

The Coastal Journey



An historic and scenic journey
along the coast of Westland

Mark Pickering

This Edition

This book was originally published in 1993 as *The Southern Journey*, a study of the historic travelling routes along the coast of Westland from Farewell Spit to Milford Sound. This edition is in digital format only (PDF file) and incorporates new corrections and revisions. There is no index.

I've kept the history but improved the access content, adding maps and photos, thereby hopefully giving people more of a visual insight into this magnificent coastline and enabling them to retrace the footsteps of the past travellers for themselves.

This has led to a title change, but in many respects the book has stayed true to its origins. All the people profiles, historical overviews and information supplements have been retained. Some of that information has been put in other places to make the text more readable or relevant.

It is important to realise that this book has not been edited by anyone else but myself, so mistakes and duplication of material are inevitable, and all errors are regretted.

There is always a danger in reprinting a book after 14 years, it might have lost its relevance, but there still seems to be little historical information available in print on the West Coast. So this book fills a gap for the small (no let's say select!) number of people interested in the subject.

People who wish to offer corrections or additions are welcome to email me at:

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'If you know something that is not as it should be, and grumble in the background instead of coming forward, any such error passing into history becomes your responsibility' A. M. Isdale

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Also by Mark Pickering

101 Great Tramps in New Zealand

202 Great Walks

Daywalks on the West Coast

The Colours: the search for payable gold on the West Coast from 1858 to 1864

Stepping Back: exploring South Island history

A Trampers Journey

Huts

Brief Biography

Mark Pickering was born in England in 1953 and after serving his apprenticeship as a letterpress compositor and linotype operator, emigrated to New Zealand in 1974. He gained a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies and his interest in tramping led to the publication of several tramping and walking guide books from 1986 to 2010. Lately his passion has shifted towards history and he continues to persevere with a writing lifestyle that remains satisfying, if unremunerative.

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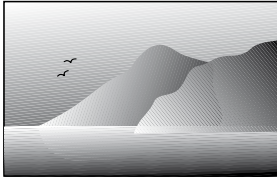
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Chronology

- 1300-1400 First Maori exploration and settlements
- 1642 Abel Tasman first sighted land in Paparaoa region and sailed up the coastline
- 1770 Captain James Cook sailed up West Coast, but didn't see Mount Cook
- 1810 Sealers marooned for four years on Open Bay Islands, Jackson Bay
- 1827 Dumont D'Urville sailed along coastline
- 1836 Te Puoho's war raid from Golden Bay to Southland via the Haast Pass.
- 1846 Heaphy and Brunner travelled with Maori guides down coast to Taramakau River and returned
- 1846 Brunner travelled down the Buller River to Paringa with Maori guides
- 1857 Leonard Harper travelled over the Harper Pass with Maori guides
- 1857 Seven whalers from a shipwreck trekked from Jackson Bay to Collingwood
- 1860 James Mackay purchased the West Coast from the Maori for £300
- 1861 Reuben Waite set up as storekeeper on the Buller River
- 1862 Charles Money and mate were the second Europeans across Harper Pass
- 1863 First European crossing of Haast Pass by Julius von Haast and party
- 1863 Whitcombe and Lauper crossed the Whitcombe Pass
- 1864 Reuben Waite sets up store on Grey River
- 1864 Maori prospectors, Smart and Hunt found payable gold in the Greenstone River, near Kumara
- 1864 Hokitika gold rush.
- 1865 Okarito gold rush
- 1866 Albert Hunt's duffers rush to Bruce Bay
- 1866 Charleston gold rush
- 1867-68 Inland Pack Track cut
- 1874 Karamea Special Settlement established
- 1875 Jackson Bay Special Settlement established
- 1878 Richard Seddon, Member of Parliament
- 1960 Haast Pass road completed through to Haast township
- 1965 Knights Point road completed, linking Haast and Otago with Westland

Prologue



As a trumper it has long interested me how the early Maori and European travellers got around the landscape.

On the West Coast small boat journeys are hazardous so inevitably the early nineteenth century traveller has to slog it out on the land – and such a land! These travellers were obliged to use the coastline as their highway, dodging around headlands, wading deep rivers, scrambling over boulders. No tracks, no bridges, little chance of being rescued, living off the land as you go... few people today would survive under these conditions.

It was exciting travel, and we can still experience this excitement for ourselves, for much of the West Coast shoreline is remarkably untouched. You can step back 150 years just from getting out of your car.

With these thoughts in mind, I thought it would be intriguing to take an historical journey along the coast from Farewell Spit to Milford Sound. How does the coast look today? What difficulties did the early travellers overcome? Can we still follow their trails?

This book is not intended as a systematic history, but a taste of the times.

I have included information sections on what clothes the early travellers wore, the sort of food they ate, the stories they told. Short biographies highlight important or interesting personalities. In this new edition I have added a substantial number of photos and maps, so that a scenic journey can be enjoyed by the armchair explorer.

But I hope this book inspires you to get out there. Many of the old pack tracks and coastal trails have been ‘done up’, making them accessible for almost anyone of walking ability. Certain areas do require tramping experience and this is indicated in the text. Canoes can sometimes be a help in exploring some of the old travellers routes.

In these well-described days, I feel it is important to leave some sense of discovery for the next traveller.

There is nothing quite so rewarding as to do a bit of part-time exploring. Suddenly rounding a headland and finding an unexpected landscape, and feeling that moment of genuine excitement when you can imagine that few other people have been in this place before.

There are still many pieces of coast I would like to visit, for the most part empty coastlines, except that now, as well as observing the lone basking seal and the strutting gull, in my mind's eye I see the ghostly figures of early travellers tramping slowly along, backs bent, their footprints being erased by the sea.



Acknowledgements

There is a wealth of historical material available on the West Coast. Phillip Ross May's *The West Coast Gold Rushes* I used again and again, and his scholarship is awesome. Barry Brailsford *The Greenstone Trails* was valuable for the travelling customs of the early Maori, and Andy Dennis's book *The Paparua Guide* was very handy for that section of coast. *Mr Explorer Douglas* (ed. John Pascoe) was essential reading and I have quoted from Douglas liberally. Pascoe's scholarship skills also cropped up in *The Haast is in South Westland* and *Over the Whitcombe Pass* by Jakob Lauper. For the Martins Bay area, John Hall-Jones book *Martins Bay* was essential.

Leaving scholarship aside, several books on 'atmosphere' stood out. Heaphy's account (most easily accessed through Nancy Taylor's editing *Early Travellers in New Zealand*), Charles Money's *Knocking About in New Zealand*, Arthur Dobson's *Reminiscences* and George Preshaw's *Banking Under Difficulties* are raw, racy and colourful.

Newspapers of the time, such as the *West Coast Times*, and the *Grey River Argus* were enlightening and delightful to read. The Canterbury University Library has 1865-1866 of the *West Coast Times*, and the Hokitika Museum has a complete run of the *West Coast Times* in original and micro-film versions.

I wish to acknowledge the help of the staff in the New Zealand room of the Christchurch Library, and also the staff of the Hokitika Museum. Thanks also to the Alexander Turnbull Library for permission to use the front cover picture of two swaggers, and also for access to the C. E. Douglas papers and the various extracts quoted.

Of course there is always unfinished business in a history, and in material terms there is almost as much printed matter that I haven't read as material I have – but one has to stop somewhere.

A book is a composite of different inputs and there are many people I talked to in relation to some area of research that were more than happy to spare the time. For the history side of it, Jim Park, Ron Searle, Trish McCormack, Maurice Tipping, Claudia Landis, Paul Madg-

wick, Dorothy Fletcher, Julia Bradshaw, Robert Long, Murray Gunn and Les Wright all gave pertinent historical assistance.

I would also like to thank various friends who were happy to follow my current mania in exploring isolated corners of Westland: Kate McLaren, Sven Brabyn and Nic Bishop. All textual errors are mine but for people who looked over the text and made various suggestions I would like to thank Barbara Brown, Claudia Landis and Paul Madgwick.

I also want to thank two unknown individuals who unintentionally whetted my historical appetite. A farmer in Haast who gave me a lift and told me he was one of the last men to take cattle through on the Haast-Paringa track in 1959.

