

# Protecting, preserving & celebrating our heritage



Summer 2024



Published by the Central Otago Heritage Trust  
[www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz](http://www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz)

# ABOUT US

The Central Otago Heritage Trust, established in 2008, comprises 35 member groups across the 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), Marco Creemers, Russell Garbutt, Kate Goodfellow, Warwick Hawker, David Hurd, Pene Morris and Ross Naylor. Ann Rodgers (CODC Liaison). Maggie Hope (Heritage Coordinator).

---

# CONTENTS

HERITAGE MATTERS .....	1
FROM THE CHAIR .....	2
CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE .....	4
THE AMAZING STORY OF THE SEVEN IRISHMEN AND UNDAUNTED MINE ....	4
WHAT'S IN A NAME - TINKERS.....	7
130-YEAR-OLD WEDDING CAKE.....	8
FROM CANTON TO CENTRAL OTAGO .....	9
CENTRAL OTAGO'S FAMILY PASSPORT ADVENTURE .....	13
ROXBURGH'S BUDDING HISTORIANS .....	14
CROMWELL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CELEBRATES 150 YEARS .....	16
PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE .....	18
MACTAVISH'S HUT .....	18
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT END-OF-YEAR ROUNDUP .....	19
RESTORING NATURAL HERITAGE AT ORKNEY WETLAND.....	20
CONNECT WITH US .....	22
OUR SUPPORTERS .....	22

COVER IMAGE: Chinese gold miner, Wing Chung, with cradle on the banks of the Clutha River. Image courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library

# HERITAGE MATTERS

## FROM THE CHAIR

It was great to see many of you at our AGM on the 20 November. At this meeting we formally welcomed four new members:

- Old Cromwell Inc.
- Haehaeata Natural Heritage Trust
- Clyde Primary School
- Maniototo Early Settlers Museum



This brings our total membership to 35 organisations, all focused on preserving and promoting the heritage of Central Otago.

We also welcomed a new trustee, Kate Goodfellow, from Clyde Primary School. We look forward to collaborating with Kate to expand our involvement in educational programmes that connect students with Central Otago's rich cultural and natural heritage.

At the AGM, Kate shared an excerpt of a film in which new entrant students reenacted the historic Clyde robbery, a story showcased at Clyde Museum. *The Tale of Parker and Cunningham*, and its accompanying book, are a testament to the creativity and enthusiasm of young learners in bringing local history to life. I encourage you to watch this entertaining short film by scanning the QR code on page 3.

In my Annual Report I reflected on our activities over the last year which included progress made on our Oral History Project (see page 19), the continued success of our Heritage Talks programme, the value of our digital and print communications and our continued advocacy for the preservation and enhancement of heritage, both locally and nationally.

Our draft 2024 - 2026 Strategic Plan was formally endorsed at the meeting. We chose the option to update the existing plan rather than undertaking a full review. In the coming months, we will be working with Council as they prepare for the consultation process required to update the heritage provisions in the District Plan. You can find a copy of our Strategic Plan in the library section of our website [www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz](http://www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz)

The Heritage Talk after the AGM, 'From Canton to Central Otago', was enjoyed by a full house at the historic St Enoch's Church. Associate Professor, James Beattie, highlighted the intriguing expertise and technologies the Chinese contributed to mining activities on the Otago goldfields (see page 9).

I would like to acknowledge my fellow Trustees and Maggie Hope, our Heritage Coordinator, for all their contributions over the past year. Their commitment and passion for heritage have been instrumental in advancing our shared goals. I look forward to another year of progress together.

I would also like to acknowledge our funders, whose generous support has been vital to the success of our projects. In particular, the funding we receive from the Central Otago District Council's contestable Community Fund enables us to support our work across the district.

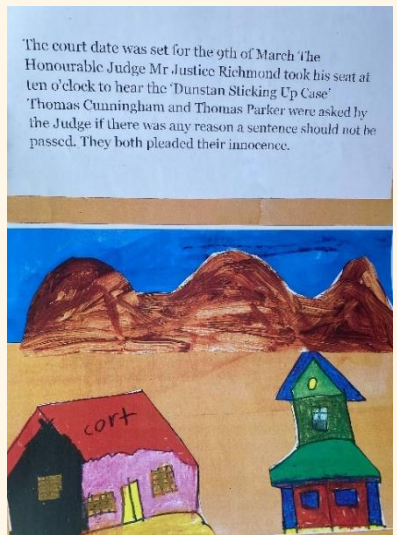
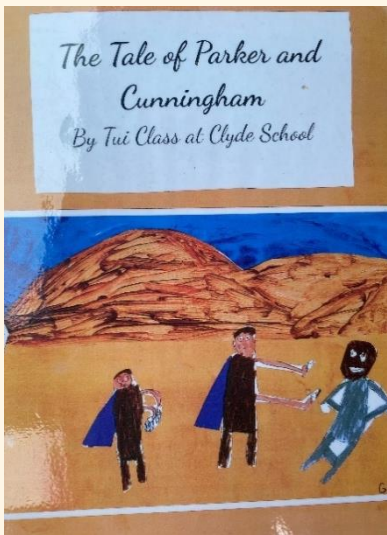
Make sure you get out and about with friends and family this summer to enjoy the many heritage offerings on our doorstep. If you're looking for inspiration, I highly recommend exploring the 'Central Otago in 100 Objects Exhibition', which is running across our five Central Otago museums (see page 13).

