

Protecting, preserving & celebrating our heritage



Winter 2023



Hoar Frost at Ida Valley, June 2023

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ABOUT US

The Central Otago Heritage Trust, established in 2008, comprises member groups 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**. Our community-based initiatives are represented under the Heritage Central Otago identity.

OUR TRUSTEES

David Ritchie (Chair), Russell Garbutt, Lynda Gray, Warwick Hawker, John Kerr, Ross Naylor, Kristy Rusher & Graye Shattky. Ann Rodgers (CODC Liaison). Maggie Hope (Heritage Coordinator).

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COVER PHOTO: *Courtesy of Phil Flanagan, Naseby*

HERITAGE MATTERS

FROM THE CHAIR

Snow, hoar frosts, enduring fog and brilliant blue skies are all part of what makes Central Otago such a beautiful place in winter. The icy temperatures in early winter have been bracing but nothing like what the Maniototo locals experienced during the 1908 snowstorm. (See page 8)



We're delighted to welcome The Cambrian Valley Trust as a new member. You can find out more about their activities on page 18.

Central Otago Heritage Trust (COHT) was one of 95 submitters in support of the proposed renovations to the Earnsclough Homestead, and 1 of 3 submitters who spoke at the hearing. The applicants are now waiting on a final decision from the hearings panel regarding external plastering and weather tightness.

It was great to see Council's brainstorm initiative to canvas ideas to inform the Long-Term Planning process. We put forward the following two heritage-related suggestions which we hope to progress with our members, Council and the wider community:

- (i) **Heritage is recognised and valued as an important resource**
Central Otago Heritage Trust proposes that a public and stakeholder symposium is held to refresh and understand community aspirations for heritage. Supported by CODC, the symposium would review and update the aspirations and goals set out in the 2012 document, "Towards Better Heritage Outcomes."
- (ii) **A vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage**
A thriving arts, culture and heritage scene supports our social and economic wellbeing. Central Otago Heritage Trust recommends that Council establish an advisory board that brings together knowledge and expertise to develop a shared and connected long-term vision for arts, culture and heritage in our District. Such a vision would reinforce the goals and values expressed in the Central Otago Destination Management Plan.

The Central Otago Museums' Trust recently received \$106,000 from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage to fund the Trust's 'Central Museums 100 Project' which will involve each of our five local museums. You can find out more about this great project on page 25.

We have three great talks coming up in our 'Heritage Talks' programme. Russell Garbutt's talk at Clyde Museum on the History of Coal Mining (back in May) will be repeated in Roxburgh with a focus on Teviot Valley coal mining. This July talk will be the first public event at the Teviot District Museum's Masonic Lodge building.

We're also delighted to have Ric Oram, Alan Brady and Rudy Bauer share their stories on the development of viticulture in our region. In August, Ric will focus on the early beginnings of wine making from the 1860s. In September, Alan and Rudi will talk about more recent developments in the industry, from the 1970s onwards. Keep an eye on our website for event details.

In our last newsletter, I highlighted the importance of intangible aspects of heritage, such as poems, oral histories and stories. We have a wonderful story from Stephanie Sommers in this edition who recounts a family trip to old Cromwell before the town was flooded. You may also have memories you'd like to share for our next edition.

Stay warm.

David Ritchie, Chair - Central Otago Heritage Trust



*The Ophir Bridge in hoar frost, 9 June 2023
Photo courtesy of Nick Berry*

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PITCHES STORE

Colleen and David Hurd knew they were taking on a big challenge when they purchased Pitches Store in 2006. The old stone building in the Ophir heritage precinct was just a bare shell. Armed with the necessary attributes of patience, vision and determination, they have transformed Pitches Store (pronounced Pitch-ies) into a boutique café, restaurant and accommodation business.



Colleen visited the site most days during the renovation project. Before a resource consent could be issued, and any alterations made to this Heritage New Zealand Category 2 building, the Hurds were required to undertake comprehensive planning and research.

A 2011 archaeological report by Peter Petchey revealed a great deal about the life and times of the site and building. An early 1871 town plan survey shows an earlier building on the site referencing 'Pitches' on the title. The original timber building was a small store, probably built in 1863 by brothers John and Samuel Pitches to supply miners working nearby at Blacks Diggings. The rudimentary timber store was burnt to the ground in 1882 and replaced by the more substantial stone building in 1883. By the late 1880s, John Pitches was the sole proprietor of Pitches General Store and butchery, with family accommodation between the two businesses. There were also a couple of lean-to extensions at the rear of the building, possibly used for shop storage or accommodation.



