, comprises member groups and organisations within the local heritage community. The role of the Trust is to represent the collective interests of these groups in protecting, preserving and celebrating our unique heritage. It is governed by trustees nominated and elected by members.

The Trust is the founding organisation of **Heritage Central Otago** and all our community-based initiatives are represented under the Heritage Central Otago identity.

OUR TRUSTEES:

David Ritchie (Chair), Greg Bodeker, Russell Garbutt, Lynda Gray, John Kerr, Ross Naylor, Kristy Rusher & Graye Shattky. David Campbell (Council Representative).

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HERITAGE MATTERS

FROM THE CHAIR

Spring is in the air. It's been great to get out and enjoy the longer, warmer days. The pandemic has taught us that, now more than ever, we need to be nimble and ready to adapt as the need requires.



Since the Winter edition of our newsletter, we've updated our Strategic Plan from 2018 which will help guide our work programme over the next three years. Conversations with our members have confirmed that the community-inspired recommendations set out in '*Towards Better Heritage Outcomes*', are still relevant today. In August, the Draft Strategic Plan was sent out to our members for feedback and I'd like to thank them for taking time to review this important document. If you'd like to take a look at this plan, go to the 'About Us' section on our website - heritagecentralotago.org.nz.

In late September, the Central Otago District Council will decide on the museums' preferred option for the District Museum Function. The Trust has been working with our five museums and Council staff to prepare documentation on how the model will work. Together we have proposed the establishment of a Museums Charitable Trust with an independent Chair, a representative from each of the museums and a representative from COHT. This new Trust would work towards the goals and objectives set out in the Central Otago Museums Sector Strategic Plan, with the support from a part-time paid coordinator. The museum sector has already shown a willingness and commitment to work together. We now look forward to a positive outcome from our Council to make this happen.

We appreciate the funding support we have received from Council over the last three years. Like many other groups, we have submitted a funding application for the Council's new contestable Community Fund. This funding enables us to continue employing a part-time Heritage Coordinator which has fostered a more integrated and cohesive approach to identifying, preserving and celebrating Central Otago's heritage.

The Central Otago Heritage Trust's two-year Oral History project will begin its next phase of development, thanks to a recently advised \$21,000 grant received from the Central Lakes Trust. We are waiting on decisions from other funding agencies to reach our final fundraising target. This will allow this successful volunteer-based project to keep recording and telling the stories of our region for a further two years.

David Ritchie, Central Otago Heritage Trust

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

MEET CHOIE SEW HOY - A MAN OF TWO WORLDS

Merchant, Chinese leader, gold-dredger and New Zealand Business Hall of Fame laureate, Choie Sew Hoy, better known as Charles Sew Hoy, was a prominent Otago identity of the 19th century.

In 1868, aged 30, he established the Sew Hoy company in Stafford St, Dunedin. The business imported a vast range of food and goods supplied to shopkeepers, Chinese miners and communities across the region. Newspaper advertisements give a taste of the Sew Hoy offering, everything from verandah blinds, fine silk, birdcages and “real Chinese gongs.”

In 1873, Sew Hoy, along with other Chinese merchants, chartered the first passenger ship from Otago to Hong Kong. On board was Sew Hoy's export cargo of scrap metal and 75 bales of North Island beech tree fungus, known by the Chinese as muk'u. The fungus, highly valued by the Chinese, was sent to California, Australia and China for use in traditional health-giving tonics and Chinese cuisine.

Choie Sew Hoy became a notable and respected figure in both European and Chinese circles. Five years after arriving in New Zealand he was naturalised. His sartorial style, self-assurance and charm gained him entry to the Chamber of Commerce, the Jockey Club, the Masons and the Caledonian Society. He was a Dunedin commercial leader who spoke out about issues of the day. He campaigned to end the opium trade and fought the prevalent racism and unfair government legislation levelled at Chinese people.

In the late 1800s, Sew Hoy's business interests turned to gold mining. He was involved in eleven major operations, including claims on the Shotover River, and the Queen Victoria quartz mine at Macetown. In 1888, Sew Hoy commissioned the construction of a gold dredge to work his Big Beach claim on the Shotover River.