On behalf of Trustees, I wish you a happy and enjoyable Christmas.

David Ritchie, Chair - Central Otago Heritage Trust.

### The Tale of Parker & Cunningham

On December 12, 1863, Thomas Cunningham and Thomas Parker stole £795 from gold merchant Joshua Skinner in Dunstan, Clyde. This dramatic 'stick-up' robbery and the ensuing court case have been retold in a book and a short film produced by the Tui Class at Clyde Primary School. Scan the QR code to watch this delightful 7-minute video.



# CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

## THE AMAZING STORY OF THE SEVEN IRISHMEN AND UNDAUNTED MINE

The discovery of gold in New Zealand in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the arrival of many adventurous, energetic and hard-working men. Among them was a group known as the Seven Irishmen who, in the 1870s, left behind a life of poverty in Ireland to try their luck in the gold fields of Central Otago. Their incredible story was documented in the *New Zealand School Journal*, July 1948 issue.

The group included Tom and Peter Flannery, whose mother encouraged them to look for opportunities on the other side of the world, as there was “little to be got in Tyrone,” where they had subsisted on potatoes, eggs, buttermilk and stir-about (porridge).

However, life didn't prove to be much easier in New Zealand, so it was perhaps just as well that the men were used to working hard and doing without.

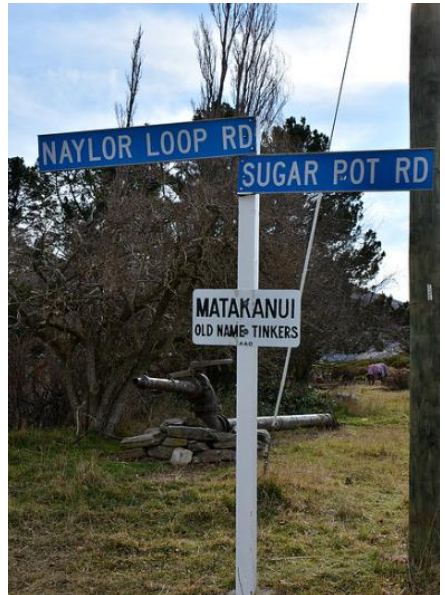
Although known as the 'Seven Irishmen' there were actually eight of them, the Flannery brothers, John Leamy, Patrick Murphy, Andrew Murphy, Edward Murphy, Patrick McDonald and John Slattery.

They had been told about a claim at Tinkers (now Matakauui) by Felix Donnelly who worked the nearby Blue Duck claim and could see it had definite potential. However, no one else had taken up the claim because of the huge amount of work that would be required to establish it.

“When the Irishmen prospected, they discovered a great deal of overburden but were convinced there was gold beneath it. All they had to do was bring water to the claim and wash the gold out,” said the story in the *NZ School Journal*.

They hunted about for water, but of course every miner wanted water and every creek belonged to someone else. The nearest water was at Chatto Creek, 21 miles away. The labour of building a race would be enormous and they had practically no money, but nothing could daunt those seven Irishmen.

The men called on Gilbert Sinclair, a Scotsman from the Shetland Islands who ran a store at Blacks (now Ophir). In those days it



was customary for storekeepers to stake miners with food and other necessities, sometimes for months, while they prepared their claims.

He agreed to stake them, knowing the task ahead of the Irishmen was huge and that he wouldn't be paid until they started to recover gold, if there was any.

The Irishmen set to work building the 21-mile water race, identifying a place well up a hill for the head of the pipeline so they would have enough pressure at the sluicing point.

They marked out the line of the water race with a spirit level, sighting from spur to spur along the side of the mountains until they arrived at Chatto Creek.

Then began the monumental task of constructing the race.

“The water race was made by building up the outside with stones. The stone walls were then lined with soil, which became waterproof when wetted. There were millions of stones on the Dunstan Mountains, but they had to be carried, shaped and fitted in firmly. Some of the walls were built up 25 feet where they had to cross cliff faces.”