Pitches family outside the store, circa 1900

After the general store closed in the 1920s, the building went through various incarnations with subsequent owners. In 1930 a chimney fire damaged the roof and the main building. Between the 1950s and 1960s, the building was used for bus storage, a garage and petrol station, leather and canvas workshops, a woodworking business and an engineering workshop.

“The multiple uses of the building left their marks on the structure,” says Colleen.

“Getting a large bus into the building meant cutting a large hole through the stone frontage. It was our dream to return the building façade back to its earliest use in the 1880s as a general store and butchers. We also wanted to create an interior large enough for six accommodation suites, a restaurant and bar.”

The 8-month renovation project began in earnest in July 2011 after a lengthy planning phase. They didn’t have the complications typical of a Grand Designs production.

“Everything went relatively smoothly with our architects (Wyatt and Gray) managing the process all the way. This left me time and energy to focus on building our home in Ophir which was happening at the same time,” says Colleen.



*The Pitches Store renovation was completed in March 2012
Photo courtesy of Shellie Evans*

It's part of our Kiwi tradition to not throw things away. Colleen reused or kept many of the old features in the rebuild. The large old green timber door that once provided bus access in the 1950s was recycled to clad the restaurant bar joinery. Broken ceramic and glassware found during the archeological investigation are displayed in a glass-topped section of the floor. The foundations of the old wash house remain at the back of the building, providing a peaceful place for guests to rest and enjoy the garden. The stone walls inside the restaurant reveal the marks and layers of time.



**The old timber door that once gave access for a bus was reused in the restaurant*



**The stone walls showing the passage of time*

Colleen was keen to learn more about the history of the building and the people that had once lived there.

“Fortunately, I didn’t have to look too far. The descendants of previous owners, including the Pitches family, are still living close by and have been very generous in sharing their stories. We also get people walking in who really appreciate what we’ve achieved here and are keen to talk about their personal memories of the building.”

The building’s rich heritage is thoughtfully reflected in the interior fit out. The six accommodation suites bear the names of past owners, and old photos of the store and the Pitches family are scattered around the restaurant and dining area.

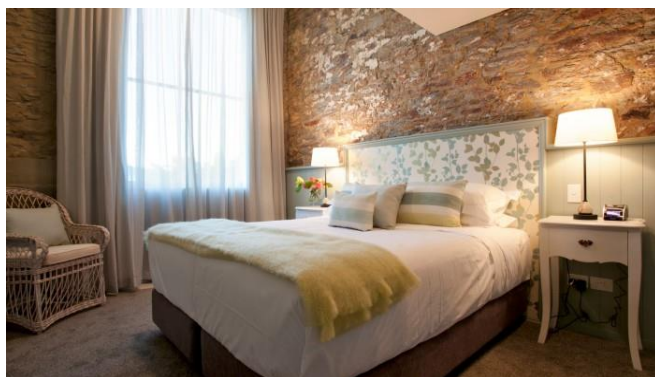
During the warmer months, the restaurant and rooms are booked by cyclists travelling on the Otago Central Rail Trail. During the colder winter months, the Hurds close the business for a well-earned break.



Colleen Hurd

Pitches Store is now on the market and Colleen is looking forward to improving her golf and spending more time with her grandchildren who live nearby.

“We both love living in Ophir and have no intention of leaving. I’m sure the next owners of Pitches will enjoy looking after the place as much as we have.”



The Emma Suite

** Photos courtesy of Colleen Hurd*

SNOW, SNOW EVERYWHERE - THE WINTER OF 1908

We've had a few good dumps of snow so far, but nothing like what was experienced in the winter of 1908 when record-breaking snowstorms wreaked havoc across Central Otago. However, it was in the Maniototo where the brunt of the storm was felt the most.

The snowstorm began in Naseby on Tuesday, July 8, and didn't let up until Thursday evening, leaving 4½ feet (1.4 m) of snow in its wake. Subsequent frosts and snowdrifts made the mantle of snow rock hard, prolonging the thaw for several weeks and making the clean-up particularly daunting.