His revolutionary design was a world first in gold-dredging technology and its subsequent success heralded the start of the Central Otago dredging boom. (See story on page 7).

In the Nokomai Valley, near Parawa in Southland, Sew Hoy and his eldest son Kum Poy (Hugh) started large-scale hydraulic sluicing. They constructed water-races, pipe-ways

S E W H O Y,
CHINESE MERCHANT,
STAFFORD STREET,

has Landed, ex Mail Steamer : Now Season's Teas, in Caddies and Boxes ; a large assortment of Preserved Ginger ; also Novelties in Chinaware — Toilet, Tea, and Dessert Sets, in unique patterns and designs. Ladies' and Gentlemen's Handkerchiefs ; Ladies' Squares and Dress Pieces of the finest Canton Silk, in a variety of rich and fast colours.

SEW HOY wishes specially to draw attention to his Window and Verandah Blinds, new style, very durable, all sizes. An assortment of Birdcages, cheap.

In stock, Real Chinese Gongs.

S E W H O Y,
CHINESE MERCHANT,
Stafford street, Dunedin.

214

Otago Daily Times, 24 Feb 1885

and dams and drew water from the Nevis headwaters. Electric lighting was installed so that work could continue in shifts around the clock. Between 1894 and 1932, they sluiced more than £223,000 of gold from the Nokomai claim.

A benefactor to many social causes, Sew Hoy supported hospitals and benevolent associations to help his fellow Chinese immigrants. He was the first president of the Otago-based society, Cheong Shing Ton, established to return deceased Chinese miners to Canton for burial in their homeland. The first 'voyage of the dead' by the SS Hoihow in 1883 carried the remains of 230 miners, all of whom had paid Sew Hoy 'insurance money' to cover the costs of their final voyage.

The practice of repatriating the dead was not approved by the wider European community as evidenced in this quote from an article in the Timaru Herald on 6 June 1883:

"This wholesale disinterment of the Cantonese Chinamen is surely a very peculiar piece of business. We do not allude to the practice of sending bones back to the Flowery Land (China) because everything the Chinese do is peculiar according to European ideas.

What we are puzzled at is the government should allow the cemeteries to be ransacked for dead Chinamen, and great numbers of bodies exhumed at various stages of natural decay."

Between 1899 and 1902 the Cheong Shing Ton society prepared the next major exhumation and repatriation of Chinese remains back to China. This last voyage included the body of its founder.

徐肇開

The Chinese state their last name first, followed by the given, first name. Choie Sew Hoy signed his name in English letters 'Sew Hoy'. This was mistaken by Europeans for his family name. Choie Sew Hoy continued to use his first name as his family name and was known as 'Mr Sew Hoy' and 'Charles Sew Hoy' in New Zealand.



Image courtesy of the Choie Sew Hoy family and Toitu Museum

Life, death and the lasting legacy.

Choie Sew Hoy was born around 1838 in Sha Kong near Guanzhou. He left his ancestral village at the age of 13, arriving in Otago in 1869 after spending time in the California and Victoria goldfields.

He had four children by his first wife, Young Soy May, in his ancestral village of Sha Kong. He had two more children with his second wife, a New Zealander Eliza Prescott, who had worked for him as a secretary.

Choie Sew Hoy died in 1901 at the age of 63. His body, along with the remains of 501 Chinese in lead-lined coffins, was onboard the SS Ventor which set sail for Canton from Dunedin in 1902 and sank two days later after striking a reef near the Hokianga Heads.

His eldest son, Kum Poy inherited the family's business interests in New Zealand and his leadership role in the Otago Chinese community. Sew Hoy descendants continued to build thriving businesses in new markets including the food, restaurant and fashion industries.

Today Choie Sew Hoy has well over four hundred direct descendants world-wide. In 2019 some of these descendants gathered in Dunedin to celebrate the 150-year anniversary arrival of their pioneering and much respected ancestor.

References

- *Merchant, Miner, Mandarin: The life and times of the remarkable Choie Sew Hoy* by Jenny Sew Hoy Agnew and Trevor Agnew
- Choiesewhoy.com
- <https://sewhoyreunion.weebly.com>

MINING NOTES.