Through the burning summer and freezing winter, the hardy Irishmen worked. Shovels and pick heads were blunted and worn out, and the soles of the men's boots were cut to pieces on the sharp schist gravel. They lived in tents or sod huts they built themselves. When they couldn't borrow a horse they carried their food on their backs, cooking their mutton and damper over open fires.

There wasn't an engineer or surveyor among them, but the men understood every yard of the race had to slope just enough to let the water run and no more.

To keep the slope even they used a six-foot triangle, fashioned from three boards with a plumb bob that hung from the apex. It was a simple method of levelling that never failed them.

By the end of the first year, they had no money left. Everything from their tea, food and tobacco, to matches, tools and clothes was supplied by Gilbert Sinclair.

After the second summer, they completed their tenth mile, building up walls around steep faces, cutting through outcrops of rock, and constructing small aqueducts of boards to carry the water across creeks.

At the beginning of the third year, they still had eight miles to go, with some of the hardest sections remaining.

“They looked at the cliff in the gully, against which they must build up a great wall to carry their race. They looked at the massive grey rocks that barred their way along the hillside. But they were as hard as rocks themselves by now. Nothing

could daunt them. They lifted great slabs of schist and fitted rock after rock to their wall in a frenzy of tireless toil. And they won.”

At the end of the third year the water race was finished and the sluicing pipes were ready. But there was no guarantee the claim would give up any gold.

They sluiced for 10 months and still didn't know how much gold they would get, or whether they would be able to repay Gilbert Sinclair.

As they began the wash up, they were delighted to find their hard labour had paid off, as the mine relinquished a decent amount of gold.



*Sluicing at the Undaunted Claim, Matakanui*

One of the men rode the eight miles to Sinclair's store on horseback with the first takings and put the bag on the counter in front of him.

Sinclair weighed the gold and said it would square the Irishmen's account, but rather than keep the money himself, he told the Irishman to take the money back and put it into developing the mine instead.

“I've waited four years. I can wait a bit longer,” he said.

The Irishmen worked the claim with great success in the years that followed.

The mine was originally called Murphy and Party, but after the first wash the name of the mine was changed to Undaunted, out of respect for the men's tenacity, hard work and belief.

The Irishmen later prospected in Southland and Thames and Undaunted Mine was taken over by The Undaunted Gold Mining Company, which was managed by Thomas Donnelly, son of Felix Donnelly, who, in 1879, had been killed by a fall of earth while working his Blue Duck claim.

Felix Donnelly's widow took up farming to provide for her 11 children (including Thomas Donnelly) and also ran two hotels - an amazing accomplishment for a woman of that era.

In September 1881, Gilbert Sinclair also passed away. He had fallen ill and knew he was dying, so when potential beneficiaries started to circle, he brought a lawyer up from Dunedin to make his will, telling him to gather all his accounts.

He was owed thousands of pounds by many miners in the district, some of them hadn't been as lucky as the Irishmen at Undaunted Mine.

"Burn the lot," he told the lawyer, insisting he did the job right there in front of him. "I'm not going to have my friends persecuted for money when I'm gone."

The lawyer did as he was asked.

The generous benefactor was gone, but, before his death his assistance had been a key to the success of many early gold mining operations in Central Otago, including the Irishmen of Undaunted.

Jo Bailey

## WHAT'S IN A NAME - TINKERS

'Tinkers' was the original name of the small gold mining settlement now known as Matakanui. There are three main tales about how Tinkers got its name and there is probably a pinch of truth in each.

The first is quite literal: tinsmiths, commonly called tinkers, gave up their trade of repairing pots and pans and repurposed their wares for washing gold. The second explanation is that when miners were asked what they were up to, they'd coyly reply, "just tinkering about," to avoid revealing their discoveries.

The final, and more plausible explanation harks back to the nomadic lives of Tinkers in Ireland, with the miners' tents likely resembling what was often referred to as a 'Tinkers Camp'.

The name Tinkers endured until 1887, when it was officially changed to Matakanui.



## 130-YEAR-OLD WEDDING CAKE

Spot the sultanas and ponder the amount of sherry!

Older folk may recall receiving a portion of wedding cake from the bride and groom, which was traditionally gifted in a small tin box.

Indeed, tradition suggests that single women who place a fragment of wedding cake under their pillow will find a husband!

While it was, and still is, customary for a piece of wedding cake to be given to guests on their departure from the wedding reception, for some newlyweds, keeping a larger portion of cake to be consumed together on their first wedding anniversary is considered to be an omen of good luck.

The ritual of retaining the top tier of a suitably preserved wedding cake stems from a 19th-century convention in which the couple saved the top tier for their firstborn child's christening.

More than 130 years on, we do not know the name nor fate of the happy couple and sadly why this top tier of wedding cake was never consumed!



This 130-year-old cake is one of the fascinating objects chosen by the Maniototo Early Settlers Association for the 'Central Otago in 100 Objects Exhibition'.