The snow level reached the top of the main street fences, and roofs of houses and shops were piled high with snow. "One's first impression, looking down from a hill upon the township, is that it exactly resembles pictures of Greenland or Siberian landscapes. Houses, trees, fences - everything, in fact, which has remained upright bears a terrific load of snow."¹

The first task was cutting tracks from doorway to doorway, so people could leave their homes and move across town. Men armed with picks and shovels carved a series of deep ditches to create pathways, with only the heads and shoulders of pedestrians visible. Nurses also worked on clearing the huge mounds of snow in front of the Naseby Hospital.



Cutting tracks across Naseby township

The worst affected building was the Mount Ida Chronicle office, where the roof caved in, "mixing up all the case type and making the removal of the machinery to other premises necessary."¹ A house occupied by a Chinese man was crushed flat, and the occupant was seen digging down to retrieve clothes from his clothesline, just beneath the surface².

Communications were cut off, and the Otago Central Railway line was closed from Clyde through to Ranfurly. "It is impossible to say how people are doing as no one is able to get away from home. Much anxiety is being felt for isolated miners and

¹ Otago Daily Times, 29 July

² Otago Witness, 15 July 1908

rabbiters in the backcountry."³ Parties set out on snowshoes to check on farmers, miners, and water race employees.

One such rabbitier, James McCormack, had a terrible experience. He left Naseby for Kyeburn on the day the snowstorm started. He sheltered in a small cave for four days without food or fire. Driven out by cold, hunger and severe frostbite, James crawled over three miles to seek help.

Getting supplies into Naseby became a critical issue, with shortages of coal, kerosene, and butter. Fuel was needed to keep fires burning and stave off the freezing temperatures.

"The great trouble is that one has to be so careful with one's fires and lights, as there is a shortage of fuel in the town, and no more can be obtained until the snow is gone. There is no news, it is nothing here but snow, snow everywhere."⁴

The Otago Central Railway reopened within a week of the snowstorm, but the Naseby-Ranfurly Road had disappeared under the heavy snow. Gangs of men with picks and shovels carved a rough access road to Ranfurly which alleviated supply shortages.

The thaw finally arrived in Naseby on August 16 when rain set in, leaving the town deep in mud. The resilience of Naseby residents in enduring the winter of 1908 was duly noted.

"The tales of hardship and heroism that have been told in connection with this great storm are innumerable. All, when repeated, make a Briton proud of his country."²



Nurses clearing snow at Naseby Hospital



Gangs carving out the road through to Ranfurly

³ Marlborough Express, 13 July 1908

⁴ Auckland Star, 20 July 1908

A FAMILY DAY OUT IN CROMWELL

The old Otago gold-mining town of Cromwell was demolished in the late 1980s. It became known as “the town that drowned” after it was flooded in the early 1990s to make way for Lake Dunstan, the man-made lake and reservoir for the Clyde Dam. The bridge, main street and shops of Cromwell might have vanished forever under the murky green water of the lake, but my early childhood recollections of those places (in the late 1950s and early 1960s) are tucked safely away in my heart’s museum of memories.

When my parents made that long drive, as it was back then, between Wanaka and Dunedin, my father liked to stop for a pie and liquid refreshments at the Cromwell Hotel. While he propped up the bar, my mother took my brother and me on a tour of the shops followed by a refuelling stop for sandwiches and milkshakes at my favourite place, the Riverview Restaurant.

One of those occasions stands out clearly in my mind. The rain had become a deluge as my father parked right in front of the hotel. When my mother opened the door to let us out my precious koala bear, Sarah, managed to jump out ahead of me. She landed in the gutter that was full of rushing stormwater. Face down, she body-surfed at rapid speed towards the place at the side of the bridge where the gutter ended and the long drop straight into the Clutha River began.



*The Cromwell Hotel
Image courtesy of Hocken*

My flood of toddler tears and loud screams alerted my mother to the tragedy in progress. She immediately gave chase in her tight pencil-style skirt and high stiletto heels. Somehow, she managed to bend over while running and swoop up my sodden bear, just seconds before she reached the end of the gutter. Had my mother not hauled Sarah out of that raging current when she did, Sarah would have sailed over the cascading waterfall at the end of the gutter and become “the bear who drowned” and, like the original town of Cromwell, she would have vanished forever into the fast-flowing turquoise waters of the Clutha River! Sarah, the sixty-nine-year-old survivor, is still with me today.



Sarah and I (1954)

MEET BOB PROFFIT

High up on the Old Man Range is a schist outcrop called Prophet's Rock. I had always assumed that it was so named for some biblical reason. However, in fact, through the all-too-common changes in spelling or assumptions, the rock outcrop is most likely named after the colourful character, Robert (Bob) Proffit.

