

Protecting, preserving & celebrating our heritage



Spring 2025



Gus Magnus' ice skates, circa 1880

Published by the Central Otago Heritage Trust
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). Ann Cowie (Heritage Coordinator).

CONTENTS

HERITAGE MATTERS	2
FROM THE CHAIR	2
CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE	4
GRANDAD’S SCALES.....	4
ESTHER JANE WEAVER – SUFFRAGETTE	6
HERITAGE TALKS UPDATE	7
SKATING ON THE LOWER MANORBURN DAM	8
GUS MAGNUS’ SKATES	10
WHAT’S IN A NAME – MIDDLEMARCH	11
THE CENTRAL OTAGO FARMER WHO COLLECTED HIGH FASHION	12
PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE	14
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE	14
SPOTLIGHT ON: VOLUNTEER SUE JOHNSTON.....	15
CENTRAL OTAGO MUSEUMS TRUST UPDATE	16
BOOK REVIEW: TAKE ME WITH YOU 3!.....	18
WATER RACES OF CENTRAL OTAGO.....	19
CONNECT WITH US.....	22
OUR SUPPORTERS.....	22

Cover image courtesy of Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery

HERITAGE MATTERS

FROM THE CHAIR

We've made it through another winter and it's good to see the start of the spring weather showing its face! Like many, I was lucky enough to get away to warmer climes for a break with the family in mid-winter. It's always nice to return to Central Otago after a break, though, as winter in Central is a season I would hate to miss completely!



It's been great to see the continued high turnout at our Heritage Talks. In August we held two, both of which were repeat talks due to the high interest. The first was Murray Radka sharing his long-held passion for heritage roses, and, later in the month Quinn Berentson delved into the history of the moa. Thank you to both Murray and Quinn.

The Heritage Talks are proving very popular, with many people eagerly awaiting the subjects and dates. Coming up at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery, on Thursday 16 October: Karen Wrigglesworth, author, engineer, and technical storyteller, will share stories about Otago's engineering heritage. (See pages 7 & 18).

It's wonderful to see progress in the project to partly reconstruct the Cromwell Chinese gold-era settlement, adjacent to the new Cromwell Cultural Centre development. It is an important part of our heritage, and it's fantastic that the historic Chinese community's contribution to the region is being acknowledged and brought to life through the physical reconstruction of the settlement, and eventually, a virtual reality display. We look forward to seeing how this project evolves and becomes an asset for Cromwell and the wider region.

We are excited to announce a further funding boost for the Oral History Project! The Otago Community Trust has contributed \$4,500 and Promote Dunstan has given \$5,000 towards supporting the project's continuation for another two years. This is on the back of earlier confirmed funding for the project from Central Lakes Trust.

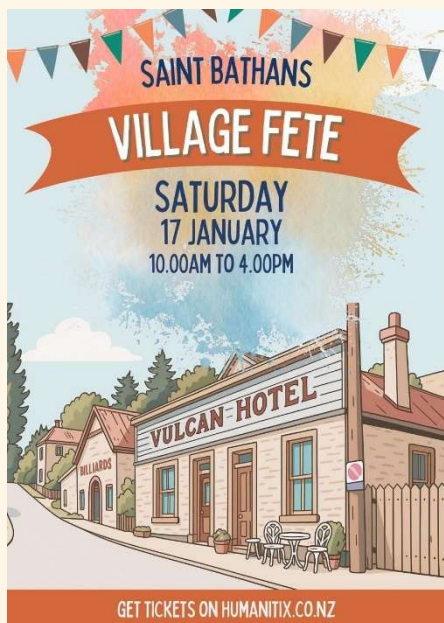
This continued funding will enable us to grow our Oral Histories Catalogue and expand the Oral Histories Project into podcasts and school learning modules. We are extremely grateful to our funders, as this enables us to continue recording and preserving the region's stories, ensuring they are not lost to history, as well as developing further ways to communicate and make these available to the wider community.

We're excited to share a new collaboration that we plan to launch during the warmer months. We'll be working with the Department of Conservation (DOC) to help coordinate the restoration and protection of heritage sites on DOC land. The great thing about this joint effort is the opportunity for the community to engage with local projects, as we will be looking for volunteers to help in tasks ranging from weeding through to skilled trades such as bricklaying and masonry.

We look forward to catching up with many of you at our AGM on Wednesday 26 November (more details to come in the next few weeks). Our guest speaker following the AGM is local author Sophie Rogers. Sophie's first book, *Nightshades and Paperwhites*, was inspired by a high school project examining Chinese goldminers in Otago.