## FROM CANTON TO CENTRAL OTAGO

Speaking to a full house at St Enoch's Church in Alexandra in November, Victoria University Associate Professor, James Beattie, highlighted the positive impacts of Chinese migrants on New Zealand's gold mining history and beyond. James dedicated this Heritage Talk to his mentor and fellow historian, the late Dr James Ng.

The arrival of Cantonese migrants to New Zealand in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century was part of a massive wave of global migration that was driven by economic, social, and political upheavals in China. Between 1840 and 1939, a staggering 10 to 15 million Chinese migrated to other parts of the Pacific through the Hong Kong gateway.

The reason for this mass exodus was the result of interlinked crises, including the Taiping Rebellion and the Red Turban Revolt in the 1850s. The scarcity of land, due to continued division among inherited sons, made it difficult to provide for families. Widespread poverty and discontent drove many to seek new opportunities abroad. The California Gold Rush, referred to as 'Sun Mountain' by the Cantonese, offered an opportunity to escape hardship and to financially support families back home.

The Otago Gold Rush in the 1860s also attracted Chinese to New Zealand. Unlike other provinces in New Zealand at the time, Otago actively encouraged Chinese miners to work in the goldfields. In 1864, the Otago Chamber of Commerce invited Chinese miners in the Victoria goldfields to come to Otago and help boost the local economy. The Otago Provincial Government also assured Chinese migrants that they would enjoy legal parity with their European counterparts. However, this equality dissolved in 1876 with the abolition of provincial governance.

Canton (Guangzhou) was home to almost all the Chinese migrants seeking their fortune on the Otago goldfields. At the peak of the Otago gold rush, there were around 4,000 Cantonese miners trying their luck. In the 1870s, the number of Chinese miners in some areas, such as Naseby and Cardrona, outnumbered the European miners.

Chinese migrants brought skills and expertise that were quickly put to good use on the goldfields. The alluvial and later hydraulic sluicing methods required enormous amounts of water. Chinese knowledge of



*Foot powered, Chinese water pump used on the goldmining races*

diverting water and removing sludge and waste proved invaluable in optimizing these processes.

Cantonese businessman, Sue Ting, managed the highly successful Argyle Water Race. This required great technical skill and expense to divert a creek from 21 km away to supply the Nokomai Claim. Cantonese miners also deployed a traditional foot-powered Chinese pump to help move water through the races.

Renowned and respected Dunedin merchant, Choie (Charles) Sew Hoy, was involved in 11 major gold mining 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 success marked the beginning of the Central Otago dredging boom. The 'Sew Hoy dredge' quickly generated remarkable financial returns, making as much as £40 in just one day's dredging. These large, mobile processing units were often referred to as 'Hungry Dragons'.



*Choie Sew Hoy Dredge. Painting by D. Badcock*

Once the easy gold began to run out, Chinese miners were quick to recognize other business opportunities. Using traditional gardening skills, many cultivated small private gardens to cater to Cantonese tables. Vegetable seeds such as bok choy, Chinese sugar peas, kohlrabi and spring onions were imported to ensure a supply of familiar ingredients. These skills laid the foundation for establishing a foothold in the development of commercial market gardening in New Zealand. By

1881, almost 25% of Chinese living in New Zealand were employed in market gardening.

“If you are near a town, possibly an itinerant Chinese gardener may come around to your door... The Chinese surpass others in rearing vegetables cheaply and successfully for the market and at the same time set a good example to their neighbours by rising at 3 and 4am.” (*Taken from Mrs Williams' Migrant Guide 1882*)



*Market gardeners Ah Sam and Joe Shum. Otago Witness, February 1888*

The Chinese reputation for being hard-working and skilled market gardeners was recognized by other farmers, who often preferred employing Chinese farm workers over Europeans. Chinese rural workers also played a key role in addressing the scourge of rabbits by contributing to pest control efforts in Central Otago.

It was widely believed that the Chinese immigrants would want to return home to Canton. However, personal accounts from miners working on the goldfields indicated a growing connection to Otago as home, as illustrated by these quotes:

“Though my body is in China my heart is in the Gold Hills.”

“Here [at Cromwell] the great river is at my door with high hills beyond and around. I would rather be here without the £30.”

While quick to learn European ways of doing and knowing, traditional Chinese beliefs and customs continued to inform everyday activities. James Beattie highlighted an intriguing Chinese compass, also known as a luopan or geomantic compass. This complex instrument was used for a variety of purposes, including navigation, fortune-telling, and geomancy (locating favourable sites for buildings, burial, mining and much more).

James Beattie concluded his presentation by stating that he had deliberately avoided referring to the hardships and discrimination endured by the Chinese in colonial New Zealand to give “agency and recognition to their ability to shape their own worlds in spite of this adversity.”