Mr Sew Hoy is one of the most enterprising men in this part of the colony, and it is gratifying to hear that his pluck and energy have met with success. At his extensive sluicing claim at Nokomai no expense has been spared to exploit the ground, and the latest improvement there is the fitting up of a complete plant for electric lighting. Mr Postlethwaite has visited the Nokomai to establish the installation, and the work of putting up the plant is now in progress. It is always gratifying to hear of the success of undertakings inaugurated by men of energy and enterprise of the stamp of Sew Hoy, more especially when such works do so much good in providing labor for such a large number of men, particularly at the present time when work generally is so scarce.—“Waimea Plains Review.”

Tuapeka Times, 26 February 1896



*Choie Sew Hoy descendants 2019, 29 Stafford St, Dunedin
Image courtesy of the Sew Hoy family*

BACK IN THE DAY

Rabbit hunting on a railway jogger somewhere in Central Otago



Image courtesy of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

DREDGING UP THE PAST

The dredged mounds of stones and gravel that form the Earnsclough tailings reveal a lot about our past. The eerie, moon-like landscape, granted Category 1 Heritage New Zealand status in June this year, are the tell-tale reminders of the massive gold dredging boom that gripped the wider Alexandra region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We take a look at how and why this industry flourished.

The early gold seekers of the 1860s sought alluvial gold in shallow creeks and riverbanks using basic mining tools of gold pans, cradles and sluice boxes. By the late 1870s, the easily accessible gold deposits in Otago had been largely exhausted, so goldminers started digging up riverbeds with specially constructed dredges.

The first attempt was the simple and basic 'Spoon dredge' on which a leather bag tied around an iron loop was dragged across the riverbed. Some gold was won, but spoon dredges could not dig deep, or process enough gravel to be very successful.



*Example of the Spoon dredge - Buller River 1895
Image courtesy of the Alexandra Turnbull Library*

Spoon dredges were superseded by bucket and ladder dredges. Initially powered by water wheels, the subsequent coal-powered steam dredges, that appeared on the Clutha in 1873, proved to be much more efficient at driving the chain of buckets.

In 1888, after drawing inspiration from the Dunedin harbour bucket dredges at work, Chinese businessman and entrepreneur Choie (Charles) Sew Hoy commissioned Kincaid and McQueen in Dunedin to build a similar prototype for his Big Beach Gold Mining Company. Using a string of buckets on a ladder that could be lowered to the riverbed as well as river flats, the 'Sew Hoy dredge' was quick to make a remarkable financial return, as much as £40 for one day's dredging. The gold dredging fever ran

hot into the 1890s with Dunedin at the forefront of design. It wasn't long before New Zealand-style dredges were being successfully used overseas.

Another major technological advance at this time was the tailings elevator. It was fitted at the rear of the dredge and allowed tailings to be deposited well clear of the vessel and facilitated dry-land dredging on the low terraces next to the Clutha River. Operators dug a pond or paddock that allowed the dredge to float and work its way through dry land. The dredge left in its wake huge mounds of tailings like those at Earnscleugh.

Sew Hoy Dredging Company.

[PER PRESS ASSOCIATION.]

DUNEDIN, March 31.

At the statutory meeting of the Sew Hoy Big Beach Company, the Chairman stated that since the Company was registered on December 13, the gold secured was 742oz 13dwt 15gr; and after deducting average working expenses, the net return was £2000. Three new dredges are now under construction in Christchurch. Captain Cameron (Gore), Messrs Sew Hoy, Blair and Duncan were elected Directors, and it is understood that a dividend of 3d per share will be paid next week.

Ashburton Guardian, 1 April 1890



*The Sew Hoy coal-fired dredge at Big Beach on the Shotover River
Image courtesy of Te Papa*

In 1900, the peak of the gold-dredging boom, there were 187 dredges at work among the gravels of the Clutha and its tributaries. It was arguably the greatest world-wide assembly of gold dredges. At this time efficient dredges secured as much as 1,000 ounces of gold in one week's working.

Each steam-powered dredge burned up to five tonnes of coal per day, working 6 days a week. When coal became scarce in Central Otago, the claims in 'Sandhills' on the Shotover and the 'Fourteen-Mile Beach' in the Roxburgh Gorge became the world's first gold dredges to be powered by electricity. Clutha operations soon followed suit. The purpose-built hydro power plant on the nearby Fraser River turned water into electricity, and electricity into gold. Locals recalled how the lights would dim when dredges worked hard, straining under the load of digging into rock.