Then there was an old lady who boarded the Railways bus at Kumara in about 1986, and as we were ascending the Otira Gorge, tapped me assertively on the knee and said surprisingly:

‘Young man, I can remember when I sat beside my father, as he drove the horse coaches up here’.



Chapter 1

Farewell Spit
&
Whanganui
Inlet





Introduction

Some people might argue that Farewell Spit isn't even part of the West Coast, and they may have a point. But it was for some time a crucial entry point to the West Coast, for few people in the 1850's — Maori or European — crossed the dangerous mountain passes.

Food sources in the mountains were scarce, or non-existent, whereas along the coast there were always some sort of food, whether it was nesting birds, shellfish, seals, penquins, or eels in the river mouths and estuaries.

The section of coast from Farewell Spit down to Kahurangi Point, is simply magnificent and can still be reached in many places.

Farewell Spit — Tuhuroa

On a large-scale map of New Zealand, Farewell Spit looks like a giant kiwi's beak, curving for 30km and enclosing Golden Bay.

In geological terms the spit is a consequence of debris flowing out of the West Coast rivers: the lighter sands are carried by currents along to the top of the South Island, and one branch turns into the shallow enclave of Golden Bay dragging its 'tail' of sand behind. The spit appears to be widening rather than lengthening, some 3.4 million cubic metres of material being deposited each year.

There is extensive evidence of Maori occupation and in 1853, at the age of 22, James Mackay took up the Cape Farewell sheep and cattle run in Golden Bay. Initially the run was around 1500 acres, and Mackay leased thousands more, including Farewell Spit.

The extensive network of tidal wetlands provides an immense food source, making the spit so important for birdlife — and it must have attracted the Maori as well.

The sheer number of birds is hard to grasp: up to 20,000 bar-tailed godwits and 25,000 lesser knots (both nest in Siberia, some 12,000 kilometres away) and many other wading species with such curious names as the Mongolian dotterel, wrybill, little whimbrel, grey-tailed tattler, banded dotterel and turnstone.

These birds live according to the tides: as the mudplain is exposed by the falling tide the birds flock to feed; as



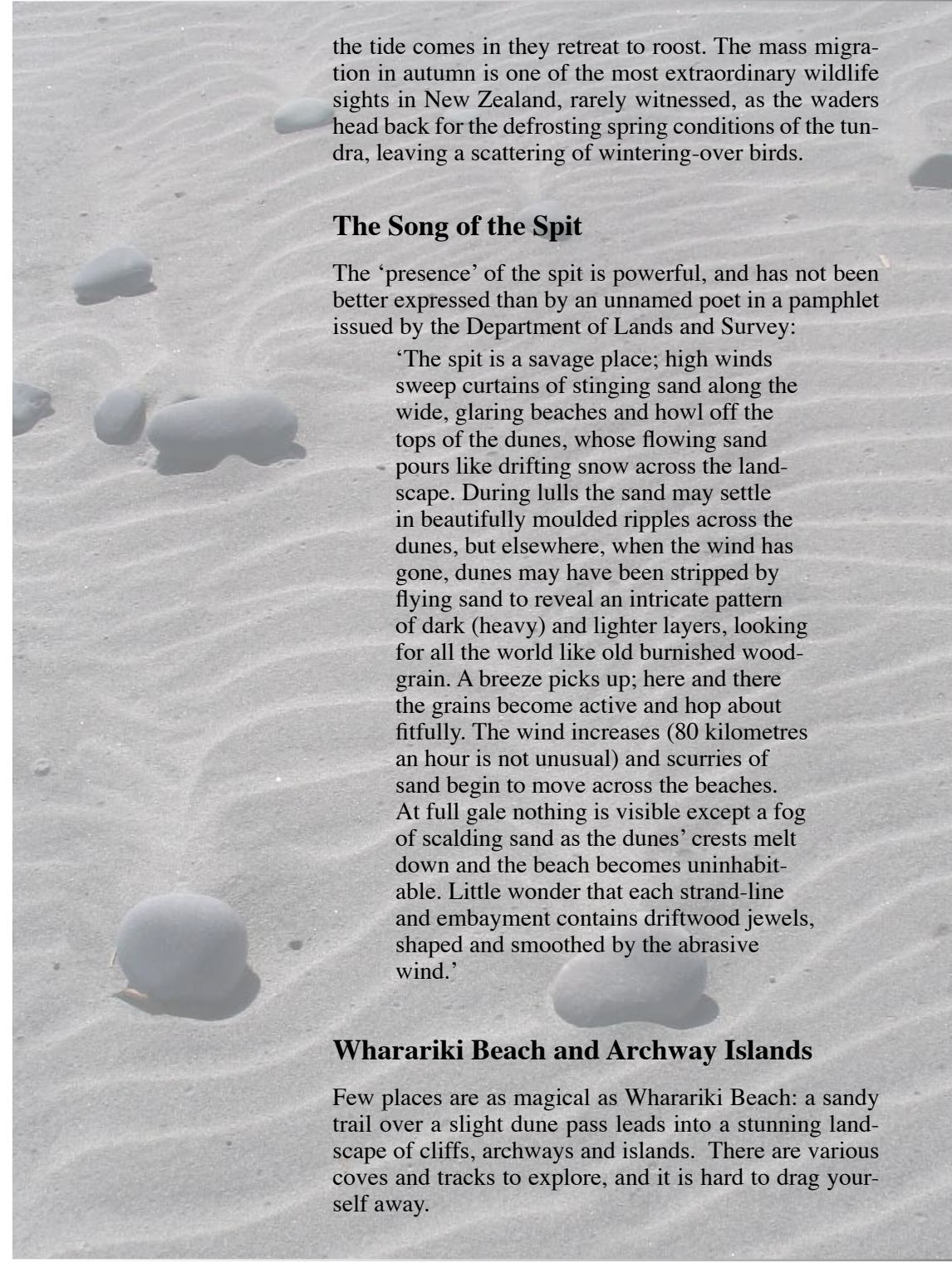
Farewell Spit Access

To Fossil Point 1 hour return; Fossil Point circuit 1 hour return; Old Man Peak 2 hours return. Remember, this is a working farm park, and care should be taken not to disturb stock. Walks may be closed during lambing in September/October.

At the visitor centre there is a cafe, toilets, viewing telescope, information boards and carpark. On a fine day you can see Mount Taranaki, 144km away, from the hilltop behind the centre. The cafe is closed in winter.



Two oystercatchers patrolling the beach at Farewell Spit, looking towards Pillar Point and Cape Farewell, the northernmost point of the West Coast.



the tide comes in they retreat to roost. The mass migration in autumn is one of the most extraordinary wildlife sights in New Zealand, rarely witnessed, as the waders head back for the defrosting spring conditions of the tundra, leaving a scattering of wintering-over birds.

The Song of the Spit

The ‘presence’ of the spit is powerful, and has not been better expressed than by an unnamed poet in a pamphlet issued by the Department of Lands and Survey:

‘The spit is a savage place; high winds sweep curtains of stinging sand along the wide, glaring beaches and howl off the tops of the dunes, whose flowing sand pours like drifting snow across the landscape. During lulls the sand may settle in beautifully moulded ripples across the dunes, but elsewhere, when the wind has gone, dunes may have been stripped by flying sand to reveal an intricate pattern of dark (heavy) and lighter layers, looking for all the world like old burnished wood-grain. A breeze picks up; here and there the grains become active and hop about fitfully. The wind increases (80 kilometres an hour is not unusual) and scurries of sand begin to move across the beaches. At full gale nothing is visible except a fog of scalding sand as the dunes’ crests melt down and the beach becomes uninhabitable. Little wonder that each strand-line and embayment contains driftwood jewels, shaped and smoothed by the abrasive wind.’

Wharariki Beach and Archway Islands

Few places are as magical as Wharariki Beach: a sandy trail over a slight dune pass leads into a stunning landscape of cliffs, archways and islands. There are various coves and tracks to explore, and it is hard to drag yourself away.