*James Beattie holding the Chinese Compass*



Cromwell's 'Chinatown' had a peak population of about 400 people. The settlement was established in 1866 and inhabited until 1920. (This riverside site was flooded to make way for the Clyde Dam in 1993). The layout of the village would likely have followed traditional Chinese geomancy principles with dwellings set at different angles to avoid unlucky, long straight lines.

*Image: Otago Witness, 19 April 1908*

## HUNT FOR HISTORY: THE MUSEUMS PASSPORT CHALLENGE

Following the successful launch of the 'Central Otago in 100 Objects Exhibition', the Central Otago Museums Trust is excited to announce a family-focused initiative: **The Hunt for History Passport.**

This passport invites children under 12 to explore the exhibition in a fun and engaging way. From the thrill of buried treasure to the intrigue of a daring robbery - and even a 130-year-old wedding cake - the exhibition showcases 100 must-see collection items. These objects, held by the five public museums across Central Otago, tell important stories of the district's rich history, creating a heritage trail of discovery. Passport activities are designed around these fascinating objects.

Young participants can complete four fun activities at each museum to earn a stamp in their passport. Those who collect stamps from all five museums will have the chance to win some great prizes.

“Children love treasure hunts, exploring, and collecting things. We saw how successful this concept was in heritage sites across Canterbury, and we thought it would be a fantastic way to encourage children and their families to explore Central Otago's rich history this summer,” said Jane Lancaster, Chair of the Museums Trust.

“The heritage trail component of this exhibition provides a fantastic opportunity for families to explore and discover what our five museums have to offer this summer.”



Passports will be available for collection from the five participating museums just before Christmas. Keep an eye on the Museums Central Otago Facebook page or visit [www.museumscentralotago.org.nz](http://www.museumscentralotago.org.nz) for more information.

## ROXBURGH'S BUDDING HISTORIANS

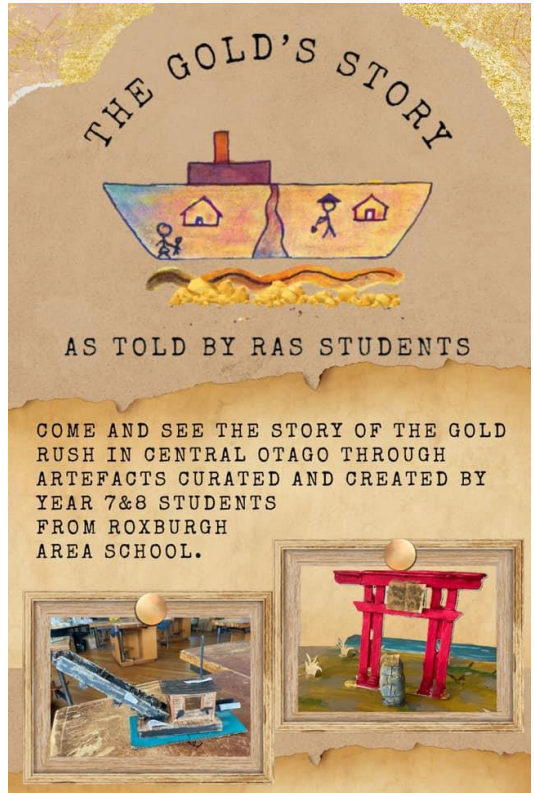
Roxburgh Area School's Year 7 and 8 class recently embarked on a fascinating journey back in time, culminating in an exhibition about the Otago Gold Rush. This project was the highlight of a term-long study that immersed students in the rich history of the gold rush era, allowing them to explore the stories and artefacts that defined this important period in their local history.

The journey began with an exploration of what it means to curate an exhibition and tell a story through artefacts. Students were fortunate to visit the Tuapeka Museum and the historic Gabriel's Gully, both significant sites in the story of the Otago Gold Rush. These visits provided a tangible connection to the past, sparking curiosity and inspiring the students as they embarked on their research.

A highlight of the term was a special visit from Sean Brosnahan, a curator from the Toitū Otago Settlers Museum. Sean shared insights into his role, explaining the process of curating exhibitions and offering invaluable advice to the budding historians. His guidance helped the students understand the importance of selecting artefacts that not only tell a story but also evoke emotion and connection with the audience.

Armed with newfound knowledge and inspiration, the students dived into their research, each choosing an aspect of the gold rush that interested them. This personal connection to their chosen topics allowed them to engage deeply with the material, resulting in a diverse range of stories and artefacts.