Bob Proffit was probably one of the last miners to work at Blackmans Gully terraces, having been granted a two acre claim in the late 1890s on "Blackmans Spur" near the schist outcrop now called Prophet's Rock. This claim is close to where gold was first discovered in the district at Meredith's Gully. He also had two further claims nearby at Omeo Spur and Neutral Spur.

Bob Proffit moved around depending on the season. During the harsh winters, he retreated down to his hut in Blackmans Gully. In summer, he lived in Dip Hut - a shepherd's hut belonging to Earnsclough Station. This arrangement enabled Bob to work his claims at over 4000 feet.

After a lucky strike, Bob would frequent the various hotels in Clyde and return to his lonely hut once all his gold had been spent.

Bob, as the unofficial guardian of all the huts on Earnsclough Station, reported in regularly to the owner, Stephen Spain. He also enjoyed a good friendship with Mrs. Spain and would often bring her samples of gold that he had mined and would drink his tea noisily from a saucer.

Bob was a colourful character, but not a lot is known about his early life. He was born in Barton in Oxfordshire on 6 March 1853 and had many siblings, one of whom settled in Taihape. His father was known by the surname Proffit (formerly Prophet). He apparently spent some time working as a circus performer before arriving in New Zealand on 3 July 1876. He was first recorded in Clyde in the 1892 electoral roll.

Bob was prestigiously strong and agile, most likely due to his circus background. He could get two small boys to grab hold of his rather full beard and swing them round like a merry-go-round. He would also run up and vault a gate, perform a



Prophet's Rock

somersault in mid-air and land on his horse on the other side, then graciously bow and gallop off to the admiration of those who were watching.

Bob didn't get to enjoy a long retirement. He never married, and in 1924, during a period of severe weather, he succumbed to illness and hypothermia. Convalescing in a retirement home was not an option for this fiercely independent character. Instead, Bob threw himself into the Manuherikia River on 2 October 1924, bringing another era to a sad close. He is buried in the Alexandra cemetery.

These days, as the winter wind, mist and snow swirl around Prophet's Rock they bring to mind some lines from Tod Symon's "Where Poplars Sway":

*"Tis the graveyard that is home for that hardy band
Who wandered these barren slopes
With a scanty store of flour and tea
But a heart full of mighty hopes."*



Dip Hut

Photos provided by Barrie Wills and additional research by Margaret Jarrold of Central Stories Museum & Art Gallery.

Russell Garbutt, COHT Trustee

HERITAGE TALKS

Grape Expectations - The road to producing world-class wine

We have two great presentations coming up in August and September that take us on a journey through our region's wine-making past. From the early pioneers of the nineteenth century to the trail blazers of the 1970s who established our region as a world-class wine destination. Mark the dates in your calendar and keep an eye on our website for further details heritagecentralotago.org.nz/events

PART ONE - The French connection

French immigrant, Jean Desire Féraud goes down in history as being one of first pioneers to develop viticulture in the region in 1864, along with his neighbours, and fellow Frenchmen, the Bladier brothers. Renowned author on the subject, **Ric Oram** shares his extensive research on our region's foray into winemaking and developments into the 1970s.

Wednesday 23 August, 6:30pm

Central Stories Museum & Art Gallery, Alexandra



PART TWO - Taking our wine to the world

The 1970s marked renewed interest in New Zealand viticulture with a few visionaries disregarding advice that Central Otago and the Gibbston valley were too cold, too high and too far south to prosper. Alan Brady and Rudi Bauer talk about getting our region's vineyards and wines onto the world stage.

Tuesday 26 September, 6:30pm

Bannockburn Hall

Alan Brady was one of the early pioneers to plant grapes in the Gibbston valley in the 1980s. That experimental plot produced Central Otago's first commercial vintage in 1987. He was inducted into the New Zealand Wine Hall of Fame in 2013. After 40 years at Gibbston, Alan moved to Clyde where he now produces wine under his Wild Irishman label.



Austrian-born **Rudi Bauer** of Quartz Reef has been a stalwart of the Central Otago wine industry from its early days. He came here in 1989 to work at Rippon Vineyard. He went on to plant his pioneer, biodynamic vineyard at historic Bendigo in 1998. Rudi is a two-time recipient of the New Zealand Winemaker of the Year Award.



PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

REBURIAL WELCOMES EARLY SETTLERS BACK TO DRYBREAD

Light rain and mist shrouded the reburial of twelve early settlers at Drybread Cemetery on May 20, 2023. This long-awaited ceremony gave recognition to those who had been buried in unmarked graves in the late 1800s.

Drybread was established in the early 1860s as a gold-mining settlement north of Omakau in the Manuhērikia Valley. Thirty years later, Drybread was abandoned when gold diggers moved on to other sites, leaving loved ones behind in the cemetery.

With a number of unmarked graves and inconclusive cemetery records, the Drybread Cemetery Trust approached the Southern Cemeteries Archaeology Project for assistance to learn the true extent of the cemetery's borders and the location of the unmarked burial plots.

The research team, led by Otago University Professor Hallie Buckley and Southern Archaeology Director Peter Petchey, identified 12 unmarked graves. The remains of these people, ranging in age from infants to adults, were exhumed in late 2020, five of whom were of Chinese descent.

By using a combination of bioarchaeological methods and historical research, the team was able to gain a deeper understanding of these previously unknown settlers. Samples of the remains were analysed to determine physical attributes such as ethnicity, age and sex, as well as their life histories by examining diet, disease and physical trauma.



Projects leaders: Peter Petchey and Hallie Buckley

The name 'Drybread' conjures up imagery of miners and settlers doing it tough, with only a slice of dry bread to look forward to after a hard day's slog on the goldfields. The forensic evidence partly supports this folklore, although archaeological investigations at the diggings found evidence of a miner's extensive garden showing how the locals endeavoured to create some home comforts. (See [page 17](#))

At each of the twelve graves, Hallie Buckley gave a brief description of what the researchers were able to deduce about each person. Forensic evidence showed

that some adults had suffered from rickets as children, caused by a prolonged lack of vitamin D, a common ailment among urban English during the Industrial Revolution. Others had endured broken bones, everyone had poor dental hygiene, and one man had undergone recent surgery. The analysis of clothing, hairstyling and coffin styles gave a rare glimpse into the wealth, burial traditions and cultural norms of the late 1800s.

"Our team of scientists has been very privileged to contribute to bringing these people's stories back into the light. We're happy and relieved to have brought the project full circle with the reinterment of the people here at Drybread, now with the location of their graves known and some identity retrieved," says Hallie.

About forty people attended the public ceremony at the Cemetery. Formal proceedings commenced with Anglican minister Rev Penny Sinnamon, of Omakau, leading the Christian reburials at the European graves. "Today, a welcoming place has been made for these people... we honour these lives with respect and recognition," she said.



Rev Penny Sinnamon



Celebrants Les & Maisie Wong

Les and Maisie Wong from Dunedin led the traditional Buddhist blessings performed at the Chinese graves. Rice and petals were scattered to represent the Chinese life cycle, liquor was poured on the earth to welcome our brothers into their new graves. Attendees were given a small white envelope to take away with them. Inside were two sweets to reflect the sweetness of life, two coins to repay any perceived debts and travel expenses and a tissue to wipe away the tears.

A Chinese gentleman, Ah Won, had worn his hair in the traditional long queue (plaited ponytail). His ornate coffin and tailored clothes, purposefully made to accommodate a spinal deformity, suggested he had enjoyed a more affluent lifestyle.

Dried twigs were found in the right hand of another Chinese gentleman, Ah Hau, which were later identified as kowhai flowers. It was a moving touch to see freshly cut kowhai flowers laid at his graveside.

"The research tells us things we could never have learned from books," says Les, who has spent decades researching the unmarked graves of early Chinese settlers throughout Otago.

"It's like putting together a puzzle. Following a trail to find the missing pieces can be a slow but rewarding process. By piecing together what we know about our unknown Chinese forebears, we can restore their dignity, honour their place in early New Zealand society and give them peace," says Les.



Kowhai flowers placed at Ah Hau's grave

Drybread Cemetery is located on private property on Glassford Road, near Omakau. The Glassford family has been farming at Drybread for 156 years. The current generation, Tony and Karen Glassford, are active members of the Drybread Cemetery Trust. Tony's great-grandparents are buried there, and Karen (nee Sinnamon) plays a hands-on volunteer role as sexton, ensuring the graveyard is well maintained and burial records are kept up to date. "We're so pleased to have the bodies returned. We now have a greater sense of who is buried here," she says.



Left to right: Les Wong, Charlotte King & Karen Glassford looking over the old Drybread cemetery records at the Glassford homestead.