Wharariki Beach Access

30 minutes walk one way from carpark to beach. Full circuit walk (which is the best) is 2-3 hours



Wharariki Beach and Archway Island

Port Pupunga to Whanganui Inlet

In the nineteenth century a well used Maori trail went over the low saddle from Pakawau in Golden Bay to Whanganui Inlet. The Maori usually paddled the inlet and picked up another trail at the south end which lead through the hills and along the limestone cliffs to the coast at Hapu Stream.

In 1846 Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner (led by Maori guides), were the first European trampers on this route, and at the Whanganui Inlet came up against the Chief Te Niho, who was not to happy to see them continue.

‘The old fellow received us running up and down at the water’s edge and flourishing his tomahawk without any apparent purpose other than to appear a person of some consequence, and perhaps in some degree to intimidate us. On hearing that we were going to Kawatiri [Buller], he at once began to bluster, and declared that we should not go a step further, but stay until he chose that we should return. We had no right he said, to undertake the journey without his permission. He was chief of Wanganui, and the whole of the coast beyond was his, and he must have much money before he would allow us to proceed’.

Early Travellers in New Zealand (1959)
edited by Nancy Taylor.

Te Niho was a ‘lieutenant’ of Te Rauparaha, and conquered the West Coast in the late 1820’s. Heaphy and Brunner bribed the chief with tobacco and passed on.

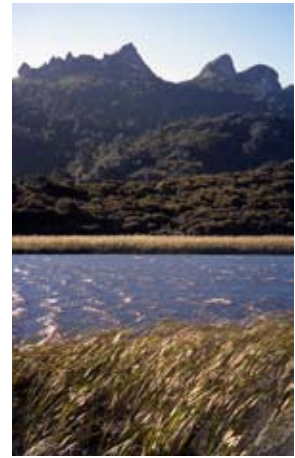
Whanganui Inlet Access

The modern road around Whanganui Inlet is one of the most remote roads in the South Island, and crosses several distinctive causeways over tidal side-creeks. There is no other place in New Zealand with such a strange roadway.

The sheer power of the twice daily tidal surge in and out is easily seen from any one of the causeway bridges, such as the Wairoa River. The Wairoa is an excellent we paddle in a canoe.



Low tide at Whanganui Inlet exposes huge areas of mudflats, scenically appealing, as long as you don't have to walk across them.



This photo was taken in the 1980's and shows 'Echo Point', although someone has painted 'out of order' of the pole. The site is not currently signposted so there's no way to test whether the echo really has gone!

Gold in the Whanganui

In the early 1860's gold was discovered in the Anatori River region and the old Maori trail from Port Pūpunga quickly became thick with diggers.

The Whanganui Inlet was famous for it's mud, for without a canoe there was little choice but to wade the inlet at low tide, a distance of about nine miles.

‘Oh, the mud, the beautiful mud. Up to our waists in slush and mud we waded, the wind whistling in our teeth. For five long weary hours we ploughed on through it, no stopping, no rest, for the tide was coming in fast, and a few minutes delay meant a night on the cold shore of what in a few hours would be a vast inland lake’.

The geological survey map of 1922 still shows the track on the mud flats. It meets the coast at Paturau, follows along the land edge and finally stops just after Sandhill Creek.

At the southern end of the inlet in the 1860's there was an accommodation house.

‘In the early days I have seen some rough and primitive places supposed to supply food and lodging for the public, but this one stood on its own and requires special mention. It was a large Maori whare with a chimney at one end and a door at the other with a bare ground floor. When we arrived here the only food was small potatoes, and the price of a meal was 1/6 [one shilling and sixpence] if they cooked them, and 9d if you cooked them yourself. In the refreshment line there was a liquid. I do not know the composition but it was called ‘Rum’.

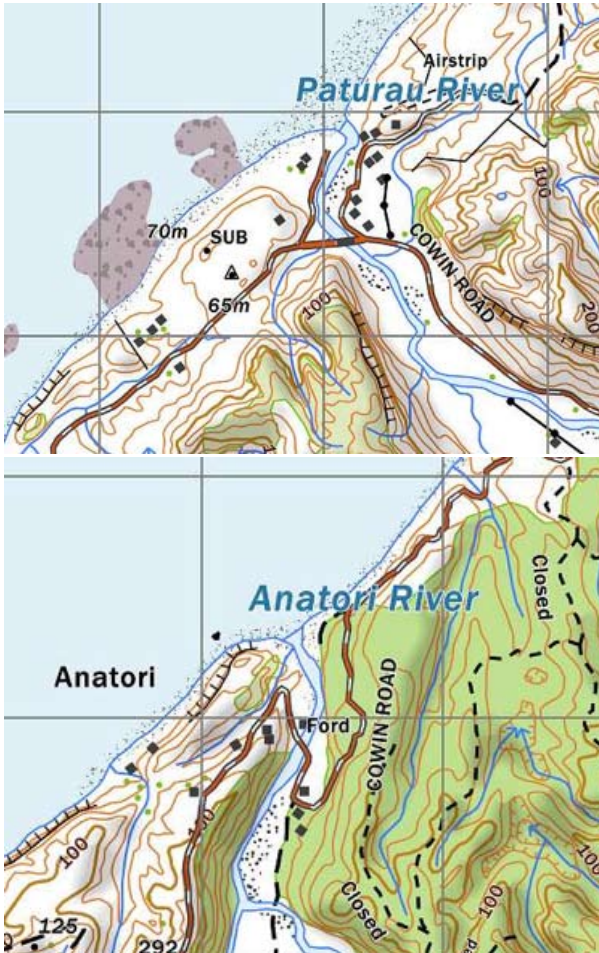
After the inlet, the Maori trail wound along inland to Paturau, and then followed the beach down to the Anatori River. During the 1860's and 70's the river mouth fairly bustled with supply vessels, bringing all the bits and pieces needed to keep up to 500 diggers working in this area alone. The Paturau-Taitapu-Anatori region gained a general nickname, after one of the mines there, the ‘golden blocks’.

Paturau and Anatori Access

Eventually the road reaches the coast again at Paturau and you can drive down to a coastal reserve. There are some attractive limestone formations at the Paturau river-mouth, and you can still follow the old Maori beach trail from Paturau to the Anatori River mouth along the shoreline

The road rambles down to the windswept Anatori River, where there is a rough and ready camping area (small charge applies) and a deep ford, which is impassable for normal cars.

A four-wheel drive vehicle can cross the Anatori River ford and continue 4 km further to the Turimawiri River ford. People more usually take quad bikes from here along the beach, or walk.



Limestone formations on Paturau beach.



Big River

This ford gave Heaphy and Brunner considerable trouble in 1846, but the Maori guides found a ford ‘up to their throats’ for about 200 yards, taking two trips to get everything across.

They stayed in a cave or rock overhang about a mile south of the river. The lagoon was obviously full at this time and Heaphy learned that Richard Barrett got a small cutter into the ‘harbour’ when on a sealing voyage about 1835. Barrett later went on to establish Wellington’s first hotel.

Kahurangi Point and Lighthouse

Dan Moloney in *Maori Nomenclature in the Buller County* (1926) gives a translation of Kahurangi as ‘blue skies’.

‘Maori canoe voyagers coming from Wanganui, Wellington, Nelson and Marlborough, endeavoured to make landfall at Kahurangi. The climate from Kahurangi to Karamea is a temperate one and the Kahurangi landfall was always associated in the experience of the voyagers with blue skies’.

He rejects ‘kahu’ hawk ‘rangi’ sky, or that it was named after a certain light coloured greenstone, and suggests the full name was ‘Te Kahu-O-te-Rangi’.





Big Biver is no marked on the map but it is the estuary immediately above this caption.

Kahurangi Point Access

To get to the DOC hut at Kahurangi Point requires some tramping skill, and a good tide timetable.

It is about 8 km from Turimawiri River to the Point, and both the Anaweka Rivers and Big River can only be crossed at low tide at the river mouths. It suits an overnight trip.

The 20 bunk DOC hut is the old lighthouse keeper's residence, by Camp Creek at Kahurangi Point.