David Ritchie – Chair, Central Otago Heritage Trust

Do you possess the skills of yesteryear?



Step back in time at the
St. Bathans Village Fete
Saturday 17 January 2026!

We are calling on heritage enthusiasts, craftspeople, and artisans to join us in celebrating traditional skills and old-world charm in the heart of historic Central Otago.

Showcase your heritage craft, demonstrate a forgotten skill, or share your handmade wares with visitors eager to experience the magic of the past brought to life.

For more information, keep an eye on the website: www.stbathans.nz or email on stbathansvillagefete@gmail.com

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

GRANDAD'S SCALES

Sometimes it isn't the biggest, the best, or the rarest, that means the most. For Tony McCarthy, it is his Grandad's set of gold scales.

Tony McCarthy had an unusual item in his childhood home and one that piqued his interest from a young age; a set of boxed Avery gold scales that once belonged to his maternal grandfather, Charles Weaver. The scales were manufactured between 1891 and 1896. Charles was a dredge master and shareholder of the Earnsclough Gold Dredges from the early 1880s through until 1924.



Tony McCarthy's prized Avery gold scales which once belonged to his grandfather, Charles Weaver

But digging for gold goes back even further in Tony's family. Charles' father, John Weaver, had been present at both the California and Victoria gold rushes. After marrying Mary Martin in Australia, John moved with his family to Otago, where he then tried his hand on the Dunstan gold fields in 1864.

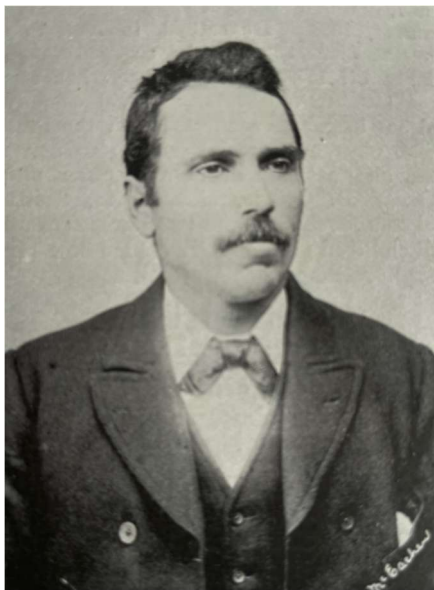
Interestingly, Tony's paternal grandfather also immigrated to New Zealand and worked on the gold fields. In 1890, he purchased his first mining claim with his brother, which they worked together for many years. He also worked on the Earnsclough No. 1 dredge and even had the opportunity to work on the first-ever tin dredge in South East Asia at Phuket Harbour, Siam (now Thailand).

Tony's father continued in his own father's footsteps and worked on the last dredge in Central Otago, the Alexandra gold dredge, which was finally dismantled in 1963.

Tony has fond memories of growing up around this huge dredge, and a particularly vivid recollection, as a 5-year-old, of climbing all over the Alexandra gold dredge when it was closed for maintenance. His brother, Quentin, being a little older and perhaps a little more adventurous, fell into the water and was thankfully plucked out by their father, gumboots and all!

Charles Weaver's scales were eventually passed down to the oldest boy, Wayne, and have since been traded back to Tony. His interest in scales has seen his own collection grow, and he has acquired various gold scales and troy weights. After Charles Weaver's set of Avery gold scales, Tony's next most-prized set of scales is a set made for the Government of New Zealand. It is believed these scales may have been used to measure the Reserve Bank of New Zealand's troy weights.

Tony and his wife, Laura, are hoping to return to Earnsclough and his hometown of Alexandra. He is very proud to have Charles Weaver's gold scales returned home to where he first made use of them, well over one hundred years ago!



Charles Weaver

Source: Tony McCarthy's collection



Some of Tony's collection of troy weights

For anyone who has gold scales and troy weights and would like to contact Tony, he can be reached on tonymccarthy@nz@gmail.com

Follow this QR code to see Tony's website for more information.



ESTHER JANE WEAVER – SUFFRAGETTE

Esther Jane Weaver was born in 1862 in Victoria, Australia. She was the daughter of John Weaver and Mary Martin. (John Weaver was the father of Charles Weaver, the original owner of the Avery gold scales in the previous story!)

With her family, Esther arrived in Otago in 1863. They settled in Chapmans Gully, near Alexandra. In 1887, she married Moses Holden and together they had four children. (You may remember Moses Holden from the story on Holden's Cottage in the Winter 2025 newsletter.)