Photo courtesy of Marjorie Cook, ODT

After the reburial, guests were welcomed back to the warmth and refreshments at the Glassford homestead, where conversations about the research and history of the cemetery continued.

WHAT'S IN A NAME - DRYBREAD

We believe Drybread got its name from Charles Wise and his advance party who came here looking for gold ahead of the permits being issued, so they could get a jump on following miners. They had brought supplies with them on their journey, including bread that had gone rock hard and stale. They also brought a milking nanny goat, so the milk was used to soften the bread.

On the day they discovered the gold here, they went back to their camp for an evening meal, all 'cock-a-hoop' that they were now potentially rich men. When they got back to the camp on the day of their find, they found the nanny goat had gone dry, and they were forced to eat a celebratory dinner of rock-hard dry bread. The irony was not lost on them.

The group took to calling the location 'The Drybread Site' without referencing its exact location. This meant they could talk about their precious site without giving away the prize, which was apparently an old gold mining trick. Once the permits were granted, and more miners descended on the area, the name stuck.



Andrew Hamilton's 1869 sketch of Drybread

The site didn't have an official name before the rush. The government tried to call the place Glassford's, like Hamilton's in the Maniototo, after the owners of pastoral leases. But the established community had got used to calling the place Drybread. If you look in Papers Past, it goes from Drybread to Glassford's and back again. We love the name and think it's the right one.

Charles Wise stayed on and was on the school and cemetery committee (I think). He also managed to stake a claim for the available water used to wash up the sluicings, hence the name Wise's Creek up the back of our property.

Karen Glassford, Drybread Cemetery Trust.

TAKE 5 - INTRODUCING THE CAMBRIAN VALLEY TRUST

The Cambrian Valley Trust is a new member of the Central Otago Heritage Trust. We asked Karen Daly, the Trust's secretary, to answer five questions about their work and aspirations for heritage.

1. What is the main purpose of Cambrian Valley Trust?

Our main purpose is to maintain the historic school and safeguard the history and stories of the early days. The school was in use from 1885 to 1954.

2. Describe some of the heritage features or history of the Cambrians

The Cambrian Valley was originally settled in 1863 when gold was first discovered at Welshman's Gully. The name reflects the Welsh origins of these early settlers, including members of the Morgan, Owen and Williams families. Fortunately, these early settlers also found coal which was a necessity to keep warm.

Some of the remaining cottages from this period are still lived in today, and some are just ruins. The old buildings in the valley exhibit typical characteristics of that era, such as sod houses, mud brick structures and iron-clad timber buildings.

The Cambrian Historic area is included on the Heritage New Zealand list.

3. What are some of your recent successes?

Last summer, we successfully raised funds to repaint the school - thanks to the St Bathans Community Association, the Bob Turnbull Trust (Ophir) and donations from the community. The task was undertaken by Oamaru painter Warren Pitches, using a colour palette that reflects its past. Warren was delighted to take on the job as his grandmother had attended Cambrian School as a child.



*The newly painted Cambrian School,
Photo taken by Karen Daly, June 2023*

Inside the school, we've tried to make the entrance and classroom authentic to give visitors a tangible experience of what school life was like in the village. Bags on hooks, old wooden desks lined up in neat rows, the wall clock, old photos in beautiful old oak frames and bookshelves give the feeling that children are about to pour in to start their lessons.



The classroom set up for lessons

Tricia Batkin, one of the last pupils at the school, has done extensive research into the school and families that lived in the valley. The documents and photographs are now bound in large folders on display in the classroom. Information panels have also been installed outside the building.

The school is open to the public every day. Remember to sign the visitors' book. There's also a donation jar for anyone wishing to assist with the upkeep.

4. What are some of your recent challenges?

Our main challenge is to protect and maintain the unique Welsh presence and heritage features of the village. It is our hope that any new developments in the valley will be sympathetic to our distinctive heritage.

5. Looking ahead, what goals or activities are on the horizon?

We will continue to protect and preserve our stories and work towards maintaining the heritage features of the Cambrian Valley. We also have a dream that one day the old classroom will be used by local schools interested in spending a day here to get a feel about what life was like here in the village.

TELLING OUR STORIES - THE HYDE RAIL DISASTER

“Real history is about people telling their own stories.” That’s what Jim Sullivan said in opening his COHT heritage talk about the Hyde railway disaster.

“When people start telling their stories, you get involved,” he told the crowd of 100 at Central Stories Museum in late May.