Kahurangi Point to the Heaphy River

South of Kahurangi Point few nineteenth century Europeans ventured, or for that matter even twenty-first century trampers, for the coastline has remained essentially unchanged since Brunner and Heaphy's eight week trip in 1846.

The travel from Kahurangi Point is extremely difficult, with steep headlands such as the Tauparika Cliff, Rocks Point and Wekakura Point. The *New Zealand Geographic* magazine (No 14 1992), has an article on this stretch of coast which gives a good idea of the travelling conditions, which have not changed since Maori times. In fact, they have probably got worse, since in the nineteenth century some sort of Maori trail existed around the headlands. Heaphy talks of a 'rotten native-made rope' at Tauparika.

The next definite record is that of James Mackay and his guides, who took three weeks to reach the Buller in 1857. There was the shipwrecked party that returned from Jackson Bay, also in 1857, an unsuccessful gold prospecting party from the *Fantome* in 1860, and a venturer named Mackley looking for sheep country, but bringing back Buller gold in 1861.

It's quite likely there were other unrecorded prospecting parties, since going by boat was expensive and not necessarily faster. Arthur Dobson took five weeks on the vessel *Gypsy* to get from Nelson to the Buller. They even drifted as far south as Franz Josef, and in a letter to his father he wrote 'such a miserable time that I have ever had in all my life, especially the last three weeks'.

The Maori seemed to travel this stretch of coastline quite regularly, for Brunner and Heaphy encountered a Maori family heading north to Nelson to be baptised. Like the Maori Heaphy and Brunner had to live off the land as they went, realising by now that their provisions would not last them. Everything was grist to the stomach. A meal of rock chub, mutton fish [paua] and sea urchin was a 'curious but satisfying meal'. They also tried seaweed and penguin soup.

There was an alternative inland route, now known as the Heaphy Track, but it was not often used by Maori, and was not really developed till the 1890's.



Coast south of Kahurangi Point Access

This is a very difficult coastline to access, and even today only hardened trampers need apply. No tracks, no marked routes around the bluffs, steep bush country if you are forced inland, which you often are.



Maori

It's a matter for speculation when the Maori first reached the West Coast, perhaps in the 1200-1300 period. What brought them here is equally unclear: curiosity, new land for settlement, population pressure, may have all been factors. It's likely that they kept to the coastline at first, because of food sources and it would have been easier for travelling and navigation. Greenstone was probably first noticed on the West Coast beaches before it's source was traced inland to such rivers as the Arahura, and it's possible to suppose that the process of this exploration led to the discovery of several main divide passes. Certainly by the time the European arrived the Maori knew all the main passes, and the European exploration of the West Coast was a rediscovery of a landscape already generally well known. Barry Brailsford in his book 'The Greenstone Trails' describes some of the track making techniques used by the early Maori.

'Trail breaking was the task of the leader who marked the route for future parties by snapping but not severing, small branches along the way. The snapping was known as kowata or whati, and the route marking as ara pawhati. If subsequent parties reinforced the earlier trail blazing by snapping new growth the route became well defined, particularly as Maori travellers moved in single file and hence put considerable pressure on a narrow line of land. Early European observers noted that where the Maori trails led over moss the moss never sprang back into its former shape. The pathway could thus be felt by the feet even though the moss looked little different to the eye'.

Routes followed the easiest ways, and for the South Island that usually meant a valley rather than a ridge trail. Like the European the Maori found fern and bracken country difficult to make trails in. There was some trail construction: in the shape of ladders (the Miko cliff is a famous example) or manuka brush in swamps, and narrow chasms might be bridged by 'poles or crude vine suspension bridges'. Deep rivers were invariably crossed by swimming, or rafts (mokihi) made out of flax stalks, or the technique of a breast pole (tuwhana).

Clothing was basic. A sort of all purpose rain cloak that left the legs free, and strong sandals – paraerae. The Maori would carry several pairs of sandals, making more along the way as needed, and Thomas Brunner said that the sandals took twenty minutes to make and lasted two days hard travel. Special leggings, warmer ‘undercloaks’, and sandals were used for the harsher conditions of the alpine trails. Ropes would be carried for the alpine routes.

The Maori exploited the food sources of both land and sea. From the sea margins came fish, eels, whitebait, shellfish, seaweed, sea anemone, etc. On the land bush birds such as weka, kaka, and wood pigeons were crucial, especially during the summer. Native vegetables would be mamaku, nikau palm kernel, taro, and crops of kumara but the introduced potatoes quickly became a staple, and there were some maize and leeks.

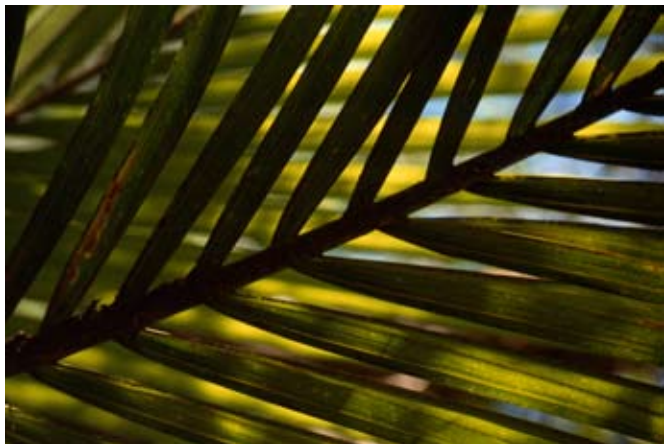
A ‘fire plough’ or fire kit was carried, usually by a senior wahine of the party, because of its importance, and although the Maori did not usually travel at night they made a kind of ‘torch’ out of bark soaked in fat and bound by flax. They also used a type of native fungus which could give off a steady glow. Family groups travelled slowly but war parties could make very fast time. A large Maori family group took two weeks to cross the Harper Pass from Westland to Kaiapoi, but war parties regularly made the trip in five days. ‘The good walkers, the light footed ones, were known as ‘waewae mana’. The ‘greyhounds’ who could eat up the distances very quickly were ‘waewae taurekareka’.

Perhaps the most famous Maori journey of all was Te Puoho’s, with forty warriors and women, from Golden Bay down the entire length of the West Coast, then over the Haast Pass to Southland – some 1500 km – in 1836-37. It was an ambitious, bold, and foolhardy raid, which ended in death for Te Puoho and enslavement of the rest of the party, with one exception. Ngawhakawawa, Te Puoho’s brother-in-law, alone managed to slip away from the clutches of the Southland Maori and retrace the terrible journey back to Golden Bay – one of the great solo treks anywhere recorded in European or Maori history.

The Maori population of Westland is hard to estimate. In 1857 Tarapuhi told James Mackay there were 87 Maori on the coast, and by 1868 we have a record of 116 Maori (Westland 68, Buller 48) according to a crown census.

Chapter 2

Heaphy & Buller



From Heaphy River down to the Karamea and Buller you feel you are in a different world. It's a warm, moist climate, almost winterless, with a dense forest as a backdrop to the beautiful coastline where nikau palms dot the shore like upturned feather dusters.

What was a huge challenge for the nineteenth century travellers, is much easier for a modern visitor. However, some of the shore is still untouched and rarely visited, notably between Little Wanganui and the Mokihinui River.



Oparara River

Heaphy Track

When Heaphy and Brunner followed the coastline in 1846, their Maori guides informed them that there was an inland trail, approximately following the line now taken by the Heaphy Track. The Maori spoke of a ‘considerable tract of level land’, which must have been the Goulard Downs. However, most of the Maori Heaphy and Brunner met were travelling via the coast, and the inland trail does not seem to have been used a great deal — perhaps only for the war parties?

The history of the European Heaphy Track is erratic. James Mackay reached the Goulard Downs in 1857 from the Aorere, and some diggers ‘proved’ the route to Karamea by following down the Heaphy River a year later. It was surveyed and cut as a track in the late 1860’s, mainly as an access aid to diggers, though it does not seem to have been popular because it became overgrown again.

It was not until 1893 that a thorough four foot bridle track was established, though frequent slips again quickly made it unserviceable. It seemed to get only occasional usage until the New Zealand Forest Service built huts and upgraded the track in the 1960’s. The creation of the Kahurangi National Park in 1995 would now make the likelihood of a road across this section seem remote.