One student chose to focus on the law enforcement of the era, engineering a pistol used to police the gold carts as their artefact. This choice highlighted the challenges and dangers of maintaining order during the gold rush. Another student was captivated by the story of Roxburgh's Commercial Hotel, run by the enterprising Mrs Heron. They created a model of the hotel, showcasing its role as a



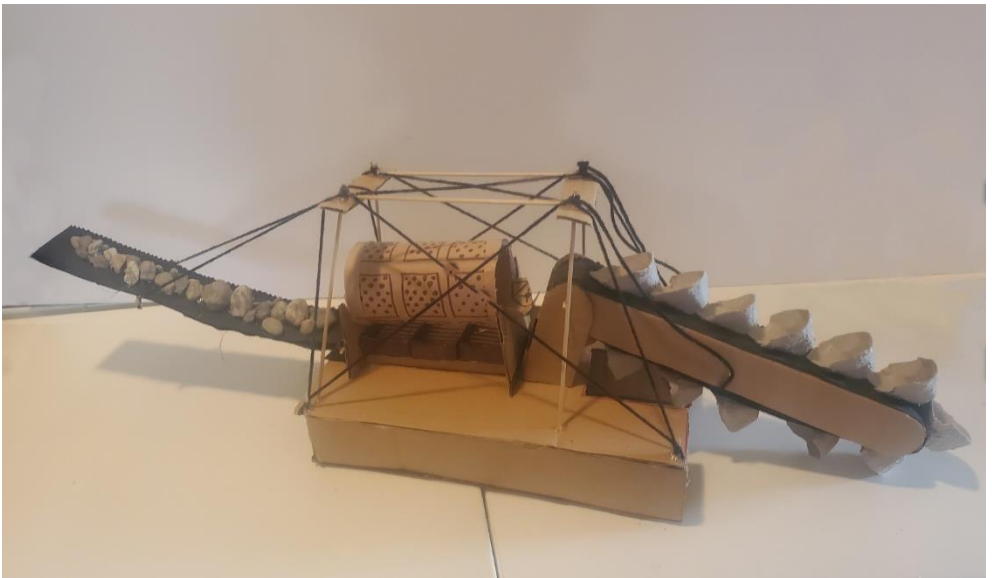
bustling hub and Mrs Heron's pioneering spirit. Exploring the experience of the Chinese miners was a popular topic, and one student made a Chinese doll, brought to Otago by a Chinese miner as a reminder of home. This artefact highlighted the diverse cultural influences present during the gold rush and the personal stories of those who traveled great distances in search of fortune.

As the students curated their exhibition, they enjoyed seeing how the various stories and artefacts came together to create a comprehensive narrative of the gold rush era. The process taught them valuable skills in research, storytelling and curation, as well as an appreciation for the complexities of history.

The culmination of their hard work is now on display at the Roxburgh Lodge Museum, where the community is invited to explore the exhibition. Visitors have been impressed by the depth of knowledge and creativity demonstrated by the students, who have successfully brought the history of the Otago Gold Rush to life.

This project not only enriched the students' understanding of their local history but also fostered a sense of pride and accomplishment. The community thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the exhibition and the students relished the opportunity to share their learning with others.

Sarah Moore, Roxburgh Area School.



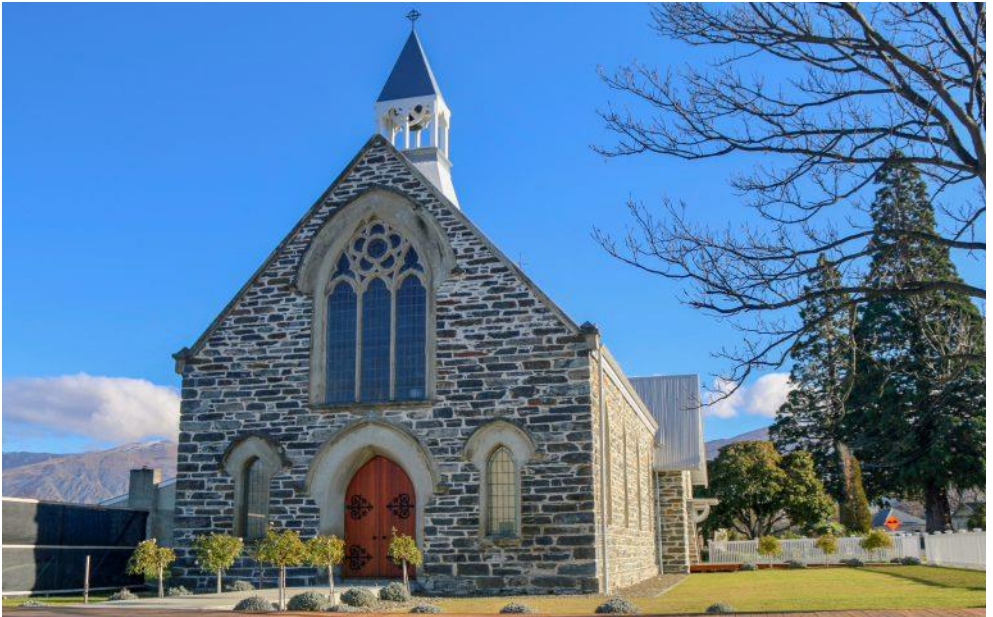
*Bucket Dredge by Roxburgh Area School Student, Emma Jowett*