Such is the case with the Central Otago train crash - New Zealand’s second-worst rail accident - which occurred on King’s Birthday weekend in 1943. As a public holiday, the train was at full capacity. Reports from that time indicate that the train was going very fast and was not fully under control. The train derailed at a deep cutting just north of Hyde. Twenty-one people were killed and many more injured.

The tragic facts soon came to light but it’s the personal stories of the survivors and their family members and friends who lost loved ones that really tell the story of this fatal crash.

“The Hyde railway disaster has in the past been labelled ‘the forgotten tragedy’ but eighty years on that isn’t the case. The fact that you have all come along tonight is testament to this,” Jim said.



*The day after the Hyde Rail crash, 5 June 1943
Photo courtesy of nzhistory.govt.nz*

However, it is true that many survivors were initially reluctant to talk about the traumatic event and it took several decades for the personal stories to emerge. Gradually, some of the survivors came forward to recount their memories; and next generation family members and relatives relayed the recollections of survivors or the back-stories of some of the people who died in the crash.

We are fortunate that the COHT Oral History Project has worked to commemorate and honour those affected by the tragedy.

One such oral history was recently undertaken with Elizabeth Coleman, who was just four years old when the disaster occurred. Describing herself as a bright and lively child, she distinctly remembers the day when her mother was given news of the tragedy.

Earlier that day her father and two older brothers had taken the train from Kokonga and were looking forward to attending the Winter Show in Dunedin. Her father,

Thomas Connor, and older brother John were killed in the accident. The other brother had one leg severely injured and spent several months in hospital undergoing surgery and treatment.

The event was devastating to the family. Elizabeth's mother soon moved back to Gore to be nearer her family. Elizabeth remembers the large volume of kind and supportive letters she received from Central Otago communities.

Although Elizabeth went on to attend school in Gore, the impact of the family tragedy continued to reverberate throughout her early life and into motherhood. Looking back, Elizabeth believes that those who were left of the Connor family that day suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In recounting her story in an oral history format, the grief and pain felt by Elizabeth around the events of that day, and the flow-on effects, are heard clearly in her voice. So too are the characteristics of compassion and strength, courage and wisdom, which she has relied upon to reflect, grow and heal.



*Elizabeth Coleman**

Elizabeth describes her emotions around that day, how her mother coped, and the close neighbours and friends who were a wonderful support to them. She also describes the challenges of her later life, and the loving support of her husband, Dusty Coleman.

Elizabeth has written three books dedicated to the events of the disaster, Her son-in-law, Greg Mason also published a book on the disaster. Some of these books can be purchased at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery.

In 1989 Elizabeth, prompted by her husband and others, felt strongly that a memorial to commemorate the disaster should be established. A Memorial Cairn, built by the Hyde Memorial Committee, was officially unveiled in February 1991.

Listen to an extract from Elizabeth Coleman's interview by following the QR code.

Lynda Gray, COHT Trustee
Carolyn Squires, Oral History Manager



OTAGO GOLDFIELDS HERITAGE TRUST - WINTER UPDATE

The Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust (OGHT) is pleased to give an update on our recent news and events and give you a glimpse of what's on our horizon. We love to share what we do, so please feel free to participate or help out with organising any of our upcoming activities.



Goldfields Cavalcade 2023 and 2024

We were very pleased to complete another successful Cavalcade in March 2023 when our trails converged on the host town of Millers Flat. Our trail members love the opportunity to get up into the hills on horse, cart, bicycle or on foot. In particular, they appreciate being able to traverse private and conservation land that is not often accessible to the public. The Millers Flat Committee put on a great gala event at the finish line that provided a wonderful occasion to celebrate our 30th Cavalcade. We are tremendously proud to have reached this significant anniversary.

Looking ahead, the 2024 Cavalcade trails will converge to finish at Waikaia, where a very enthusiastic community is already planning a great welcome on 2 March 2024. Mark the date in your diary!

Nevis Valley Signage Upgrade

It's time for an upgrade of the interpretation signs on display in the Nevis township. The original signs did good service but were starting to show the effects of exposure to the elements. When the new panels are ready, we will hold a member's field trip out to the valley to replace the signs and explore the remnants of nearby goldfields. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for details.

Heritage Site Review

Terry Davis and the team organised an archaeological assessment of heritage sites in the Teviot Valley as a part of our Heritage Sites Review programme. This ongoing activity provides important updates to the national Archaeological Association website 'ArchSite' which is used in our region by the CODC, DoC and grant funding bodies in carrying out their various missions.