Esther Jane Holden (nee Weaver) c. 1890
Source: Quentin McCarthy's
'Descendants of John and Mary Weaver'

In 1893, Esther was one of 31,872 women aged 21 or over who signed a petition for women's suffrage. This represented nearly a quarter of New Zealand's European female population who were of voting age at the time. Thirteen separate petitions were collected, the largest of which contained nearly 24,000 signatures on 500 sheets. Later, when they were glued together, they formed a single roll which stretched for 270 metres. This roll was presented to parliament on 11 August 1893. Otago was extremely well represented on this petition, with just over 31% of the signatures coming from women in Otago.

Esther died at her daughter's home in Dunedin on 8 July 1944. She is buried in the Alexandra Cemetery.

Emma A. Todd.
Annie Cannon
Margaret Annie
Helen Nordgren
A. Cullen
Esther Jane Holden
Charlotte Yorke
A. C. Wayne

Mrs. Brown
South Dunedin
Hartangata
Broad Bay
Captain Southland
Alexandra South
Royal Terrace
Milton

Esther Jane Holden's signature on page 105 of the 1893 women's suffragette petition

HERITAGE TALKS UPDATE

August was a busy month with two heritage talks. Both were repeat talks, due to the high interest in them.

At Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery in Alexandra, Murray Radka talked about his passion for preserving heritage roses. Thanks to observant members of the public, he is still discovering them! Murray shared heartfelt insights into his family life with his wife, Noeleen, and their boys and grandchildren, and his world-renowned collection of roses at Brandy Hill, their property in Springvale.

Next, at Clyde Museum, Quinn Berentson delivered his fascinating talk on New Zealand's legendary bird, the moa. Quinn reflected that some of the facts he discovered about the moa amazed him – not only because he hadn't known them, but also because they don't seem to be widely known at all. This inspired him to write the book, *Moa: The Life and Death of New Zealand's Legendary Bird*. This book won Quinn the 2013 New Zealand Book Awards 'Best First Book' and the Royal Society of New Zealand's 2013 Science Book Prize.



Telling Technical Tales – Otago's engineering heritage

On Thursday 16 October, join award-winning author and engineer, Karen Wigglesworth, at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery, as she shares stories about Otago's engineering heritage.

For more information and to RSVP for this talk, go to the *Events* page on the Heritage Central Otago website (www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz/events) or follow this QR code.



INSPIRED BY MURRAY'S ROSES? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO HELP

Following Murray Radka's heritage talks, several people have enquired about volunteering at Brandy Hill. To date, Murray has preferred to do the work himself, but he now concedes it's time to accept help. If you're interested in lending a hand at Brandy Hill, we'd love to hear from you. Volunteers would help with a variety of general gardening tasks, all under Murray's guidance. Email us at ann@heritagecentralotago.org.nz if you'd like to be part of this special opportunity. *Please note it may be several months before you are contacted about your offer to help.*

SKATING ON THE LOWER MANORBURN DAM

Completed in 1934, the Lower Manorburn Dam was built around 20 years after its upstream counterpart, the Upper Manorburn Dam – also known as the Manorburn Reservoir. The two are connected by the Manor Burn, a 25km stretch of water that carries flow from the Upper to the Lower Dam.

Managed by the Ida Valley Irrigation Scheme, the Upper Manorburn Dam was created to store and regulate water for farmland in the region. The Lower Manorburn Dam was also built for irrigation needs, supplying the Galloway area. However, it quickly became an unexpected local gem and iconic winter destination. When its surface freezes, it draws ice skaters (and curlers) from far and wide.

When frozen, the Lower Manorburn Dam is a 60-acre expanse of ice, making it the Southern Hemisphere's largest natural ice-skating rink. It is also one of the most commonly frozen pieces of ice in New Zealand. The Alexandra Winter Sports Club was established here in 1935. This club fostered a vibrant skating culture, hosting competitions for figure skaters, speed skaters, and curlers. They even

constructed a building at the dam's base for skate rentals and refreshments, and held annual carnivals. (Follow the QR code to see footage of locals in fancy dress at the 1946 'Ice Carnival' hosted by the Alexandra Winter Club at Lower Manorburn Dam).



A. W. Robertson of Oturehua (1939)
Source: Allied Press



The first skaters on the Lower Manorburn Dam (1934)

Sadie Cameron is second from right

Source: National Library of New Zealand



In 1939, the Lower Manorburn Dam hosted the inaugural New Zealand Ice Skating Championships. It is estimated that this event drew a crowd of approximately 2,000 to the Lower Manorburn Dam. Only five years had passed since the completion of the dam, but already Alexandra was considered one of New Zealand's leading ice-skating centres.

Men and women competed separately in both speed (over three-quarters of a mile and one-and-a-half mile distances) and figure skating. In the men's figure skating,

A. W. Robertson of Otarehua finished first in a field of seven, and in the women's event, Sadie Cameron of Alexandra took the gold in a field of four. The dam hosted several more New Zealand ice skating championships, including 1946 (the first since 1939, due to World War II), 1959, 1967, and 1980.



Skating on the Lower Manorburn Dam (1960s)

Source: Chris Burles via Facebook

During the 1950s and 60s, the dam continued to draw hundreds of visitors from across Otago and Southland. Up to 20 buses would sometimes be present, bringing skaters from as far as Dunedin and Invercargill. In 1959, two and a half inches of ice had frozen by 2 June, which provided one of the earliest opportunities for skating on the dam.

In 1969, work commenced on an artificial rink beside the Lower Manorburn Dam. This proved to be a popular spot until it was decided, in the early 1990s, to have a rink in Alexandra.

Competitive speed skating events were also held at the dam, including the 1970 New Zealand National Short Track and Long Track Championships.

The 1980 championship was the last to be held on natural and outdoor ice. After the current outdoor Olympic-sized ice rink in Alexandra was opened in 1993, there was a sharp decline in the number of ice skaters at the Lower Manorburn Dam.



The new artificial rink at Lower Manorburn Dam

Source: Icelnline (undated, probably 1970s)

While skating on the dam has been a hugely popular winter pastime over the decades, it is not without risk. In June 1942, a young boy fell through the ice and spent half an hour in the frigid water before a rope was found and he was pulled out. In August 1966, a 56-year-old man fell through the ice and was unable to be found. It is believed that strong underwater currents had weakened the ice. And, just last year, a former triple Olympian in short track speed skating fell through the ice. Fortunately, he was able to self-rescue due to his training and knowledge. He shared his experience on social media and warned others about the dangers of skating (especially alone) on natural, unverified ice.

GUS MAGNUS' SKATES

It is believed ice skating was introduced to Central Otago by two Swedish brothers, Gus (August) and John Magnus, who arrived in Alexandra in the 1880s. Gus Magnus spent his career in mining, where he worked on, and managed, several dredges.

Following his retirement, Gus was elected one of the founding vice presidents of the Alexandra Winter Sports Club on its formation in 1935. Being an expert in figure skating, he also became the official club coach. Under his tutelage, the club produced many proficient ice skaters over the years.



*Gus Magnus' ice skates on display at Central Stories Museum & Art Gallery
Donated by the Magnus family*

The evolution of ice skates over the centuries has been remarkable. The oldest were developed in Scandinavia and date back to approximately 1800 BCE. They were made from old horse and cow bones, which were pierced and fitted with leather straps. In the 13th century, iron blades on a wooden platform were introduced; in the 15th century, the blade was changed to include a curled toe. These earlier skates weren't designed for sport but purely for transportation. Design tweaks continued, and ice skates evolved from simple strap-on designs to specialised boots with advanced blades. The first ice skates with leather boots permanently attached to metal blades were developed in 1850.

The ice skates pictured belonged to Gus Magnus and are probably from around 1880. Though Gus was almost certainly skating in more modern boots by the 1930s, it's possible these skates took a turn on the ice at the Lower Manorburn Dam. Thanks to the Magnus family, they are available for all to see at Central Stories Museum & Art Gallery in Alexandra.

WHAT'S IN A NAME – MIDDLEMARCH

The township of Middlemarch, located at the southern end of the Strath Taieri, is arguably best known today as the start (or end) point of the Otago Central Rail Trail. The area was first settled by Europeans in the 1850s, at which time it was swampy. After the land was drained, large grazing runs were established, and the area became suitable for farming.

As the gold rush kicked off in the 1860s, this brought miners through the area, and a trail was developed along the Taieri River. Middlemarch was one of the townships that grew along the route to service the travellers heading to and from the goldfields. The Otago Central Railway was completed in 1891, connecting Middlemarch to Dunedin and other parts of Otago.

But how did Middlemarch get its name? The word has both literary and geographic connotations. Middlemarch was centred around Garthmyl Hill Farm, established by Edward Wingfield Humphreys in the late 1860s, and is thought to have been named by him. The name Middlemarch may have been a reference to George Eliot's 1871 novel *Middlemarch*, a work deeply concerned with the complexities of rural life and personal aspirations – perhaps this resonated with settlers forging new lives in a remote landscape. Another theory suggests the name is a combination of 'middle' and the Old English 'march,' meaning boundary. This may be a reference to March Creek (a tributary of the Taieri River) that formed the boundary between the two major runs of the time, Gladbrook and Taieri Lake. March Creek also flows close to the township.

We may never know whether the naming of Middlemarch was based on the literary or geographic reference. However, both possibilities suggest a theme of in-betweenness – whether in place or purpose – and captures something of the settlement's character as both a destination and a crossing point in the vast Otago landscape.



Middlemarch Railway Station, 2008
Source: Ulrich Lange

THE CENTRAL OTAGO FARMER WHO COLLECTED HIGH FASHION

An Otago tractor shed.

That's where New Zealand's most significant high fashion collection was stored in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the dedication of high-country farmer, Eden Hore.

He thoroughly destroyed the stereotype of a typical farmer by collecting more than 200 garments, shoes, hats, and other accessories in the hopes of bringing tourists to the small town of Naseby.



Eden Hore

Central Otago Couture: The Eden Hore Collection, co-authored by Claire Regnault and Jane Malthus, with photography by Derek Henderson, celebrates the collection through stories and photographs of the clothing backdropped by the area's iconic local landscape.

"He was a farmer first and foremost, and he liked to travel in the winter and see other parts of the world. He had an idea of tourist attractions in various places, and he wanted to create a tourist attraction for Naseby. In respect to his collecting, that was his driving force," said Jane Malthus, a dress historian and book co-author.



Images courtesy of Derek Henderson

Hore organised garden parties to showcase the collection with some events raising funds for local churches. He took the collection around New Zealand and to Sydney, Australia, to raise funds for the rural Flying Doctors service.

“Eden was quietly spoken except maybe when he was shouting at his stock. He was all kinds of things.

“He had a real affinity for animals, there is no doubt about that, but, as we quote in the book, a stock agent says, ‘It was a pretty strange thing for somebody in that location, a farmer to be collecting New Zealand high fashion’,” said Jane Malthus.



The collection highlights a thriving and creative fashion scene in New Zealand in the mid-20th century, long before we saw the likes of Zambesi and Karen Walker. Included in the collection are creations designed by two of New Zealand’s illustrious fashion icons, Colin Cole – active from the 1950s to the 1980s, and Vinka Lucas – active from 1959 until 2008.

Eden Hore died in 1997 at the age of 78.

You can view a display of his fabulous frocks at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery, where you can also purchase *Central Otago Couture: The Eden Hore Collection*.

Article courtesy of Radio NZ

Follow the QR code to visit the Eden Hore website and learn more about the Eden Hore story.



PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE

Martin Curtis: Music, Mountains, and a Life Well Travelled

The Oral History Project invites you to listen to a newly published interview with Martin Curtis, now available on our website. The interview offers a captivating insight into the life of one of Central Otago's most interesting figures. He discusses his journey as a musician, his travels through Europe and Australia, and his arrival in New Zealand as a 'Ten Pound Pom.'



*Martin Curtis at home
Earnscliffe, 2023*

Martin recounts his early life and how his love for music and nature blossomed from a young age. Born in London, he would cycle for miles exploring the countryside outside of his family's city home, learning to love the natural environment and the wildlife that inhabited it. He took up hiking and mountaineering and became a trekking guide in Iceland and Bhutan. His love of the mountains found a great outlet in New Zealand, and Martin recounts his experiences of climbing Aoraki Mt Cook, along with other adventures in the Southern Alps.

Even as a young boy, Martin was captivated by music. He was first drawn to the guitar at age eight after hearing Les Paul on the radio. This marked the start of a lifelong dedication to music, particularly folk music, that would become both his passion and a career. Martin gives insights into his songwriting and recording processes and recalls his involvement in school music programmes. After his extensive travels, Martin fell in love with Wānaka and Central Otago and settled in Cardrona. He was instrumental in founding the long-running Cardrona Folk Music Festival, which attracts musicians and music lovers from far and wide. This interview also includes stories about his experiences restoring heritage buildings in Cardrona and tramping huts in the mountains; his horse trekking business; his years running the Cardrona Valley mail and bus route; and his conservation efforts, focusing particularly on kea and takahe.

The interview is a testament to Martin's deep appreciation for the land and the people he has encountered. We're grateful to Martin for sharing his experiences with such warmth and humour, and to interviewer Jan Piggot for her work in preserving these stories for the oral history collection.



SPOTLIGHT ON: VOLUNTEER SUE JOHNSTON

We're excited to introduce a new regular feature in our newsletter: *Spotlight On*. In each edition, one of our Oral History Project volunteers will share their experiences, insights, and the stories behind their work. This month, we spoke with Sue Johnston about what drew her to the project and why this work matters.

What first inspired you to get involved with the Oral History Project?

Three years ago, I moved to Bannockburn and saw a notice in the Cromwell Bulletin asking for expressions of interest from anyone who enjoys meeting people and would like to learn more about the history of Central Otago. I hadn't heard of the Oral History Project, so volunteering seemed like the ideal way to find out more about Central Otago and its people.



Can you share a particularly memorable moment or story from an interview?

John Breen from Breen's Construction regaled me with hair-raising tales of how he and two other contractors erected transmission masts for Radio Otago from 1980 to 1985. The lower sections were put in place using a crane, and the contractors had to climb to the top of the mast, hanging on for dear life as a helicopter arrived with the next section of the mast swinging from strops! Any error would probably be fatal as initially no safety equipment was used. I felt goosebumps hearing about such feats!

What do you enjoy most about sitting down with people to record their memories?

It's an honour and a privilege to hear and record each person's story. You meet them often as complete strangers, and, because of the interviewing process, you develop a special connection as they share aspects of their life they may never have shared before.

What have you personally learned or gained from being part of the project?

I've learned that each and every one of us has a story to tell. Being an Oral History volunteer has enabled me to meet so many humble, inspirational, and accomplished people in our community, and hear firsthand the experiences that have made them who they are. I also really enjoy being part of such a dedicated, enthusiastic, and supportive team of oral history volunteers.

Through this series, we hope you'll get to know the wonderful team helping preserve Central Otago's voices and stories for future generations. A big thank you to Sue for kicking off our 'Spotlight On' series – and to all our volunteers for the passion and commitment they bring to the project.

CENTRAL OTAGO MUSEUMS TRUST UPDATE

Central Otago Museums Featured in National Taonga Research Project

Clyde, Alexandra, and Cromwell museums are in the spotlight this month as part of a study on how museums navigate the complex cultural and legal responsibilities of taonga Māori repatriation.

Researcher Carly Vevers is completing her Master of Arts in Museum Studies at Massey University. Born in Invercargill and now living in Tauranga with her husband and six-year-old son, Carly has deep connections to Murihiku and Otago through her Kāi Tahu/Kāti Māmoe and European tupuna, who were mutton-birders in earlier times and later sealers, whalers, and goldminers. “Although I call the sunny Bay of Plenty home, down South will always be my Tūrangawaewae,” she says.

Her thesis examines the role of museums under the Protected Objects Act 1975 (POA), with a particular focus on the ‘grey areas’ and ethical dilemmas that arise when caring for taonga Māori. She is especially interested in the Central Otago Taonga Roadshow events, where members of the public were invited to bring in taonga for identification and kōrero.



Researcher Carly Vevers



Dr Gerard O'Regan (left) examining some of the taonga at Cromwell Museum in April

Carly first learned about the roadshow concept while undertaking her first post-graduate paper, *Taonga Tuku Iho*, and learning about the POA. A 2023 newspaper article, about taonga found by a Bluff local and the inaugural roadshow-type event at Te Rau Aroha Marae, caught her attention, in part because of her whakapapa to the marae. She sought out Dr Gerard O'Regan at Tūhura Otago Museum for an interview, and he suggested that she

connect with the Central Otago museums team. Dr O'Regan had introduced the roadshow model to the region and, along with his team, was instrumental in delivering the events.

"I'm hoping case studies like the Central Otago Taonga Roadshows give a 'reality shot' of how museums today are interacting with taonga, how they are supported by others, and how museum workers see the future for museums and taonga," Carly explains. "It's also a chance to shine light on all the issues that arise with this law – a very sensitive and emotionally charged area that public museums are written into and left to navigate."

By documenting Central Otago's approach, Carly hopes her research will provide practical insights and inspiration for other museums across Aotearoa and help ensure that the stories and care of taonga are guided by collaboration, respect, and community connection.

From 8 – 12 April 2025, Central Otago Museums hosted a highly successful Taonga Tūturu workshop series, bringing together museum professionals, community members, and cultural enthusiasts to explore, assess, and celebrate Māori taonga.

What is the Protected Objects Act?

The Protected Objects Act 1975 (formerly The Antiquities Act) was enacted to safeguard culturally significant and valuable objects, particularly those of Māori origin, from theft, damage, or misuse. Its primary purpose is to establish legal protections for objects of historical, cultural, or artistic importance, ensuring their preservation for future generations. The act creates a framework for identifying, registering, and safeguarding protected objects, and it provides authorities with the necessary powers to prevent illegal dealings, such as theft or unauthorized export.

Over the years, the Protected Objects Act 1975 has been instrumental in several high-profile cases involving the recovery and restitution of stolen Māori taonga. It has been used to prevent the sale by overseas auction houses of items deemed to be of great historical significance, including one of Sir Edmund Hilary's watches, and Sir Charles Upham's Victoria Cross and bar, which was considered an object of national significance. Additionally, the act supports efforts to increase public awareness about the importance of cultural heritage, encouraging the responsible collection, trade, and display of protected objects within New Zealand. The Act plays a crucial role in preserving the nation's cultural heritage and protecting its most valuable and irreplaceable artifacts. When the Act was updated in 2005, the maximum fine for infringements was increased from \$2,000 to \$100,000. However, the Act only applies to objects that are fifty years or older.

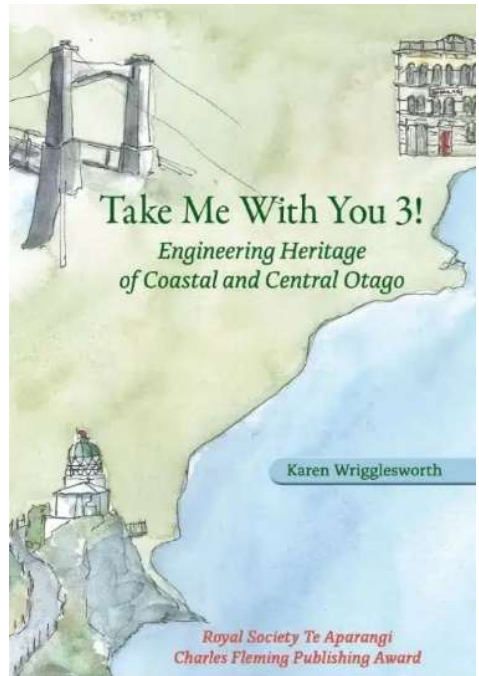
BOOK REVIEW: TAKE ME WITH YOU 3!

Karen Wrigglesworth recently published *Take Me With You 3!*, her third book in a series exploring the world of engineering through a storyteller's lens. Blending her skills as an engineer, writer, and photographer, Karen brings technical stories to life in a way that's accessible and fun. She loved learning how things work, why they were built, and the stories about the people who built and used them. Her books are designed not just to be read, but to be taken along on adventures – encouraging readers of all ages to explore the remarkable, and often unnoticed, feats of engineering that exist all around them.

In *Take Me With You 3! Engineering Heritage of Coastal and Central Otago*, Karen continues her exploration of New Zealand's engineering landmarks. Two of her highlights, while researching this book, were the Golden Progress site near Oturehua and the Northburn Tailings near Cromwell. She also loves to tell stories that are 'hidden in plain sight', like that of the Brandy Hill Water Race.

We all rely on engineering every day but often don't have much understanding about how things work or why they are there. To make the best decisions about incorporating our technical wants and needs into our future life, it makes sense to begin by understanding what we already have and why we have it. Karen hopes that people will enjoy finding out more about these interesting places and the people behind them. They are fascinating stories and deserve to be told.

On Thursday 16 October Karen will be giving a heritage talk at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery in Alexandra (see page 7 for more details).



WIN A COPY OF TAKE ME WITH YOU 3!

Karen is giving away a signed copy of her book! To enter for the chance to win, please email info@heritagecentralotago.org.nz before Friday 10 October with *Take Me With You 3!* in the subject line.

WATER RACES OF CENTRAL OTAGO

Thanks to 19th century ingenuity, rivers run two ways in Central Otago: down the valleys and sideways along the hills. In the 1860s, miners quickly discovered that gold here didn't give itself up easily. Sluicing and sifting at scale required a good supply of water, and most diggings sat high and dry above the rivers. The answer was audacious: thousands of kilometres of hand-cut channels – water races – etched into schist and clay, skirting spurs at a near-level fall so a thin, controlled stream could be delivered to the claim. Over four decades these “ribbons of stone” stitched together creeks, saddles, and basins, and shaped both the landscape and the region's future economy.

Race building was a blend of surveying and stubbornness. Crews pegged a contour line across the country, then dug the races using hand tools and rudimentary techniques. Picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows would have been the most commonly used tools. The materials used depended on the local resources, but were typically a mix of stone, timber, and sheet iron.

The giant among the races is the Mount Ida Water Race that fed the Maniototo diggings around Naseby. It was begun in 1873 and opened on 26 July 1877. Snaking approximately 108 kilometres along the foot of the Hawkdun Range, it is a testament to patient geometry – the gradient is enough to keep the water moving,



Mount Ida Race, adjacent to the Naseby Reservoir

Source: David Hamilton, Early Water Races in Central Otago



*A water race on the Old Woman Range
Source: John Hunt, Landcare Research, Natural Sciences
Image: Library of New Zealand*

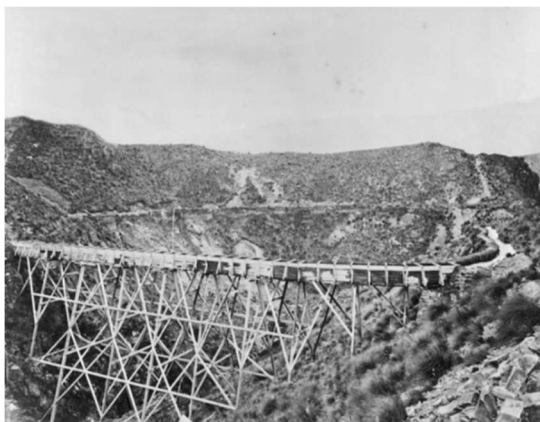
but not fast enough to erode the land. This was achieved through a grade of one in 754. That is, for every 754 horizontal units, the height of the race dropped one unit in elevation. The race became the town's lifeline and, remarkably, elements of the system still supply water to Naseby and surrounding farms.

South of Cromwell, the Carrick Range bears another masterpiece. Built in 1874, the Carrick Water Race hauled water some 34 km from the

Nevis to the Bannockburn Sluicings. The construction of this race was a major accomplishment, considering the particularly difficult terrain. Today, much of the original water race is used for irrigation.

The Bendigo Historic Reserve, approximately 17 km northeast of Cromwell, still contains many relics from its goldmining heyday. In 1875, the Bendigo reef was considered the richest in Otago. Today, the area is littered with water races as well as mine shafts, tunnels, dams, pipelines, stone huts, and stamper batteries. These races delivered water for ground-sluicing the surrounding gravels and fed the stamper batteries that crushed the hard rock.

St Bathans' Blue Lake is an unintended monument to decades of hydraulic elevating at the Kildare claim. Located in what was originally known as Peymans Gully, St Bathans looked out to a 120-metre-high hill. Due to the use of high-pressure water jets, the hill was flattened and, as the mining continued, eventually became a pit. Over time, the pit filled naturally with mineral water and formed what we now know as Blue Lake. Though they are harder to spot, water races were built at St Bathans to feed



*Scandinavian Gold Mining Company's water race
St Bathans, c. 1890*

*Source: Muir and Moodie. Ref: 1/2-053127-F
Alexander Turnbull Library*

the monitors and elevators. These races brought water from the Manuherekia River to St Bathans.

The exact number of water races built in Central Otago during the gold rush era isn't known. What is known is that the combined length of the water races is in the thousands of kilometres, with some individual races stretching as far as 80km. Many of these races, or at least parts of them, are still visible.

After the gold rush ended, many water races reacquired their former importance, but for different purposes. They became vital for the development of Central Otago's fruit orchards and vineyards. Many are still used for irrigation purposes. Some have found an entirely new purpose, being converted into biking or walking/running trails. An example is the *Great Naseby Water Race*, an



Cycling alongside the Mt Ida Water Race
Source: TrailHub

ultramarathon, where runners attempt to run distances between 50km – 200km, part of which is alongside the water race. Others aren't so easily accessible, but are highly visible while engaging in leisure activities, such as the water races in the vicinity of Butchers Creek on the Roxburgh Gorge Trail, or in the Teviot Valley.

Where are the best examples to see water races today?

- **Mount Ida Water Race (Naseby/Maniototo):** Long, clearly visible, and still partly in service. There are multiple access points via Naseby Forest walking and cycling tracks.
- **Carrick Water Race (Bannockburn/Carrick Range):** In addition to the dramatic location and views, explore the associated ruins at Carricktown and the Young Australian Waterwheel. The DOC access tracks make it straightforward to follow sections of the water race line.
- **Bendigo Historic Reserve (Welshtown/Logantown):** See a dense cluster of mining features with race remnants, dams, and battery sites. There are several different tracks available.
- **St Bathans/Blue Lake:** While you can't walk the network of water races here, this area does provide a strong illustration of what the early water race network enabled – hydraulic mining on a world-class scale.

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 for our website or next newsletter to Ann Cowie, Heritage Coordinator: ann@heritagecentralotago.org.nz

Our website

Get the latest news and events at: 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

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