## CROMWELL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CELEBRATES 150 YEARS SINCE OPENING

In late February 2025, the sesquicentennial celebrations of this Cromwell church will be held. You could argue it's older than that because services were held from 1868 onwards in the schoolhouse. Back then, services were led by the Reverend Benjamin Drake. He became the first minister when the Presbyterian authorities in Dunedin finally decided that Drake was a good bloke (he was) and that there was a group of people in Cromwell who wanted to be Presbyterian. The first 'official' service was held in February 1875.

It took until early 1881 for the church building to be finished and opened. The church operated for 123 years until it was sold to a private buyer in 2004. It has since been beautifully restored as a private residence.



*Old Presbyterian Church in Cromwell, a Category 2 listed building*

The new Presbyterian Church is located at the other end of Cromwell, reflecting the shift in the town's centre of activities. There was more than a little strife over whether or not it was better to build a new building or renovate and extend the existing one. Eventually, after some years of working through funding and location issues, the green light was given. This included selling the old church as well as the Bannockburn Church, which was bought by the Central Otago District Council for use by the local community. There was a big effort to raise funds and to persuade local tradies to donate time, expertise and even materials to do a 'quick build' over

a weekend that became known as “We Did It in Two.” The resounding success of this project was made possible through the generosity and expertise of the following contributors:

- Alan Wilkinson, who came up with the idea and twisted the arms of the tradies who made it happen
- Don Colling of Don Colling Construction, Robert Herbert of Wedge Construction and Jeff Walker of O'Callaghan & Walker, representing the three building companies who first put their hands up to lead the building effort
- Murray Brown, who chaired the church's building committee and, with great perseverance, kept it moving until it had the necessary support
- Alan Missen, minister from 2003 - 2008, who strove to keep the project in front of the congregation.

Opening in 2006, the new church has become a hub for community use, offering significantly more floor space than the old church. From Monday to Saturday each week, much of this space is rented out to commercial and not-for-profit users, enabling the church to host a much wider range of activities.



*New Presbyterian Church in Cromwell*

The church's sesquicentennial will be celebrated from 22 - 24 February 2025. Chaired by Joy McDonald, the organizing committee promises a fun and memorable event, filled with opportunities for old friends to reconnect.

A special book, *No Plans to Quit: Cromwell Presbyterian Church Passes 150 Years*, has been written to mark the occasion and will be available for \$42. To purchase a copy, contact the church office at [office@cromchurch.co.nz](mailto:office@cromchurch.co.nz) or call 03 445 3078.

# PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

## MACTAVISH'S HUT

Close to Ophir, on Ida Valley Road, stands a restored miner's cottage known as MacTavish's Hut. This modest two-room structure was built by Lockhart MacTavish on an acre of parched mining land known as Blue Nose Gully. The mining claim was granted in 1870, suggesting the hut was constructed around this time.

At one stage it was occupied by a goldminer, Clem Daniels, who died there at an old age. It was always quite apparent when Clem had a good wash in his claim because he would tidy up and come down into Ophir, swinging his walking stick, and celebrate his good fortune at the two pubs. After a roaring celebration, there wasn't a kid to be seen on the street as he made his way homeward to the hut.

The schist hut was restored in the early 1980s by the Leask family and local stonemason, Steve Sorenson.

The Central Otago Heritage Trust logo, thoughtfully designed and generously gifted by Gary Stewart from the Gas Project, was inspired by this old miner's hut.



MacTavish's Hut can be viewed at the base of the hill at the beginning of the Ida Valley Road. (Not open to the public)

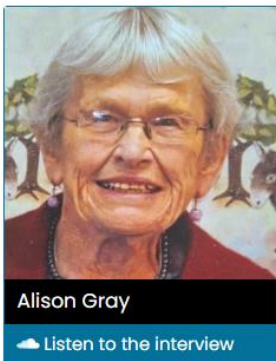
## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT END-OF-YEAR ROUNDUP

Telling stories was the original means of passing on knowledge and experiences. Oral history has come a long way from cavemen sharing stories around their campfires. These days we have hi-tech recording equipment and Artificial Intelligence (AI) audio editing tools, but whatever the format, oral history continues to be a valuable means of preserving the past and connecting generations.