In 1920, the Rivers Commission estimated that 300 million cubic yards of material had been moved by mining activity in the Clutha River catchment. An estimated 40 million cubic yards had been washed out to sea, and 60 million cubic yards in the river, leaving the remainder still on riverbanks. This invasive dredging activity had raised the riverbed by as much as 5 metres.



The Alexandra dredge worked the Earnsclough Flat until 1962. It weighed 1000 tonnes and produced the sea of tailings seen today at Earnsclough.

Image courtesy of Promote Dunstan

When the price of gold rose in the 1930s, there was a modest revival in the dredging industry. The three dredges working the Clutha at this time were colossal, resembling giant floating factories with huge elevators dumping residue rock tailings high on the river flats. The 'Molyneux' worked between Clyde and Cromwell but received very poor returns and ceased operating in 1952.

The multi-storey 'Austral-Malay NZ' and the 'Alexandra' made steady returns, but both eventually ceased operating when all available land had been dredged.



*Austral-Malay N.Z Ltd, the largest dredge ever seen in the world
Operating between 1940 to January 1952*



*The sequence of tailings in the Earnsclough historic reserve is the only
surviving set that tell the story of gold dredging from the 1860s to 1960s
Image courtesy of Heritage New Zealand*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

MOUTERE-DISPUTED SPUR RD

What was the implicated squabble leading to the name of the road that turns off the Omakau-Alexandra highway heading off into the hills?

Ross Naylor an Omakau local and Central Otago Heritage Trust board member has delved into the history to uncover the details of a stoush that simmered for more than 50 years. It centred on a 1000-acre strip of 'no man's land' between Moutere and Matakanui Stations. The central players in the land wrangle were the Glassford brothers, owners of the Matakanui run, and two of their shepherd employees Robert McIntosh and John Hamilton.



McIntosh and family lived in a small hut near the boundary of Moutere Station. He was granted informal consent by the Glassford family in 1867 to cultivate some land on the Matakanui run. Formalisation of this gentlemen's agreement started in 1868 when McIntosh advertised his intention to apply for a lease to farm this section of land. One condition of the application was that the boundaries of the claimed area be marked with trenches and a post at each corner, and those trenches dug by McIntosh are still visible today.

About the same time, another shepherd of the Glassfords, John Hamilton, also started cultivating land, adjoining Robert McIntosh's, on the Matakanui run.

Initially the Glassford brothers agreed to both shepherds farming the land within the boundaries of their run. But in 1872, James Glassford had a change of heart when he wrote to the Land Board requesting that the "two persons Hamilton and McIntosh, who have taken up land on my run be ejected."



*Robert McIntosh and Grace Hamilton
Image courtesy of Ross Naylor*

Both McIntosh and Hamilton took exception to the order and stayed put. The solidarity of both families was further cemented in 1888 when Robert McIntosh junior married Hamilton's daughter Grace.

James Glassford's opposition to land tenure by McIntosh and Hamilton was overruled by the Surveyor General in 1903, who submitted a proposal to the Land Board that a further 457 acres, contiguous to the original block, be granted to Robert McIntosh, increasing his holding to one square mile (640 acres). Unfortunately, McIntosh died

before the agreement was ratified. His son, Robert junior inherited the farm, and soon after, was granted a smaller lease block of 267 acres. He increased his holding to 1000 acres on acquiring more leasehold land when Matakanui Station was subdivided in 1910. It was a two-mile-long strip extending from what is now the Moutere-Disputed Spur Road to the junction of Campbell and Chatto Creeks.

By this time, old John Hamilton had died. His sons Mathew and John inherited the land which was subsequently transferred to their sister Grace in 1924 (Mrs McIntosh), thereby affecting an amalgamation of the Macintosh and Hamilton disputed properties. This land became known as Disputed Spur, and the name of the farm at the foot of the spur, near the western boundary of Matakanui Station.

