

The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust Newsletter

August 2021



Opihi Riverbank Native Planting 28 August **Meet at Alma Cottage 10 am. 2033 Fairlie- Tekapo Road**

We have plants ready to start on native revegetation of a segment of the upper Opihi River. Bring your spade and good weather - some refreshments provided. Our aim is to improve water quality, biodiversity and showcase the beautiful local awa or river for a public walking track loop connecting with the existing Heritage Walk.

Trees for Canterbury and Church Garden

A huge thank you to the wonderful Trees for Canterbury organisation for their donation of 119 native plants for the church garden. They have supported us in 2003 for the garden and again in 2005 with 300 cabbage trees to establish 'Cabbage Tree Flat' an old name for the township area.

Thanks to Waka Kotahi for Tree Work

A tall leaning pine tree threatening the church was felled recently and a couple of others topped resulting in a great heap of mulch. This was spread on the church garden and native tree area by the old Nuffield tractor and mulch team, thank you to Joyce and John Kelly for their assistance.

The South Canterbury Flood of 1868

(edited by his descendant John Vickers, and abridged. The full version will be placed in the Musterer's Hut Book).

John Rainbow Stansell recalled this catastrophic flood from when he held the Royal mail contract from Timaru to Tekapo.

He is also known for holding the license at the Burkes Pass Accommodation House for 5 years from 1869.

"On February 3rd 1868, I crossed Edwards Creek going to Lake Tekapo in the morning from Burkes Pass, and the creek was about up to the horse's knee. When I came back at 1 pm. the water was well up to the horse's side and running very swiftly. It rose during the night and washed away two Bullock Drays, one loaded with iron fence standards, and the other with number 8 fencing wire. Both were washed two miles down the creek, and they never found any of the bundles of standards and only half of the bundles of fencing wire. What was most remarkable was the creek had stationary banks about 8 feet high and about 2 chains apart.

I stayed at Burkes Pass that night and started on Tuesday morning for Timaru with the mails.

But for a Maori named Napoleon, who was on his way home to Temuka, who told me he did not think I would get through, for all the rivers and creeks were" terrible to look at and worse to ford" I do not think I would have got through that day. There were seven culverts between Albury and the Cave and six of them were completely washed away, and all the earth covering them, and they had 10 to 15 ft of earth covering the culverts.



On arriving with the mail at Pleasant Point, two of the Parr brothers came up to the Post Office in their shirts and trousers. They were flour Millers and had a windmill at Timaru, and a farm near Pleasant Point. During the night their house had been washed away [the house was small in those days] and they were on one side of it all night. They were employing a married couple named Slater, and before I left he came up and reported the house he occupied had been washed away and broken up, but he had managed to get his wife and five children on to one side and used it as a raft, but the wife and the five children were swept off and drowned and he could not save any of them. The Maori Napoleon left me at Pleasant Point and went and assisted several from being drowned at Temuka, but the poor fellow took cold and died. Mrs Martin who was at our wedding a fortnight before the flood, and who kept a general store, left it when the water started to come in the store, carrying her baby, which was washed out of her arms and drowned and also her eldest son and her father were both drowned. The Levels Station had 60,000 sheep washed away and drowned, most of them thrown up on Ninety Mile Beach. I shall never forget the sight of the beach, with its wreckage together with dead sheep, cattle, horse, pigs and sheaves of wheat and oats from the farm where most of the harvest was in stook, ready for stacking. Thus a fortnight after our wedding, my wife had a very narrow escape of being a widow."

Artwork Treasure Re-emerges

A significant watercolour sketch by Edmund Norman in 1872 entitled 'Birds Eye View of Burkes Pass' with additions by F.J.Hayman in 1904, has come to light in the Mackenzie District Archive. Edmund Norman is well known now as a very skilled draughtsman, employed by the New Zealand Company as an apprentice surveyor in 1841 and later professional artist capturing landscape in the Mackenzie District the 1860s and 70s, while working on various stations including Sawdon at the time of his death in 1875. His accurate and highly detailed work was added to in 1904 by Frederick James (Jim) Hayman, a teacher at Burkes Pass School between 1902 to 1904. He has added all the buildings present in 1904 in incredible tiny detail onto the panorama together with areas of vegetation, fencing and a few cattle. Joyce Kelly remembers it hanging in the Burkes Pass Hotel foyer in her childhood. The sketch is suffering from age and chemical degradation from acidic backing materials so has been taken to Lynne Campbell, art conservator to see if it can be stabilised for the future.



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