For nineteenth century travellers the route along the beach south of the Heaphy River, is generally a good one, and marks the beginning of a period of reasonable travel all the way down to the Little Wanganui.

The Heaphy headlands usually required a low tide to get around safely, and in a big surf could be dangerous. Trampers often had to show some smart footwork in the days when the Heaphy Track was not cut continuously along the coast and you were still required to rock hop around some headlands. Several people have been drowned here.



Heaphy Track Access.

Nowadays the Heaphy Track is a veritable backpackers 'highway' with a continuous bush track, shelters, and all side creeks bridged. You have to choose to walk on the beach, there is no necessity to do so.

The coastal section of the Heaphy Track is the most enjoyable section of the track, and is a worthwhile 2-3 day tramp in its own right.

From Kohaihi there are several shelters and bridges on the 6 hour one way tramp to Heaphy Huts. This is famous for its sandflies and sunsets.

Scotts beach from the Heaphy track.



Kohaihai River and Oparara Estuary

This marks the end (or start) of the Heaphy Track. The Kohaihai winds down in sluggish tea-stained curves, almost reluctant to meet the sea. A foot swing bridge crosses the river and disappears in a thicket of nikau palms.

There used to be an old deer cullers route that started up the south spur (up the Lookout Track), and followed the ridge line into the head of the Oparara River and over a range into the Ugly River. The ridge crest route was still quite clear in the 1980's, marked with old gin traps.

South of the Kohaihai River it is good beach walking to the Oparara river and estuary. This was usually crossed at low tide, then another good walking stretch down to the next obstacle, the Karamea River. Oparara has been translated as 'bad fern root'.

Karamea River and Lagoon

Crossing the Karamea River was not a pleasant task for Heaphy and Brunner in 1846. Their Maori guides made up a raft of flax stalks, 22 feet long which surprisingly took about 700 lbs of weight as the party floated an inch above water. However this wasn't sufficient for buoyancy and the dog had to be thrown overboard, and after this step failed, Heaphy followed the dog.

The Karamea Special Settlement of 1875-76 was mostly composed of Shetland Islanders and English agricultural labourers and was not as disastrous as the ill-fated Martins Bay and Jackson Bay 'townships' – though matters started badly. J. M. Curtis in his thesis *The Special Settlements of Jackson Bay and Karamea* compared the two.



Heaphy Track Access

From Karamea township it is a 15 km drive to the Kohaihai River and road end. Extensive picnic and camping area, toilets, shelter and phone.

Scotts Beach is only 2-3 hours return. Nikau Walk 40 minutes return, Zig Zag lookout track 30 minutes return.

The Oparara River has today become much better known for what lies in its headwaters. The three archways can now be reached by a good road, well signposted, with walking tracks.



Kohaihai River and campground.

The pakihi lands first given to the settlers at Karamea were largely useless and once the road building work had been used up only the hardy (or those who had no choice) stayed on. However, some factors favoured the settlement. It was not so ambitious in scope, and only 220-230 immigrants were originally settled, and these were a fairly close-knit group, more adaptable to the conditions, tougher and self-reliant, with a strong religious faith that also acted as a uniting factor. In the end not so much was expected of the settlement and so the settlers were left to get on with the job as best they could.

The first Karamea River bridge went up in 1895, got washed away, repaired, washed away again, and for some years a 'punt' was used, which could carry four horses and carts at once (or later four cars) till 1924 when another bridge was built. Karamea is believed to be a contraction of 'Kakara Taramea' 'scent made from gum extracted from leaves of spear grass'.

From Kohaihai to Little Wanganui it was easy going for the travellers, until they reached the full stop of Little Wanganui Head. This river was not bridged till 1906. The current name seems a contradiction, for 'Whanganui' equates to whanga 'harbour or bay' and nui 'large'. The 'Little' was apparently added to avoid confusion with the North Island Wanganui.



Karamea Access

The main highway follows the coast closely, particularly just before Little Wanganui. There is also a short access road (the 'wharf' road) from Little Wanganui township to the Little Wanganui river mouth.

The northern access to coastline and Little Wanganui Head, is via the Glasseye Road from Highway 67 then follow tidal flats across Glasseye Creek to the Little Wanganui Head.



Tree stump at Little Wanganui River, looking north to Karamea River

The Inland Road – ‘knee-deep mud’

There seemed to have been three inland ‘roads’ from Karamea to the Mokihinui River. The first was started around 1875 using the labour of the Karamea settlers, and was finished the next year as a bridle track, and possibly room for horse-drawn carts. The route was made up Glasseye Creek over a lowish bush saddle into Falls Creek, then sidling into Corbyvale and out to the Mokihinui via Mumm’s Creek. This track is believed to have been known as ‘Spencers Track’, and a small remnant of it is still shown on the metric Karamea map, though large parts of this track were damaged by the 1929 earthquake.

Local people in 1991 have suggested in 1991 that parts of Spencer’s Track are still in existence. The geological survey map of 1914 calls this the ‘Stillwater Track’ marking it as overgrown and finishing in the head of the Six Mile. ‘Spencer’s Road’ is marked as a horse track from Corbyvale.

It’s believed a better bridle track and a more accurate line was cut in the 1880’s or 1890’s up Tidal Creek, sidling to the east of the Happy Valley Saddle (also known as Taffytown Saddle) and down into the aptly named Rough and Tumble Creek where a bridge got the travellers over the Mokihinui River, and they followed the pack track down to the coast. This track is still indicated on the geological survey maps of 1909 and 1922 as a horse-track.

It’s interesting to note that even after these tracks were completed people still often preferred the hazards of the coastal route. In the late 1870’s early 1880’s R. C. Reid describes the Glasseye-Spencers inland track as ‘narrow...with dank vegetation and knee deep mud’ and complains about slips and fast-growing vegetation obliterating the track. Reid goes on to recommended the coast route and reckoned it would take ‘eight to ten hours’ from Mokihinui River to Little Wanganui for an average pedestrian. This included a forced climb of Otahu bluff.

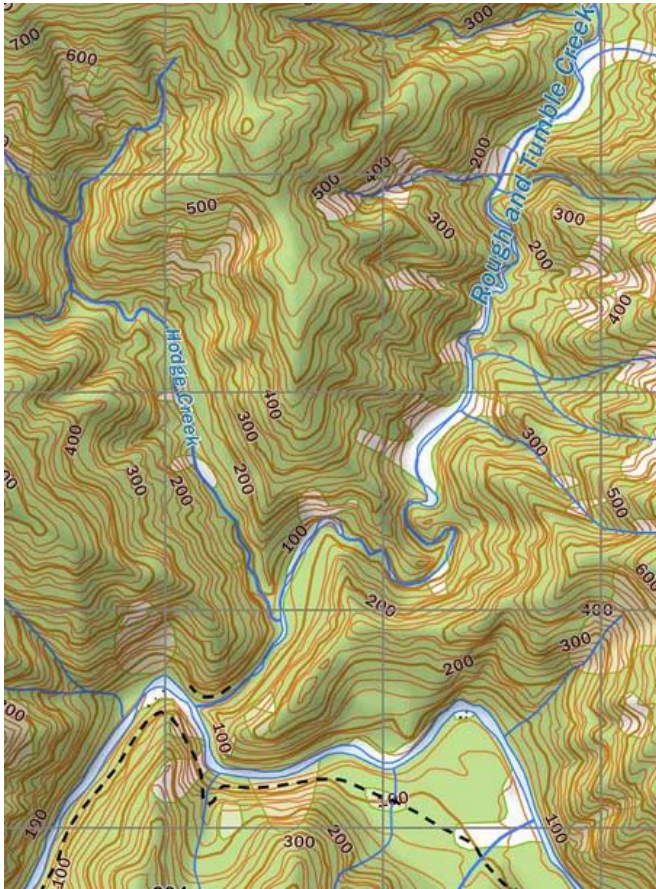
Later, in the early part of this century, when the last and final road was being built through the ‘Karamea Bluffs’, roadworkers were paid at a rate of one shilling an hour, and they had to provide their own tent and shovel. It’s believed that the construction of this road took place over about five years (the Mount Radiant Subdivision map of 1909 shows the incomplete track over Happy Valley saddle) and was finished about 1912, with the first car getting through in 1915 or 1916.

Mokihinui River Access

The Mokihinui pack track is still in good condition and some remains of the old Mokihinui bridge to Rough and Tumble Creek, can be spotted in the river far below.

The pack track continues onto Specimen Creek and is a masterpiece of construction, although there is one exposed section with a wire bolted in place. The track runs through many rocky bluffs and fine scenic views of the gorge. A stamping battery and pelton wheel can still be seen.

How the pack track survived the 1929 earthquake is a mystery, but early sections were widened to almost 'dray road' standard, and cattle were once driven up to Mokihinui Forks for grazing till the 1960's.



The map shows the Mokihinui River pack track at the bottom, with Rough and Tumble Creek heading north. This was the main road or horse-track to Karamea for many years, from about 1890 to 1916.



Mokihinui River and gorge.



The Coastal Route – ‘trying to the mind and muscles’

The coastal route between Little Wanganui to the Moki-hinui was a lively one. R. C. Reid times of 'eight to ten hours' for an 'average pedestrian' seems optimistic, especially since you needed low tides at Gentle Annie and Little Wanganui (though there may have been tracks around these points). It is likely that the route could take up to one and a half to two days. The author took two and a half hours fast walk one way with a light pack to Kongahu from Gentle Annie.

One traveller gives a warm account of the general proceedings along the coast.

‘...heavy walking on shingly beaches, clambering and jumping along masses of rocks and boulders, climbing steep cliffs, in one place only accomplished by aid of a pendant wire rope, many devious turnings through thick bush and fell, to make a way round the head of the many gullies which break the face of the hill, steep ascents and descents, trying to the mind and muscles...’

After crossing the Little Wanganui River rounding the Little Wanganui Head at low tide was the first obstacle. After that it was a reasonable travel to Falls Creek and to an unnamed headland. This was the crux of the route and often travellers were forced upwards here.

‘Crossed the Tunapho glen and stream, [Falls Creek or Te Whenua] and ascended the Otahu hill in order to avoid a deep chasm in the beach. The hill is about 1000 feet in height, and the ascent is by a water-course, over slippery clay and limestone. The way continues along the summit for about a mile, and then descends the face of the hill by the landslip before mentioned, being the most laborious and one of the most dangerous portions of the route between Cape Farewell and Kawatiri. Continued along the beach (here consisting of large masses of limestone which have fallen from the hill) to Pukuokongahu point...’ [Kongahu Point].

Little Wanganui Access

From Highway 67 take the Glasseye Road past the baches to Glasseye Creek.

At low tide you can walk round the first headland on broad tidal platforms, and about 2 km south there are several baches, which are accessed by quad bikes from the Glasseye Road.



Looking across the Little Wanganui River south towards the steep cliffs of the shoreline and Kongahu (or Old man Rock) in the far distance.

The area is still as Heaphy so accurately describes, the landslip a massive dislocation of debris from the hillside where scrub has since regenerated. Several local people stated that bolts supporting a wire rope were placed into the cliff here to enable travellers to get around the coast at low tide instead of a laborious hill climb. At what date the bolts were inserted is not clear, but they are still believed to be there, though the wire has gone.

The geological survey map of 1909, the Mount Radiant Subdivision, shows a track marked 'Big Hill' around the Otahu bluff.

Old Man Rock at Kongahu Point is a distinctive feature on this coastline, though only just an island at high tide. Then the travel was very straightforward, and attractive, on mostly gravel beaches past isolated sea-stacks at Six Mile Creek, Grenadier Rocks, Three Mile Creek and eventually to the rock cluster at Gentle Annie Point (also known as White Rocks). This was an awkward headland, best tackled at low tide.

The name is believed to have originated from the popular Stephen Foster song of the time 'shall we never see thee no more gentle Annie'. There are a lot of Gentle Annies in New Zealand (a map search brought up fifteen), and they always refer to a 'struggling point', so perhaps the singer feels that his absence from his beloved makes the hill even steeper!



Kongahu Coast Access

The Kongahu coast coast is accessible from the Gentle Annie Point.

From the main highway, turn left after the Mokihinui River bridge and follow the short shingle road past the 'Cowshed Cafe' and holiday homes.

A cattle track can be easily walked over the Gentle Annie headland to give access to the Three Mile beach, or at low tide you can scramble around the Gentle Annie Point rocks.

From here the route is beach walking with occasional headlands to Six Mile Creek and Kongahu Point at mid to low tide. The 'three' and 'six' miles were the distances from the Mokihinui River.



Gentle Annie headland and pebble beach.

Mokihinui River

‘It was undoubtedly the most dangerous ford which I have met with in New Zealand’ was Charles Heaphy’s verdict. The name implied the difficulty for any traveller, for ‘mokihi’ was the raft, and meant ‘nui’ large. The brief gold town that existed at the mouth of the river in 1867 was called ‘Kynnersley’ after the then resident commissioner. This location is now called Waimarie, and because the gold from this area often came in flattened, water-worn nuggets they were affectionately known as ‘Mokihinui Spuds’.

Local people invariably pronounce Mokihinui as 'Mokinui'.

South of the Mokihinui the coastal travel was straightforward, all beach sands and mostly small rivers. The Ngakawau River and the Waimangaroa River rarely posed a problem, except in flood, and the Orowaiti estuary was also straightforward at low tide.

Waimangaroa River

Charles Money worked sporadically at the Waimangaroa gold diggings (five kilometres inland) from December 1862, but did ‘nothing brilliant in the ground we had set into’. As he reported, blasting the granite boulders was a risky business.

‘I was one day washing a dish of stuff in the creek below the claim, when I heard a shout above, and, looking up, saw the man with whom he was working running down the track with a face like a ghost, calling for help. I immediately ran up and passed him — for he was too flabbergasted to speak a word beyond ‘blast’, ‘blown up’, ‘dead man’ — and so on reaching the drive found poor Ned crawling out from beneath it on all fours, and with a face like a plum pudding. He seemed to know at once the full extent of the mischief, for his first words were ‘I wish to God it had killed me; I shall be blind for life!’

Money gave up this dodgy work and

‘...determined to go back to civilisation for a time, and become once more a victim of tailors’ bills’.

Mokihinui River Mouth

There are short side roads accessing both sides of the river.

Highway 67 parallels the coast from Mokihinui to Granity, giving easy beach access down side-roads at several points.



Charming Creek

This is a lovely walkway following the line of a tramway into the Ngakawau Gorge. There are tunnels, waterfalls and historic relics. Very good trail for children.



Waimangaroa River

Side road from Waimangaroa to Dennistoun cemetery and river mouth.



Waimangaroa River outlet, looking upriver and inland towards Dennistoun.



The lonely Dennistoun cemetery is beside the Waimangaroa River outlet, and has a number of headstones of men who were 'accidentally drowned'.

Westport

Gold got Westport going, coal kept it going. The enterprising storekeeper Reuben Waite set up a store for diggers in 1861, but although several hundred diggers were working here it never triggered the expected rush. This hiatus might have been the modesty of returns, especially with the glories emerging from Otago at the time.

Access was the key problem, for the Otago gold fields were much easier to reach. Later, Westport experienced several significant rushes, but the area was always eclipsed by the rich finds south, and eventually the town turned to the 'black gold' for a reliable income.

There was a substantial Maori pa and settlement on the banks of the Buller for a long time before the gold rush, and one estimate in the 1860's suggested that Westport's population might have reached 12,000 people, but that would have been a very ephemeral population indeed. Currently it is 5000 people.

Buller River – Kawatere 'deep, swift, water'

For the early traveller the Buller was a major difficulty. The Maori built rafts or mokihi, usually out of flax stalks, and the early Europeans quickly employed the same technique until they could either get canoes made for them by the Maori or shipped in their own ferry boats for the purpose.

In places it was said that the driftwood on the beach was sometimes piled so high that the early European travellers burnt large amounts just to clear the way.

The first bridge across the Buller was not built until 1888. As a harbour, the Buller like the other rivers was a risky-but-no-other-choice business, and getting across the bar literally a matter of life and death at times. Even now, every year a fishing boat gets 'rolled' on the bar, often with loss of life.

The Buller was named after an English Member of Parliament, who was also a Director of the New Zealand Company.

Westport Access

The Buller rivermouth jetties both have narrow roads on them, and can provide an 'exciting' viewing platform during a wild sou'wester.



Thomas Brunner



'By general agreement this is New Zealand's greatest journey of exploration'. Brunner's name must always be associated with the Buller River, which he traversed with Maori guides in 1846, and then continued onto the Paringa River in South Westland.

It was an epic trip for a European, the first white man into this country. However it might be timely to take a hard look at his 'achievement', for Brunner's reputation exists partly on the length of time of his journey – almost 18 months away. He seems to have taken an inordinately long time to get down the Buller, from the middle of January to the 4th June – four and a half months – a distance of about ninety kilometres. True, the weather was poor, food hard to get, and the country difficult, but why didn't he raft or canoe?

Barry Brailsford in *The Greenstone Trails* makes the point that the Maori use to regularly raft or canoe down the Buller River. '...experienced Maori crew could bring a canoe from Inangahua Junction down to the mouth of the Buller in six hours'. It took Brunner and party six weeks. Brunner himself described his Maori guide Kehu as 'a capital manager of a canoe', and John Rochfort in 1859 with Maori guides took three weeks going up the Buller River on a surveying trip whereas Brunner had taken '13 weeks of agony' to cover the same distance going down.

'Experienced Maori travellers utilised the rivers with canoe or raft and worked with the elements instead of bashing against them'.

No one can doubt Brunner's courage, but his achievements were wrought at great personal cost, to himself and his guides, and one has the suspicion that some of this trauma was self inflicted. For instance Brunner tackled the Buller only nine months after coming back from his coastal trip with Heaphy to the Buller mouth, and one wonders how fit a condition he was in to repeat another arduous

journey. Why, for example, did he take no tent or oilskins? One gets the impression that he was not a good manager of men, and the Nelson Survey Office fell into a neglected state under his tenure. It's equally plain that he had difficulty asserting authority over his Maori guides down the Buller.

In comparison one notes how easily John Rochfort, Arthur Dobson and Leonard Harper seem to have travelled along the coastline and through bush country with Maori guides. Dobson in 1864 took 14 days to get to Bold Head from the Grey and back, surveying as he went. Brunner took nine days one way.

In fairness to Brunner, the first explorer is always liable to make mistakes that the next explorer can profit on, but it pays to remember that Brunner was not the first explorer, merely the first white man. Brunner was reported lost for 3-4 days near Riccarton Bush in Charles Torlesse's diary '31st January 1850... Great news of goings on at Lyttelton and of Brunner's having been lost for 3 or 4 days within 10 miles of Deans'.



Chapter 4

Paparoa



This is a punishing shoreline. Westerly waves beat against iron headlands, the forest is drenched with sea-sweat. Pebbles growl at every wave surge, and underwater coal seams get torn open and pieces of sea-coal are thrown up, smooth and polished like obsidian.

Sea caves, like the Te Oru Mata, were natural stopping places, with plenty of kai: eels from the river, shellfish off the rocks, fresh fish quite literally thrown up on the beaches sometimes.

The coast from Westport to Greymouth was notoriously difficult coastal travel, and the Maori and gold diggers took inland routes wherever they could. But even so it took ten days of hard foot-slogging travel to cover a distance that nowadays we can manage in half a day by car.



Cape Foulwind — ‘one of the prettiest views in the world’

From Westport, once across the Buller River, Carters Beach was an easy ten kilometre stretch, strewn with driftwood to reach Cape Foulwind.

By 1866 Cobb and Co were running daily coaches along the hard sands at low tide on the first part of the run to Charleston. The fare from Westport to Charleston one way was twenty-five shillings including ‘ferriage’ across the Buller and tolls. The inland road was constructed in 1874. Carters Beach was named after a Charleston hotelier, and was originally called South Beach.

Cape Foulwind was the hard part of the Charleston-Westport coaching route, with a ‘rough three miles’ over the cape itself through what was then still heavy bush, then a short beach stretch again at Tauranga Bay, and then another cutting through the rocky peninsula and onto Okari beach. Several ‘wayside’ houses sprang up to ease the travellers thirst, in what probably took a reasonable day between the two towns.

After Carters Beach the coast walking to Cape Foulwind is made more difficult by a series of mudstone cliffs and islets at Kawau Point, very pretty, but dangerous with virtually no escape routes.

Charles Heaphy in 1846 talks of following the summit edge of the cliffs, and descending a ‘native-made ladder’ to a small beach, where they negotiated a cavern leading under the next point. Then it was rock scrambling and a climb of another headland to look into Tauranga Bay ‘one of the prettiest views in the world’.

Naming Cape Foulwind has been a popular pastime for European navigators. Abel Tasman named it ‘Clypygen Hoeck’ or rocky corner in 1642, Cook called it ‘Foulwind’ in 1770, and Dumont d’Urville called it ‘Les Trois Clochers’ or ‘the three steeples’ in 1827.



Cape Foulwind Access

A narrow shingle road now runs alongside much of Carters beach to Cape Foulwind giving easy access.

Cape Foulwind has a popular walkway established over it giving excellent walking access to the spectacular seal colony and cheeky wekas in the carpark. It's worth walking right through for you pass a plaque and a astro-labe, then the lighthouse, and follow the old railway line, which was used for moving quarried rock. On stormy days this is a wild piece of shore.

Walking times: 30 minutes return to the seal colony, 2-3 hours one way for the entire walkway.

For Kawau Point there is access through Cape Foulwind village or from a short road beside the hotel, and a track to the beach. Here there are some mudstone arches, which although they are not likely to be Heaphy's original 'cavern', give a good idea of the sort of travelling conditions.

This is a nasty stretch of coastline to get trapped on as there are no escape routes, and hardly any places even to sit out a high tide.



Mudstone headlands at Kawau Point.

Nine Mile Beach and Okari Lagoon

This ten mile stretch of beach was good travelling for the coaches, though the outlet of the Okari lagoon caused problems from time to time. A ferry service was operated till the inland road was constructed, and the cost was one shilling and sixpence per person. In the late 1880's, for a time a Greek, Nicholas Bebil, and his family, operated the ferry:

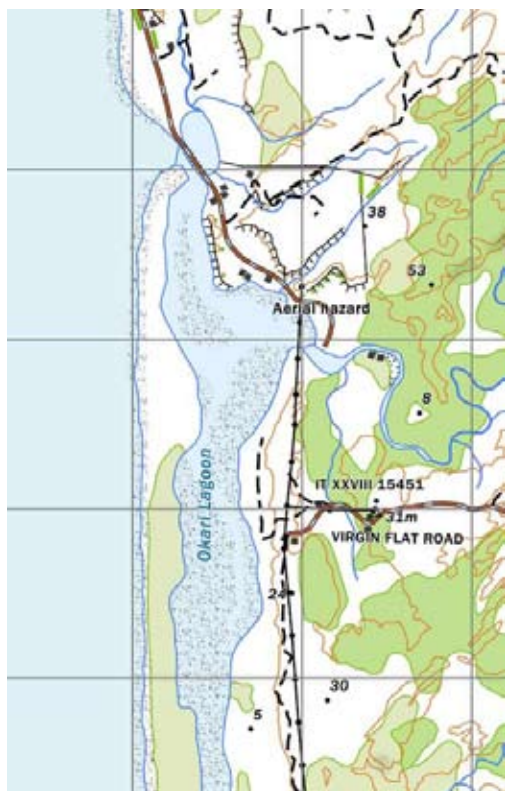
‘On the Charleston side a huge bell, weighing seventy pounds stood on a four legged stand, and when a passenger wished to cross he rang the bell, the boatman hoisting a flag in response’.