Since January this year, volunteer interviewers have completed 22 interviews, with others currently underway. Historical interviews of eight Clyde families were gratefully received from Promote Dunstan and have been added to the repository. We also appreciate the close ties we have with the Upper Clutha History Society. Recently, they shared with us a fascinating interview with John Darby about his work with the Bird of the Century, the Pūteketeke.

We want to make our oral history stories as accessible as possible. There are currently 45 interviews online, and we're steadily publishing more. The biggest step forward has been using AI to improve sound quality. Newly published interviews have been edited with Adobe Podcast, and previously published interviews are being re-edited to make the listening experience more enjoyable. In the future, we're aiming to develop oral history podcasts to give people another way to access our local history.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who worked tirelessly to research, prepare, and conduct new interviews this year. You have given a voice to individuals whose stories might otherwise be overlooked or underrepresented in mainstream history. By enabling people to share their unique experiences, perspectives and memories, you have preserved these narratives not only for us to appreciate today but also to educate and inspire future generations. Well done team!



Scan the QR code to listen to two of our newly published oral history interviews. Alison Gray reflects on her time at the Waipiata Sanatorium and Brigid Denniston shares childhood memories of growing up at Earnsclough Castle.

## RESTORING NATURAL HERITAGE AT ORKNEY WETLAND

An impressive five-hectare wetland has recently been developed near Omakau.

Across New Zealand, wetlands now occupy about one-tenth of their original extent. Many were drained to make way for farming and urban development. For Māori, wetlands were vital food resources (mahinga kai), including tuna (eel) and whio (blue duck). Efforts to protect wetlands, or to recreate them as in this case, are essential for restoring our natural heritage.

The Orkney wetland was named in honour of the farm it is located on, a name bestowed by the original European settlers (the Corrigals) who came from the small Scottish island of Orkney. The wetland's main inflow is a tributary of Thomsons Creek, named after George Thomson, another Scottish settler, who settled Matakanui Station in 1861.

Today, Orkney Farm is owned by Pete and Robyn McLeod, who have recently protected the land with a QEII National Trust covenant.

The wetland initiative is one of several Thomsons Catchment projects overseen by the Manuherekia Catchment Group, with its creation financially supported by the Government's Jobs for Nature programme.

The new wetland will help improve the water quality in Thomsons Creek before it flows into the Manuherekia River. It will also provide wetland habitat for native birds and fish, many of them rare and special. It will also be a place for people to visit and enjoy, helped by its location right next to the Central Otago Rail Trail.



*A drone image of the wetland, looking north, May 2024*

Nic McGrouther, the Thomsons Project Manager said, “To see the small puddle surrounded by old willow become the thriving wetland less than two years into the project, is absolutely incredible. We now have over 40,000 native plants in the ground, and an increasing number of birds using the wetland as their home.”

The wetland project has been supported by many volunteers, scientists, engineers and agencies. The late Matt Hickey, an Otago freshwater ecologist had the original vision, and Dr Chris Tanner from NIWA and Brendan Sheehan from Mt Aurum Engineering designed the constructed wetland to maximise its ability to filter sediment, including a meandering nearly 1 km flow path with only a 0.4 metre fall in elevation. This required survey work by Landpro; precise earthworks by S & B Civil; and an exit weir that was built by Breen Construction.

The planting design was done by Jo Wakelin, with bulk planting led by Habitat Restorations Aotearoa and Matukituki Natives and assisted by many supportive locals including the Matakanui Combined Rugby Football Club and local landowners. Pioneer Energy have provided culvert pipes to help access around the wetland. The local and regional Councils have also provided support.

Local schools are also involved, with Omakau Primary School carrying out monthly water quality testing, and Poolburn School pupils learning about the health of Thomsons Creek. Volunteers have formed bird monitoring and predator control groups and there are plans to develop a planting group for the wetland.

The project team are working with the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust on a short detour off the Rail Trail so visitors can view it and learn about its development.

Nic McGrouther adds, “This has truly been a community-led project from the very start with hundreds of members of the community, local businesses and organisations supporting the creation of the wetland in so many ways.”



Scan the QR code to find out more about the Orkney Wetland and its community planting days and bird surveys.



*Bird monitoring at the wetland, October 2024*

# 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, Maggie Hope, for our website or next newsletter: [maggie@heritagecentralotago.org.nz](mailto:maggie@heritagecentralotago.org.nz)

## Our website

Get the latest news and events at: [www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz/events/](http://www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz/events/)

## Our newsletter

You can find archives of our quarterly newsletter in the library section on our website.

## Follow us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/heritagecentralotago](http://www.facebook.com/heritagecentralotago)

# OUR SUPPORTERS

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



Lottery Grants Board  
Te Puna Tahua  
LOTTO FUNDS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY





34 Sunderland St Clyde 9330  
info@heritagecentralotago.org.nz  
www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz