Protecting, preserving & celebrating our heritage

Autumn 2026

The interior of Julia Burke's writing desk

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

Marco Creemers, Jenny Dixon (Chair), Russell Garbutt, Kate Goodfellow, Warwick Hawker, David Hurd, Pene Morris, and Ross Naylor. Ann Rodgers (CODC Liaison). Ann Cowie (Heritage Coordinator).

CONTENTS

Front cover image courtesy of Russell Garbutt

Back cover image courtesy of Debbie Fahey

HERITAGE MATTERS

FROM THE CHAIR

It is a pleasure to be writing to you for the first time as Chair of the Central Otago Heritage Trust. I'm looking forward to working with the Trust, our members, and the many people across the district who care deeply about Central Otago's stories, places, and people. You can learn more about me as I answer the tough questions on page 16!

One thing that has struck me already is the energy around some of our current projects. Our podcast project is a great example. It's progressing well and will open new ways of sharing Central Otago's rich heritage. Integrating components of our Oral History Catalogue with stories from our local museums and producing them in a new format is an exciting challenge. We look forward to welcoming new listeners to our podcasts. See page 15 for an update on the podcast project.

Recently, we had the pleasure of celebrating a significant milestone: publishing the 100th Oral History interview on the Heritage Central Otago website. This special occasion brought together the volunteers who record and prepare these interviews and some of the people who so generously agreed to share their memories and experiences. Those stories are a remarkable taonga, and reaching 100 interviews is a testament to the care, skill, and trust involved on all sides. To give some perspective on the impact of this project, in any given month, the interviews are played up to 350 times, and we've had listeners from 22 countries!

As Chair, I'm keen to see us continue building on this work – supporting volunteers, embracing new ways of sharing heritage, and making sure the stories of Central Otago are recorded and accessible for future generations. Thank you to everyone who contributes, in ways large and small, to making that happen. I'm looking forward to getting to know this community and working with you all over the coming months.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the very sad passing of Laurence Van der Eb in early February. Laurence was a huge advocate of heritage in all its forms, and even in the weeks prior to his passing, he was researching the Sew Hoy family's connection with gold. Our thoughts and sincere condolences are very much with his family.

Jenny Dixon – Chair
Central Otago Heritage Trust

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

A TALE OF A WRITING DESK

Sometimes, when you're flicking through a reference book, something catches your eye – maybe it's a photograph or a paragraph. Then, for some unknown reason, the memory of it lingers in the mind long after the book has been closed.

The *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* was a mammoth publishing feat between 1897 and 1908: its aim was to "place on record plain facts regarding the settlement and progress of the Colony". Volume 4 of the six published volumes covered the Otago and Southland Provincial Districts. Some people paid the publishers to appear in the books, so "the compilers have recognised the advisability of representing the various subjects of notice as they individually appeared to themselves and their friends, in their best and happiest moments, rather than as they might have appeared to their enemies, at their worst."

In one of my readings, I came across the entry for the Ida Valley, and a portrait of a young woman called Julia Burke caught my eye. My curiosity was piqued as to who she was and what happened to her.

Julia Burke, the third and youngest daughter of Mary and John Burke, was born at Port Chalmers in 1871. Julia attended St Mary's School – where she appeared in prize lists – and later Port Chalmers District High School. She was a devout Catholic and sang in the choir of the Port Chalmers Catholic Church. In 1891, she was chosen to make a presentation to the departing parish priest.

Julia Burke as Poolburn School Mistress, c. 1900
Source: Cyclopedia of New Zealand

In 1892, while completing teacher training, Julia took second place in the national science examination for teachers. She passed through the grades and by 1893 was in charge at a country school where "she gave every satisfaction".

In 1894, she was appointed assistant at Poolburn School in the Ida Valley. The Ida Valley School had closed in 1886 and its buildings were moved to Poolburn, where the roll initially grew. However, by May 1894 the roll had declined, and when the

headmaster, Kenneth Phin, resigned, Julia took his place. (Phin left to take up farming on land newly available after the Galloway Run was broken up.)

The school was a wooden building with one room and a porch. It could accommodate 48 pupils; Julia had 34 on the roll, with about 30 being the average number of pupils attending. A five-room residence was provided for the teacher, and the school sat on ten acres of land.