McIntosh sold Disputed Spur farm in 1936 to J.C.F (Cotton) Rowley. Twenty years later, the McIntosh family returned to the farm when Robert's great grandson William McIntosh purchased the property. In 1976, after freeholding the land, Disputed Spur Farm was sold to his neighbour, Martin Paterson of Matakanui Station.

It took more than 50 years to settle the dispute, but the backstory and local history is forever captured in a Central Otago road signpost.



*Matakanui Station consists of 23,000 acres rising to 5,000 feet on the Dunstan Mountains. The usable land is made up of long leading spurs, open tussock flats and irrigated paddocks.
Image courtesy of matakanui.co.nz*

PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MCNULTY HOUSE

After several years of restoration, historic McNulty House Cromwell, officially opened in March 2021. The end result is an excellent example of architectural heritage conservation, and eloquently captures the human, cultural and social narratives that the house embodies.

Situated on 40-42 Inniscort Street, McNulty House, so called due to its long association with the McNulty family, served as residence for several significant pioneer business people of the region. The house, which typifies stonemasonry craftsmanship and practical Victorian design, was built around 1890 by the Scottish stonemason, William Gair¹. It was also known around this time as 'Stonehurst' House.



McNulty House today, fully restored.

It was thought the house was built for the family of Otago settler John Marsh, Mayor of Cromwell from 1883-1885.² While Marsh owned the blocks of land between 1867 and 1880, he eventually sold the land to George Eliott a property speculator. The house was constructed for Thomas Rooney, Mayor of Cromwell 1895-1897 and his wife Christine. Rooney purchased the land from Samuel Dalglish³, Clerk of the District Court in 1889 for the sum of eighty pounds. After Rooney died in 1903, Christine remained in the house until her death in 1915.

The house was then purchased by James McKenzie, and in 1926 passed on to his son Thomas and wife Annie, who ran it as the Marama Nursing Home. It is thought that the lean-to at the rear was constructed at this time.

In 1935, the property was sold to Margaret Guffie McNulty and served as the family home and headquarters for the family's transport cartage business. Dr Anne Cowie (Nee McNulty) was born there in 1938 and during the 1960s used part of the house for her doctor's surgery.

Following the death of Frank McNulty, the property was purchased in 2012 by the Cromwell Community Board with financial assistance from Central Lakes Trust. It is on long term lease to Old Cromwell Inc. who instigated the restoration of the property.



*Mr Thomas McKenzie and his wife Annie in front of McNulty House.
The exterior of the building features 'tuck pointing' in the schist brickwork, a method used to disguise irregular or damaged stones.
Image courtesy of Cromwell Museum*

The large backyard has several Moorpark apricot trees estimated to be about 80-90 years old. There also used to be a sizeable vegetable patch and flower garden tended by Anne Cowie's mother. The photograph on the cover of this publication shows the back of the house with the lean-to built in the 1920s. It's a poignant image evoking how the ebb and flow of life has played out from the 1880s until present day within the four walls and under the Spring blossom trees of McNulty house.

The public are welcome to take a stroll around the cottage and enjoy the garden at any time.

Jennifer Hay, Cromwell Museum





*Official opening of McNulty House, March 2021
A big thank you to Old Cromwell Inc, CODC, Origin Architects Arrowtown
and many other dedicated people who helped with this mammoth project.*

Footnotes:

- ¹Other buildings Central Otago by Gair include Kilwinning Masonic Lodge Cromwell, 1900 and Clyde Post Office, 1900.
- ²The gold mining pioneers John and Emma Marsh (nee Gibbons) arrived in Cornish Point in 1862. They are the great, great grandparents of former Prime Minister Helen Clark.
- ³Samuel Dalglish had many varied roles including Mining Registrar, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages as well as Vaccinator Inspector for the District of Cromwell. He gave evidence in the trial following the Great Clyde Gold Robbery of 1870.



Looking for funding to kick-start a community heritage project? Not sure where to start?

Get along to a Funding Clinic to meet local funders to discuss your project.

| Date | Time | Location |
|------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 13 October | 1pm - 3pm | Matakanui Rugby Clubrooms Omakau |
| 4 November | 2pm - 4pm | Armstrong Room, Wanaka Centre |

TELLING OUR STORIES

Further funding boost for the Oral History Project

The Central Otago Heritage Trust's two-year Oral History pilot project concluded last month. The project can now begin its next phase of development thanks to a \$21,000 grant received from the Central Lakes Trust, approved at their August Board Meeting.

Telling the stories of people in the wider Central Otago region through oral histories has been the focus of the 31-strong volunteer workforce over the last two years in the pilot phase. "Receiving this grant ensures that we can maintain our momentum.

The grant will be used to continue training and support for the volunteers and purchasing new recording equipment," Carolyn Squires, part-time Oral History project manager says.

Central Stories has also confirmed their ongoing support for the project, providing the venue for the volunteer weekly drop-in sessions.

Central Lakes Trust was also the major funding partner of the pilot phase. "Receiving ongoing funding from CLT is a major confidence boost, as it recognises the successes we've made so far. We're also working towards implementing an online repository so these stories can be shared more readily with the wider community," Carolyn says.

Other supporters of the pilot phase included the Lotteries (Environment and Heritage) Fund, Otago Community Trust, and the Jack Illot Fund. Central Otago Heritage Trust is now awaiting decision from these agencies to reach their final fundraising target.



*Oral History Manager,
Carolyn Squires*



Some of the Alexandra oral history volunteer team at Central Stories

MUSEUMS IN FOCUS

Museums learn how to say “thanks, but no thanks”

Spring cleaning and de-cluttering are terms we're all familiar with around the home. Whether it's making room in the wardrobe for summer clothes, or moving into a smaller house, decisions need to be made about what to keep and what to discard. From time to time, museums also need to review what's in and what's out in their collections. However, taking objects or artworks out of a collection is not as easy as flicking off an old dress to the op-shop.

'Deaccessioning', or formally removing items from a museum's permanent collection, was the focus of a workshop held at Central Stories in Alexandra last month. Jane Legget from Te Papa, National Services Te Paerangi*, shared her expertise on deaccessioning with 19 participants covering Clyde, Cromwell, Teviot and Alexandra museums as well as those from Arrowtown, Glenorchy and Southland.

There are five main reasons why an item might be deaccessioned: lack of relevance, duplication, lack of space, safety concerns, and deteriorating condition of the item.

“Things often come in unexpectedly. Accepting everything that is donated to a museum may result in a crisis of accumulation. It's much harder to take something out of a collection than to add to it. That's where a museum's collections policy is vital. It provides the museum with the confidence to say ‘thanks, but no thanks’,” Jane says.

“A good collections policy will define a museum's focus or scope. If an object doesn't fit with this scope, then it should possibly be held at another museum that has a different, more relevant connection with the object.”

Before decisions are made, museums should undertake research about each object to assess its significance, history and relevance to the museum's focus.

Once a museum has decided to remove an object from its permanent collection, the next task is 'disposal' which typically involves transferring ownership. “Ideally disposal methods should aim to keep the object as part of a collection that is accessible to the public.”

Careful consideration should also be given on how to deal with disposal. Methods include donating the object to another museum or archive where the object has a better fit. The object might also be exchanged with an item from another museum. “Both methods are a great way for museums to strengthen their unique point of difference.”

*National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP) is a team within the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. NSTP supports New Zealand museums, galleries, iwi and other cultural Organisations by offering a range of practical and strategic programmes and resources.



Workshop participants were given a range of objects to practice the decision-making steps involved in deaccessioning items from a collection. In this image, an Indian textile was being evaluated by the group

WORLD'S EDGE FESTIVAL 2021

15 October - 17 October

This is cultural heritage in the making!

The inaugural chamber music festival aims to celebrate through classical music the awe-inspiring Central Lakes environment.

Take in the sounds at three venues:

Friday 15 October, 7.30pm, Rippon Hall, Wanaka

Saturday 16 October, 7.30pm, Cloudy Bay Shed, Cromwell

Sunday 17 October, 5pm, Memorial Hall, Queenstown.

Find out more: worldsedgefestival.com



NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Conservation Week 4 – 12 September **Take a moment to enjoy heritage in nature**

The theme of this year's Conservation Week, September 4th to 12th, was to take a moment in nature. The annual event, now in its 52nd year, celebrated nature and taking time to connect to our heritage.

Central Otago is abundant with heritage sites and landscapes on conservation land. The unique formations of Bannockburn Sluicings and Earnsclough Tailings Historic Reserves, tell the stories of goldmining that began in the early 1860s. Follow the paths of early settlers by looking around Mitchell's Cottage and the Kopuwai Conservation Area. Take a ride or walk on the Otago Central Rail Trail to immerse yourself in the history of the railway and the communities that flourished close by.

Conservation Week is also a time to reflect and acknowledge the people who have contributed to conservation successes. Our members have helped to restore and maintain many historic sites. Visitors also contribute to our conservation efforts through their quiet enjoyment of these areas, ensuring continued accessibility for future generations. We thank you all for your efforts.



Use this QR code to explore heritage sites close to home. You'll find activities that cater for all levels of fitness and are free to enjoy.

Nicole Sutton, Senior Ranger Community, Department of Conservation



*Mitchells Cottage is listed as a Category I Historic Place.
It is one of the best surviving examples of the stonemason's craft in New Zealand.
Image courtesy of DoC*

VALLANCE COTTAGE WORKING GROUP

Big plans for small cottage

Opening the doors more often will soon become reality for the 1890s cottage. With calls for more volunteers being unsuccessful, fresh ideas on how to open the cottage were needed.

A remote locking device will allow entry into the historic building. Perspex panels will be placed over doorways, allowing visitors to view static displays and chattels that will convey what family life was like in a tiny cottage over 100 years ago. Vallance family stories will be developed with assistance from the Otago Museum.

“We’re thinking about how we can bring these unique stories to life by using a range of media including static displays, oral histories and images, some of which could be accessed by visitors through their own smartphones,” says Christina Martin, Central Otago District Council Property and Facilities Officer.

“We’ll still have our Open Days. These are a great way of bringing the community together to enjoy the cottage, the garden and adjacent orchard within a market day atmosphere.”

The next market Open Day is scheduled for 26 September, details below.



It's official - the new sign confirming the name of the reserve – 'Vallance Cottage Reserve'

Draft Vincent Spatial Plan - what do you think?



Since autumn last year we've been talking with our Vincent communities about the development of a spatial plan to address the challenges and opportunities for growth and land use in the Alexandra Basin, Omakau and Ophir. We're now seeking feedback on the draft spatial plan to help fine-tune these plans before they go to Council for adoption.

Head to www.codc.govt.nz/vincentpatialplan to read the "What do you think? Draft Vincent Spatial Plan" engagement document and give your feedback online by 30 September. We hope, as alert levels allow, to be able to provide hard copy documents and feedback forms, as well as in-person opportunities to engage.

HERITAGE IN THE NEWS: SURVIVAL DOWN TO THE WIRE

During winter in the 1860s, high up on Otago's Old Man Range, exposed gold miners were caught unprepared and disoriented by disastrous late-season storms, many losing their lives. The Otago Provincial Government did not want to dissuade miners from prospecting the rich fields, and so provided funding for new safety measures to be developed. On 11 March 1864, it was reported that "5 miles" (8km) of wire was dispatched from Manuherekia (Alexandra) in readiness to improve a safety track for gold miners based around "snow poles".

More than 320 stone cairns were built at regular intervals, with tall wooden poles placed in the middle to ensure they would stand out in the snow.

The wire was then stretched from the pole to the next cairn (about 180 metres away), enabling miners to follow the track in poor visibility.

Did the track work? It did not change the intensity of the weather. Severe frost and the weight of tremendous snowfalls quickly snapped the wire. The poles were all more than 3m high but were still often buried by the snow. Just weeks after completion, miner William Pitt died of exposure attempting to follow the track through thick snow.

This piece of wire was gathered up in 1897, when new poles made of iron replaced the few wooden poles that were still standing. It remains a reminder to us of the precarious existence of the early miners in our rugged hinterland.



Otago Daily Times, 6 Sept 2021

CONNECT WITH US

Become a member

We can help you and your heritage organisation with:

- Applying for and accessing funding and grants
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing with other heritage organisations
- Promoting your project and initiative in the community
- Providing advocacy to members through our participation in heritage decision-making forums.

Share your heritage news and events

Send your news and events to our Heritage Coordinator for our website or next newsletter: maggie@heritagecentralotago.org.nz

Our website

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