National Gold-panning Championships 2023

OGHT will host this event in conjunction with the Alexandra Blossom Festival. Gold panners young and old, male and female, experienced and novice will all be gathering to pan out their flakes of gold. The experienced 'speed panners' will be competing for the fastest time to recover about 12 flakes of gold 'seeded' into their bucket of gravel. The winner will become the New Zealand national champion, eligible to compete overseas and represent New Zealand at a World Gold panning

event. National champions have ranged from senior silver-haired types to a young 18-year-old girl - all taking about 60 seconds to pan their gravel and produce the golden specks. Join us on Saturday 23 September 2023 at Pioneer Park, Alexandra to watch, or join in with the fun.

Our new home - Former Methodist Church, Cromwell

Our final announcement deserves a drum-roll! We're very pleased to advise that our Sale and Purchase Agreement with the Methodist Church went unconditional in early June. Our purchase of this heritage stone building has been supported by the Methodist Church, District Council and Cromwell Community Board. As a 'not for profit' organisation, we relied on the generosity of funding bodies to help make this purchase happen. Odette has done an amazing job with funding applications. Once the sale is completed, we will welcome folk to come and admire this revitalised asset for Cromwell and district communities.

Rex Johnson, OGHT



Former Methodist Church and home to OGHT, Cromwell

VALLANCE COTTAGE WORKING GROUP

The Vallance Cottage Working Group is passionate about bringing the stories of the nineteenth century cottage to life, with many projects underway to create an interactive experience.

To celebrate the launch of the Vallance Cottage website, a short film featuring descendent Nicola Toki will be screened at **Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery at 3pm on Tuesday 18th July 2023.**



Vallance Cottage and garden. Photo courtesy of CODC

Vallance cottage was built in 1896-97 by early settler William Vallance, a shepherd-gold miner from Scotland. Built from hand-made, sun-dried mud brick, Jean Hyland and William Vallance raised their eight children in the cottage which still stands proudly in the extreme climate of Central Otago.

In the mid-1990s, the property was gifted to the community and underwent a massive restoration thanks to community efforts, including the Vallance Cottage Working Group, made up of Vallance family descendants, community members and Council staff.

Bex Snape, Central Otago District Council

FUNDING SECURED FOR CENTRAL MUSEUMS 100 PROJECT.

Central Otago Museums' Trust has secured a \$106,150 Cultural Sector Regeneration Fund grant for the Central Museums 100 project.

The key goal of the project is to produce a showcase of the museums' collections that tell the stories of Central Otago. This will involve each of the district's five public museums reviewing and selecting 20 objects that tell important stories about our history. The 100 objects in total will be profiled on a website, and towards the end of 2024, a series of museum exhibitions and heritage talks for the community will be held.

"The funding support is a great outcome for the Central Otago museum sector. Assembling the top 100 treasures will engage staff and volunteers with a wide range of skills," said Owen Graham, trust chair.



*Owen Graham, Chair
Central Otago Museums' Trust*

The scope of the Central Museums 100 project was based on the needs that were identified by the sector. The project plan incorporates museum best practice guidelines, storytelling, photography, oral recollections, and more, so volunteers with varied backgrounds and skills can get involved.

"The funders recognized the potential for the proposal to build capability and capacity in collection management, writing, exhibition display, and public programming across the region's five museums," said Owen.

Deciding what to include in the 100 items will also be a learning exercise.

"The process of choosing 20 items will help each museum identify what makes their collection unique within Central Otago," said trust coordinator and project designer, Amanda Griffin.

There were over 200 applications to the fund, administered by Manatū Taonga, the Ministry for Culture & Heritage, and only 42 were approved for funding.

The Central Otago Museums' Trust is comprised of representatives from the five public museums across Central Otago: Central Stories Museum & Art Gallery (Alexandra), Clyde Museum, Cromwell Museum, Maniototo Early Settlers Museum (Naseby) and Teviot District Museum (Roxburgh). The Central Otago Heritage Trust is also a representative. Formed in 2022, the trust's role is to support the work of the museums' staff and volunteers and foster the cooperation and sharing of skills and resources for the benefit of all.

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

Get the latest news and events at:
www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz

Use our logo

We encourage members and interested parties to use our logo in heritage related communications. Download this logo from our website.



Follow us on Facebook

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OUR SUPPORTERS

Heritage Central Otago acknowledges the generous support from the following organisations.





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