The original Ida Valley/Poolburn School buildings
Source: Hocken Collections

The annual examinations were always positive, with the 1897 report noting that "Miss Burke, as usual, had an excellent percentage, only four partly failing out of a total of about 40." The school committee were extremely satisfied with their teacher and presented Julia with a writing desk in 1899. Portable writing desks were widely used in the nineteenth century and could be considered a type of 'Victorian laptop'. It was made by Scoullar and Chisholm of Dunedin, one of the country's largest furniture manufacturing warehouses.

Julia Burke's writing desk from 1899
Source: Russell Garbutt

The chairman, Donald Nicholson, said, "Parents recognised the progress the school had made under Miss Burke's teaching. Although the presentation itself may be of no great intrinsic value, there are occasions when a trinket may be more valued than a gold ornament under other circumstances. When a school gets an efficient teacher, parents should extend all support and confidence to such a one. I have very much pleasure, then, Miss Burke, on behalf of parents and committee, in presenting you with this very handsome writing desk. I hope you may long find it useful, and that you may prize it sufficiently to hand it down as an heirloom."

The elaborate desk bore the inscription: “Miss Julia Burke, from the parents & committee of the Ida Valley School, as a slight token of [our] appreciation of her service[s] 10/2/99”.

The inscription on the writing desk
Source: Russell Garbutt

As was the custom of the time, women rarely spoke on such occasions, and Irish-born Patrick McDonald, a successful gold miner at Matakanui and later a prime mover in the establishment of the school at Poolburn, thanked the parents on Julia’s behalf.

The Otago Education Board also recognised Julia’s abilities and in 1901 her salary was increased from £85 to £109. By 1903, the school had an average attendance of 23 students, and she was paid £123 12s 6d (about $30,000 in 2026).

By then, Julia was being courted by Irish-born Daniel Kinney, who had been gold mining around Hyde and Nenthorn in the late 1880s. Daniel and his three brothers were part of Hyde’s prominent Catholic population. He had taken up a small grazing run at Tiger Hill, near Chatto Creek, in the late 1890s when portions of Moutere and Matakanui runs were made available. In 1903, Julia (33) married Daniel (37) and she resigned her position at Poolburn School. The couple had no children. They were noted supporters of the work of the Catholic Church in the Manuherekia area. They also contributed to the Irish Relief Fund in the early 1920s. In 1925, Julia was secretary of a committee arranging a function to honour the long service of the local priest.

Julia and Daniel had their challenges at Chatto Creek that included the theft of 40 sheep in 1915 and the rabbit infestations of the 1920s. Daniel passed away in 1927 at the age of 62. Julia continued to run the farm and died, aged 70, at Dunstan Hospital in December 1940.

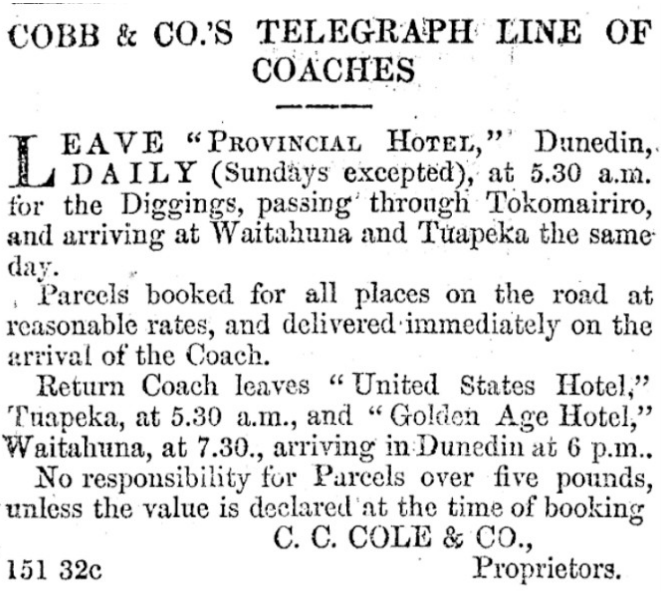
I was delighted to find out that the cottage Daniel and Julia lived in at Chatto Creek still survives – as does the “very handsome writing desk,” presented to Julia in 1899. The desk was passed down and eventually came to Jane Kinney of Alexandra. It remains a treasured reminder of a wonderful teacher whose portrait just happened to be in the Cyclopaedia and inspired this story.

Russell Garbutt, COHT Trustee
Additional material by Jim Sullivan, Historian, Patearoa

EARLY COACHES IN CENTRAL OTAGO

In late 1861, American entrepreneur Charles Cole arrived in Dunedin from Victoria, Australia. Cole brought with him around 50 horses and a collection of wagons, carts, saddles, and passenger vehicles – everything he needed to set up a transport coach business. This would be a similar enterprise to one that had already been operating for nearly a decade on the Victorian goldfields. He chose to use the name Cobb & Co., a brand that was well known in Australia and had already been adopted by several other private operators.

Following the discovery of gold at Gabriel's Gully earlier in 1861, thousands of miners poured into the region. Getting people, supplies, mail, and news from Dunedin to the Tuapeka goldfields was not an easy endeavour; it was a slow and uncomfortable – and often unreliable – journey over rough roads. Existing coaches were heavy and rigid, and unsuited to Central Otago's 'rustic' roads.



COBB & CO.'S TELEGRAPH LINE OF COACHES

LEAVE "PROVINCIAL HOTEL," Dunedin, DAILY (Sundays excepted), at 5.30 a.m. for the Diggings, passing through Tokomairiro, and arriving at Waitahuna and Tuapeka the same day.

Parcels booked for all places on the road at reasonable rates, and delivered immediately on the arrival of the Coach.

Return Coach leaves "United States Hotel," Tuapeka, at 5.30 a.m., and "Golden Age Hotel," Waitahuna, at 7.30., arriving in Dunedin at 6 p.m..

No responsibility for Parcels over five pounds, unless the value is declared at the time of booking

C. C. COLE & CO.,
Proprietors.

151 32c

Advertisement for the new Cobb & Co. coach service
Otago Daily Times, 18 November 1861
Source: Papers Past

Cole introduced a new type of coach: the "Concord". Instead of metal springs, the Concord's body was suspended on thick leather straps, making it lighter and more forgiving on uneven and bumpy tracks. Pulled by teams of around five horses, these coaches could carry up to 16 passengers plus the driver.

On 11 October 1861, the first Cobb & Co. coach set off from Dunedin for Gabriel's Gully. The journey to Tuapeka (renamed Lawrence in 1866), which had previously taken two days, was reduced to nine hours. This impressive reduction in the length of the journey was made possible by the introduction of stables and relays of horses.

Cobb & Co. Concord Stagecoach
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library

Only a few months later, in February 1862, Cole went into partnership with Charles and Henry Hoyt, forming Cole, Hoyt & Co., trading as Cobb & Co. Telegraph Line of Coaches. While the business soon expanded beyond Otago into Canterbury and further afield, Central Otago remained at the heart of its early success.

This new business partnership coincided nicely with the discovery of gold in Dunstan in August 1862, and the Cobb, Hoyt & Co. services were expanded to include a terminus at Dunstan. This journey from Dunedin took a day; an early start of 4 am would see the coach arriving in Dunstan at approximately midnight.

Coach preparing to leave Dunstan (Clyde), c. 1880s
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library

The coaches didn't just carry passengers, supplies, mail, and news; they also moved gold. On days when gold was being transported, five mounted troopers, "all armed to the teeth," accompanied the coach – one as a passenger, two riding in front, and two behind.

The last Central Otago (Queenstown to Lawrence) Gold Escort, Cobb & Co. coach changing horse at Roxburgh, 1901
Source: Hocken Collections

By the 1870s, as more roads were built and existing roads improved, additional coach routes emerged across the country. Soon, the expanding railway network began to take over the main transport routes, and coaches remained primarily to service routes the railway had not yet reached.

The legacy of the coaching era endured, even after trains and later motor vehicles emerged. Many of the routes first forged by Cobb & Co. through Central Otago became the foundations of today's road network. By the 1920s, horse-drawn coaching had largely vanished, but for more than half a century it had been vital to the goldfields and the growth of Central Otago, comfortably and efficiently moving people, goods, information – and gold!

OLD DUNSTAN ROAD: AN EARLY STAGECOACH ROAD

The Old Dunstan Road (also known as the Old Dunstan Trail) is one of New Zealand's longest and oldest historic heritage roads.

Beginning at Clark's Junction (near Middlemarch) and ending at Galloway Flat in the Manukerekia Valley, the road has mostly easy grades, suited for horse-drawn traffic. When climbing the steeper sections, passengers would have been required to alight. When descending, rocks would have been tied to the coach and slung off the back, as a primitive form of braking.

The road was heavily used during the early years of the goldfields. However, this was short-lived. Infrequent use thereafter allowed the road to survive without modifications for modern vehicles, which has resulted in its mostly authentic condition (and eligibility for a large part of the road to be classified as a Historic Place Category 1 with Heritage New Zealand).

Planning and construction of the road began in the late 1850s when pastoralism was in its infancy, and the transportation of wool from isolated inland stations to the coastal transport networks became a necessity. By 1862, Old Dunstan Road connected Dunedin with the then-booming Central Otago goldfields. At that time, it was the most direct route – roughly 170 km – and therefore the preferred line of travel for miners, traders, and transport operators. The downside to the road being the most direct route was that it crossed four mountain ranges (the Lammermoor, Rock and Pillar, Rough Ridge, and Raggedy Ranges). Being a mountainous route meant it avoided water crossings but also meant the road – and its users – was exposed to poor weather, which often made the road impassable.

Old Dunstan Road approaching Poolburn Dam
Source: Heritage New Zealand

Stagecoaches first made the journey from Dunedin to Central Otago via the Old Dunstan Road in November 1862. Coach companies, including early commercial lines operating on behalf of miners and settlers, continued to use the road until 1864, when the combination of harsh weather and the opening of a more sheltered inland route (the Pigroot) provided a less risky option.

Today, nearly 170 years after its construction, much of the Old Dunstan Road's original alignment and character remains. The Heritage New Zealand listing recognises the road's outstanding historical importance in the opening up of Central Otago – particularly during the gold rush and stagecoach era – and for illustrating the challenges of early overland transportation before the advent of rail and modern highways.

CLUTHA DISTRICT'S HISTORIC BLUE SPUR

Exploring neighbouring Clutha District recently brought me to Gabriel's Gully and the fascinating remnants of the once-thriving township of Blue Spur. Looking around at the secluded, peaceful area, it's hard to imagine a time when 500 people lived here, and over 200 children attended the school. In 1864, the settlement was relocated from the flats to the elevated site when the yield of gold (and risk of flooding) was realised, and the gully came to be dominated by the tailings. Blue Spur had two of nearly everything: hotels, butchers, bakers, stores, and churches!

Initially, the townspeople attended church services in canvas tents in Gabriel's Gully until Presbyterian and Methodist churches were built in Tuapeka (now Lawrence) in 1864 and 1865 respectively. They also congregated for worship at the settlement's school until a Methodist Church was built at Blue Spur and dedicated in April 1870. The Presbyterian Church was established soon after in August 1871.

Blue Spur Hotel and Butchers Shop, c. 1870
Source: University of Otago Digital Collections

The school was also a success story. It opened in 1867 with 34 students and initially had one teacher who was assisted by his wife. By 1881, the school employed five teachers and had a roll of 226 students. However, by the end of the First World War, the population of Blue Spur had decreased substantially. Many residents moved to Lawrence or further afield, and the roll dwindled to 30 students. Remarkably for such a small school, three of its former students became Judges of the New Zealand High Court: Mr Justice Tyndall, Mr Justice Christie, and Mr Justice Hay.

Blue Spur Band, formed in 1881, c. 1890
Source: University of Otago Digital Collections

The Blue Spur residents were active and social. Their lives were dominated by gold mining, but they were community-minded and intent on bettering themselves. Among the societies and clubs available at Blue Spur and Tuapeka were: the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Court Star of Tuapeka, the Good Templars, The Ancient Order of Druids, the Hibernian Society, the Blue Spur Mutual Improvement Society, The Blue Spur Total Abstinence Society and Band of Hope, the Quadrille Club, the Blue Spur Fife and Drum Band, and a library committee.

Like the West Coast's Blue Spur (near Hokitika), the origin of Otago's Blue Spur is unknown. *Blue* most likely comes from the colour of the wash-dirt or cemented gravel, which is a deep blue, except near the surface, where it is more of a reddish hue. The early gold miners interpreted this slight colouring to indicate the presence of gold. *Spur* refers to a ridge or tongue of high ground that projects out from a hill, mountain, or main ridge into a valley.

Gabriel's Gully and Blue Spur township, c. 1901
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library

PROTECTING & PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE

A Very Good Life: Te One Wesley Remembers Vallance Cottage

The Oral History Project has recently published an engaging interview with Te One Wesley. In it, volunteer interviewer Raylene Fastier captures his vivid first-hand account of growing up in Alexandra in the mid-twentieth century. Te One's memories of childhood, family, work, and adventure all centre on Vallance Cottage – the small but remarkable mud-brick house that was home to three generations of Te One's family and shaped his early years.

Te One Wesley (son of Hazel Vallance) and Ray Grant (son of May Vallance) outside their grandparents' cottage, which was also home to Hazel and Te One for many years. Source: CODC

Te One came to live at Vallance Cottage at the age of five, when his mother returned to Alexandra to care for her ageing parents. The cottage was built from sun-dried mudbricks by Te One's grandfather Bill Vallance, with help from his children. It was always warm in winter and cool in summer – a detail Te One recalls with nostalgia. The cottage may have been small, but it left a big impression. It was filled with music and visitors; evenings often featured banjo, concertina, and accordion music, played by family members and returned servicemen friends, with young Te One tucked into a corner quietly listening.

The interview paints a detailed picture of everyday life in the 1940s and 1950s. Te One describes a largely self-sufficient household, supported by vegetable gardens, fruit trees, bottling and preserving, rabbit trapping, and hard physical work. He remembers wash days with the copper, baking days that produced unforgettable shortbread, and the routines that shaped life before modern conveniences. School, sport, and early-morning jobs such as working on the milk run also feature, along with the freedom of roaming the town and countryside with cousins and friends.

Listeners will also enjoy Te One's humour and eye for character, particularly in stories about his mischievous grandfather, hard-working mother, a gold mining scheme that came to nothing, and how he and his mate Ray found a big packet of tobacco left behind in a shearer's hut.

At 15, Te One left Alexandra and travelled by train to Auckland to join the Navy. This was the start of a new chapter far from Vallance Cottage, but the resilience,

work ethic, and family support of his childhood stood him in good stead. Looking back, Te One reflects, “Up to 15, I would say that I had a very, very good upbringing.”

Follow this QR code to listen to Te One’s interview.

Celebrating 100 Local Voices Shared with the World

In January, our Oral History volunteer interviewers gathered at Orchard Garden for a special afternoon tea to mark an important milestone: 100 Oral History interviews published online. It was an uplifting occasion, one that reminded me just how much collective effort stands behind this achievement.

COHT Chair Jenny Dixon cutting the cake celebrating 100 published Oral History interviews

Over the past year alone, our volunteers carried out 22 new interviews, contributing to a growing repository that now holds over 130 recordings. Behind every interview lies hours of thoughtful research, pre-interview meetings, building trust, and managing paperwork. Patient and empathetic guidance helps the interviewees recall their memories of events and share their opinions and feelings. These oral histories capture insights and perspectives that cannot be conveyed by photographs or books alone.

Reaching 100 published interviews is significant not only for the volume of work it represents, but also for the way these recordings ensure Central Otago’s voices – rich, personal, and deeply rooted in place – will continue to be heard long after we are gone. People across New Zealand and overseas are already listening, learning, and reconnecting with their own histories through these stories.

Volunteers and COHT Trustees celebrating the Oral History project

Over the past month, recordings in our Oral History catalogue have been played over 270 times. In total, we've had over 4,000 plays. As you might expect, most of our listeners are based in New Zealand, but they aren't just in Central Otago; they are spread throughout the country. We also have a significant number of listeners from Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as from 20 other countries, including Germany, South Africa, and Indonesia.

As I looked around the room during our afternoon tea, I sensed the camaraderie and good humour of the volunteers and felt a deep admiration for the dedication and heart they bring to every story they help to preserve. Without them, there would be no project. Together, we are creating a living record of Central Otago, one story at a time.

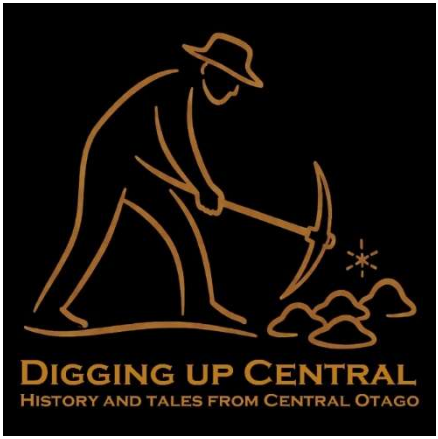
Joanna Leigh, Oral History Manager

Who should we interview next?

Do you have a suggestion for someone whose story we haven't yet captured but absolutely must? Maybe even yourself? We'd love to hear your suggestions. Please visit our website and go to the ***Oral History*** page, where you'll find a form to nominate someone. Or use this QR code.

PODCAST UPDATE

We are very excited to formally introduce our new podcast series, *Digging up Central: History and Tales from Central Otago*. This project is a collaboration between Heritage Central Otago (the Central Otago Heritage Trust) and the Central Otago Museums Trust. Through this collaboration, our goal is to share more of our stories in a different and more widely accessible format. The podcasts will be available wherever you usually access your podcasts – platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts. However, they will also be available on our website.



By developing a podcast series, we have an opportunity to shine a light on Central Otago's interesting stories and history, as well as on some of the fantastic items in our local museums. Where local voices and snippets of stories can further enrich a podcast topic, we will also make use of the recordings held in our Oral History catalogue.

Hyde Railway disaster memorial
Source: NZHistory.govt.nz

Our first podcast is a topic that never fails to capture the imagination – and horror – of Central Otago residents and visitors alike … the Hyde Railway Disaster. In this episode, we bring to life the tragedy that unfolded on the morning of 4 June 1943: we learn how it affected the lives of so many, including the train driver, John Corcoran; we hear from a volunteer at Maniototo Early Settlers Museum regarding a fascinating item they have on display that is directly linked to the Otago Central Railway; we hear directly from a woman who survived the disaster; and we learn of a fascinating twist regarding the last survivor.

You can listen to our podcasts wherever you access your podcasts, or follow this QR code to our website.

TAKE THREE WITH THE NEW CHAIR

Jenny Dixon was elected to the Central Otago Heritage Trust at the AGM in November 2025, and soon after was chosen by the Board as the new Chair. We asked Jenny about her interest in the role, and heritage in Central Otago more generally. This is what she had to say.

What attracted you to the role of Chair of the Heritage Trust?

I was attracted to the role of Chair as an opportunity to contribute my expertise and commitment to heritage protection and promotion in a very special part of the country. Heritage, both natural and built, is a critical element of Central Otago's identity, locally and internationally. It is exciting to be part of a collective effort that promotes many diverse aspects of local heritage across the region.

Jenny and Doug, Duffers Saddle

Heritage Central Otago is also undertaking its own activities, including recording interviews with people across the region. We have just reached a milestone of 100 oral histories online. These rich and personal stories of people who lived in and shaped this place will be a legacy for generations to come. And there are more exciting projects in the pipeline.

Is there a place or landscape in Central Otago that has piqued your interest in heritage?

Since arriving in Cromwell, I have been exploring some of the historic gold mining areas in the region. Last summer, I travelled to the Serpentine Scenic Reserve to visit the last remaining building, which was used as a church. I was struck by the barren nature of the extraordinary landscape. It is astounding to think that a functioning settlement of more than 200 people managed to live there in the 1870s in such harsh conditions. Even now, 150 years later, it is not easy making your way there in a four-wheel drive vehicle. Looking after these remnants of past activities is an important part of preserving the history that has shaped the early development of this region in so many ways.

Jenny on Old Dunstan Road near Middlemarch Feb 2026

What do you think are the key heritage issues facing Central Otago at present?

Since 2015, Central Otago has been an attractive place to live, work, and play, and is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. Lifestyle and recreation pursuits, the ability to work remotely, employment and business opportunities, and enhanced regional connectivity are all significant factors in encouraging more people to settle here. This expansion inevitably exerts pressure on some of the iconic features that attract tourists and residents, highlighting the need to ensure heritage is a strategic priority in the ongoing economic and social development of the region.

Therefore, I see two key issues for heritage. First, it is imperative that preserving and promoting our heritage remains a priority as population growth intensifies and stretches the capacities of both physical and social infrastructure.

Second, the outcomes of Local Government and Resource Management Act reforms may well have implications for heritage protection in terms of both provisions and funding. These reforms will likely take some time to work through, so we will have to wait and see what transpires. The Trust will take every opportunity to lodge submissions when public consultation is sought in the course of legislative changes.

Jenny visiting the historic Teviot Woolshed Feb 2026

TEVIOT PIONEER LEGACIES

Cushion: Handmade by Mrs F.T.D. Jeffery
Source: Teviot District Museum

This striking cushion was handmade by Mary Maud Louisa Jeffery (known as Maud) in 1910.

The front of the cushion consists of a fine cross-stitched background in black thread. The darker leaves are cross-stitched in cotton thread, while the lighter-coloured leaves feature embroidery with very intricate beadwork, which was popular at the time. The various flowers on this cushion appear to have been cross-stitched on the canvas, then appliquéd onto the ground canvas with substantial filling, as they are very prominent, up to 10 mm in height. The back is plain black velvet. This is a very solid cushion!

Mrs F.T.D. Jeffery was born Mary Maud Louisa Beighton in 1873. She was nearly six years old when her father died in 1879, leaving behind his widow Mary, three daughters, and a son. Her father was John Beighton, the first mayor of Roxburgh, a founding businessman and proprietor of a store that serviced many of the town's essential needs, an initiator of many founding organisations, and the owner of about 50 sections in Roxburgh.

Maud's widowed mother was so traumatised by the death of her husband that her four children had to be cared for by someone else while she returned to Dunedin for a short time. She remarried in 1883, and in 1884 she died, reportedly in childbirth, aged only 35 or 36 (Maud was only 11!). Mary's second husband, Charles Cooper, played a great role in the raising of the four young Beighton children. Maud's mother is buried with her second husband in Roxburgh Cemetery, not far from the grave of John Beighton.

In 1898, Maud married Frederick Thomas Duke Jeffery, the local pharmacist; some of his descendants continued the business in Roxburgh from 1905 until 2000. Maud and Frederick had four children, Geoffrey, Eric, Brian, and John, and their descendants are still prominent in the Teviot area. During World War II, John was a pharmacist with the 3rd General Hospital in the Middle East and was invalided back to New Zealand, where he died aged 27.

Maud's sister, Ada, who had lived with her for many years, died aged 40 in 1915. The youngest sister, Lottie, married Dr John Henderson and lived in Wellington, where she founded the Female Prisoners' Welfare Society (1919), the Women's Service Guild (1929), and the Wellington Housewives' Association (1946), as well as being involved in several other service organisations.

Maud was a Sunday School teacher for many years and a dedicated worker for the Roxburgh Anglican Church, which sits on land donated by her father. She was also a founding member of the Roxburgh Plunket Society.

The Jefferys were both keen horticulturalists and kept a wonderful collection of plants, so it is little wonder that her handiwork reflects this great interest. Their son Brian was a successful botanist who discovered a rare species of *Veronica* (Hebe): 300 of these were planted on the rocky face adjoining the west side of the Hydro Dam. According to Glad McArthur, the first grapevine in Roxburgh was grown in the old Beighton garden.

Maud died in 1954, aged 82. She had a wonderful collection of early items and had an ambition to have an Early Settlers Museum in Roxburgh! Many other items from the Beighton and Jeffery families feature in the Teviot District Museum's collection.

Barbara Fraser, Volunteer, Teviot District Museum Inc.

Visit Roxburgh's museums:

Teviot District Museum, 11 Abbotsford Street
Lodge Museum, 77 Scotland Street

Open Saturday and Sunday 2:00 to 4:00 pm

Closed through winter, but call-outs are available all year round

Email teviotmuseum@gmail.com for contact phone numbers or more information

SPOTLIGHT ON: VOLUNTEER JENNY STEPHENS

In February, we spoke to Oral History volunteer Jenny Stephens about what drew her to the project and why this work matters.

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

Having belonged to the Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust for many years, I relished the information that came to me regarding Central Otago's fascinating history. When I saw a notice asking for volunteers, I thought to myself, "I can do that". My career had given me interviewing experience, and this gave me the confidence to put my hand up.

Can you share a memorable moment or story from an interview you've done?

They've all been fascinating, full of highs, lows, and laughter. Snow, storms, floods, and issues with stock are all common. The resourcefulness of the people in the early days was amazing!

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

I'm impressed with how open and honest people are with someone they've just met, and how willing they are to share their stories. After we've finished, they often visibly relax, and it's not uncommon for them to tell me something interesting that didn't come out in the interview. I usually say, "Just hold on a minute. I'm going to turn the recorder back on and ask you to tell me that again".

Why are oral histories important for Central Otago's heritage?

The stories told in authentic voices are very convincing – it's as though they are talking to you directly. To hear the variety of accents (which were common in the early days, based on where the family originated from) enhances the authenticity of the oral histories. Many of the terms people used, and the chores they carried out, are not ones we are familiar with today.

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

Whenever I meet any of the people I've interviewed, it's like meeting an old friend. Of course, I knew some of them before the interview, but for those who were new to me, I now feel that there's a special bond, and I believe this is true for them also.

HERITAGE TALKS UPDATE – HAAST'S EAGLE

Award-winning author and zoologist Quinn Berentson returned to Clyde Museum in January to deliver two talks on New Zealand's now-extinct predator, the Haast's Eagle. This was an excellent sequel to the talks Quinn delivered last year on the moa, the bird that was hunted to extinction, which caused the Haast's Eagle to become a "predator without prey". Quinn's talks coincided with Clyde Museum's current exhibition, *Giant Birds of our Southern Land* (available to visit until the end of April).

The Haast's Eagle, which is generally believed to have become extinct 700 years ago, could weigh up to 18 kg and had a wingspan of up to 3 m. Enormous as this sounds, the wingspan was relatively small compared to its body size. DNA analysis shows the Haast's Eagle was related to Australia's *Little Eagle* (one of the smallest eagles in the world).

An artist's impression of the Haast's Eagle
Source: Katrina Kenny (Artist)

Following its arrival in New Zealand, the *Little Eagle* underwent a rapid transformation (over 2 million years!) to adapt to its new environment, in a process termed *island gigantism,* which enabled it to tackle its new giant prey: the moa. The Haast's Eagle was believed to have attacked like an eagle but fed like a vulture. One of the more unsettling facts shared by Quinn was the estimation that the Haast's Eagle attacked with the force of a cement block (one that had huge, sharp talons) falling 8 stories!

Several factors, including the hunting of the moa, are thought to have brought the Haast's Eagle into contact with humans and ultimately led to its extinction. When this happened is unknown. However, in the 1860s, a pair of giant birds were killed by explorer Charlie Douglas near Landsborough, West Coast. Douglas described these birds as having wingspans measuring 2.02 m and 2.54 m. Considering Douglas' solid reputation and trustworthiness as a surveyor, it has been hypothesised that he may have shot two Haast's Eagles. And, not just any two, but the last two remaining Haast's Eagles.

You can buy Quinn's award-winning book, *Moa: The life and death of New Zealand's legendary bird*, directly from him (email Quinn.Berentson@op.ac.nz) or follow the QR code to buy it online.

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 by following this QR code:

Our newsletter

You can find archives of our quarterly newsletter in the 'Library' section (under the 'About Us' dropdown box) of our website.

Follow us on Facebook

@heritagecentralotago

OUR SUPPORTERS

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

The old Bank of New Zealand, Clyde

HERITAGE
CENTRAL OTAGO

info@heritagecentralotago.org.nz
www.heritagecentralotago.org.nz