The first claimed football match between Charleston and Addisons Flat (a nearby gold mining community) was played on the Nine Mile Beach in 1869:

‘The result was indefinite, both sides claiming a win; and when the decision was given to Charleston there was heated discussion. A truce was called, everyone being allowed to retain his individual opinion, though various letters appeared in the Westport Times upholding opposing views. The actual winners were the several booths on the sandhills, one of which (Behan and Kelly's) is credited with having taken more than £200’.

At the south end of Nine Mile beach a short road was cut through the bush by 1867 and a ‘rough log’ bridge crossed over the Nile with a steep final cutting up into Charleston. This bridge had been built by locals and a toll of one shilling was charged. When this got washed away its replacement was reputedly one of the first suspension bridges in New Zealand, designed by Arthur Dobson.

The Nile River probably got its name from a schooner of that title; the oddly named Woodpecker Bay at the Fox River was similarly christened in 1866.



Okari Lagoon Access

There is a narrow but good shingle road for 7km from Cape Foulwind alongside the beach, which crosses a swamp inlet (with driftwood pushed over the road by the tides!) then goes inland through a cutting and winds around the edge of the Okari Lagoon to a dead end beside the tidal estuary.

Housing development along the beach line has rather spoiled the wildness of the scene.

Canoe Access — The Okari estuary is an excellent place to explore on canoe, and some distance can be gained up the bush-lined Okari River. Best access is from Cape Foulwind.

The Nile estuary is a small and rather idyllic spot for a paddle, access off Beach Road from the main highway just before Charleston.



Charleston – ‘swearing and tearing and skull-cracking’

Charleston or ‘Charlie’s Town’ (as one version has it, named after Captain Charles Bonner skipper of the ketch Constant) was one of the most famous of the West Coast goldfields. In 1866 the raised sea beaches were found to be rich in gold, though today it is hard to imagine that this scruffy looking place produced such wealth and excitement.

There is only one hotel licence left, though at its peak the Charleston district boasted eighty. It cost £30 to buy a licence, and the vetting of the licensees was none to thorough, and considering it was probably a surer way to make money than gold digging it is not surprising that well over a hundred hotel names are recorded from this period – with such grand names as the Criterion, Empire, Great Republic, Harp of Erin etc.

Times were lively. When the gold rush to Addisons started (just north of Charleston) Sunday intruded before the diggers arrived and so they had to wait till Monday before pegging out. G. M. Hassing; describes the resulting melee.

‘All day on Sunday diggers flocked out to the new rush. My mates were three very decent, peaceful fellows, and we, in anticipation of the rowdyism that we knew would take place when pegging off would commence on Sunday night, deemed it prudent to look around for a fighting partner in case of emergency. We succeeded in picking up one, Pat Mullins, whose reputation as a bruiser of the first water was a house-hold word on the Coast. Indeed, it was well we provided for the onslaught, for the swearing and tearing and skull-cracking on that glorious Monday morning was really something to be remembered’.

There are two tiny and pretty harbours – Constant Bay and Joyce Bay – both now silted up because of the goldfield tailings. Even when these harbours were in original condition it required some skilled and desperate seamanship to enter, and most boats moored outside and got their goods to shore by surf boats.



Charleston Access

Joyce Bay and Constant Bay are both pretty little harbours, with an attractive picnic area straddling the two. There are lots of little sea-rock formations to explore, but watch the strong surf surging in and out of the bays.

There are two attractive short walks along the coastline here, both well-graded and signposted. Charleston is popular with rock climbers

The cemetery on the Nile Cliff (signposted just north of the town) is worth a visit if only for the lugubrious litany of drowning and sudden deaths that strip away the glamorous romance of those gold days.



Looking across the rugged Charleston coastline, Constant Bay and Joyce Bay on the right.

Charleston South to Fox River

Here the difficulties begun again for the travellers, indeed this stretch south to White Horse Bay is probably harder than the hazards of the Te Miko coastline.

The beaches are short and the headlands ugly. Nearly all the early accounts indicate travellers were forced up onto the pakihi terraces at some time – ‘a swampy moss’ Heaphy called it. Obviously Heaphy’s Maori guides had some idea of these problems, for they led the Europeans inland till they bashed down to the Tiropahi River. This may have been dropping too short for there is still some difficult rock-scrambling before White Horse Creek, then another unlovely (to their eyes) headland before reaching the relative bliss of the wide beach of Woodpecker Bay and the Fox River.

No better illustration of the difficulties encountered by the first Europeans can be bettered by Charles Money’s description in *Knocking About in New Zealand*. They took seventeen days from the Mawhera pa at Greymouth to the Buller River. So think of Charles Money and friends as you zoom along in a car that will do the same journey in two easy hours.

‘On the eighth day of our journey, in crossing a deep stream, our stock of matches was utterly ruined, and we were therefore compelled to eat our flour raw and to drink water instead of tea. Rowley and I, having had to do this more than once before, did not suffer from privation; but one of our companions did so most acutely from his first meal of dough, and vowed he would sooner starve than touch it again. We found a good quantity of a bush plant called “nikou”, [nikau palm] the pith of which is much like hazel nut, and is very good eating when roasted or boiled. This and fern-root made a variety that enabled us to get on well enough for a day or two; but we were beginning to feel queer on this diet, when one day we reached a number of rocks covered with shell-fish of all sizes’.

White Horse Creek Access

The main road swings away from the coast at Charleston, and there is no easy access to this part of the shore until the road returns at White Horse Creek bay. Here, however, it is possible to scramble north at low tide to get an idea of the coast-line.



Weka.

All the Europeans struggled to find bush plants to eat: 'though there are several edible plants, they are not very nourishing, nor can I honestly say very nice'.

Most birds were good eating, if you could catch them, especially the weka, but not the kiwi which was 'passable when hungry'. Charles Heaphy surely went into tongue-in-cheek rhapsodies when describing the epicurean delights of the weka: 'Hail to thee, weka! – tender as a chicken, gamey as a pheasant, gelatinous as roaster'.

William Smart travelled several times along the coast between the Grey and the Buller, usually being guided by Maori. The first time took nine days, but they 'lost two' because they missed the land trail at White Horse Creek, blundering along the rocky coves until they turned inland and picked up the trail again.

The return journey (this time with Tarapuhi) took seven comfortable travelling days, and a third journey, in a party of three Europeans and fifteen Maori, took only three and a half days from 1pm on June 1st to the evening of the 4th 'walked day and night to suit the tides'. They carried little food as the Maori had some food stored along the route. James Mackay in 1857 with two Maori guides only took six days from the Buller to the Grey.

Even in the detailed journal of an educated prospector like William Smart, it is striking how rarely he comments favourably on the scenery, or on the scenery at all, mind you, he had his reasons:

'The scenery along the beach line is very good, some beautiful little bays, but we were too hungry to properly appreciate it...'

The geological survey map of 1914 shows the Charleston-Brighton pack track kept inland from Charleston, reaching the coast at White Horse Bay. A better road was being constructed but still stopped short of White Horse in 1914, but by 1916 another survey map had pushed the road on to the top end of the Fox River Beach.

A 'Post Office' was optimistically indicated at Brighton (Tiromoana) but the traveller was back on pack track along the coast to Razorback Point. 'Mabel' Bay on an early map is now 'Meybille' Bay today and should be 'Mabille' Bay, after an Austrian surveyor Theophilus Mabille.

information supplement

Clothing

What the male European traveller wore in the nineteenth century would be uncomfortable and impracticable – a sort of mimicry in outdoor clothes of what people would more usually wear inside, on more formal occasions.

Jackets, trousers held up by braces, often a waistcoat, and inevitably some sort of hat, though the style varied from fixed brim to floppy brim, boater to cap. A walking stick and a pipe made the gentleman feel more comfortable. A few might sport a watch chain even when tramping. Only on his feet did the swaggers make any real sartorial concessions to the arduous terrain – usually long boots, with wrap around puttees to keep out the grit and mud. Sometimes bowyangs, pieces of string tied below the knee, were used to lift the trousers above the boots.

Arthur Dobson recalls using Maori sandals made out of flax when the European boots failed.

Gold diggers had their own 'uniform' of flannel open necked shirt and moleskin trousers, made from a thick cotton material that was supposedly waterproof when wet. Always high boots, a 'wide-awake' hat (called that because it had no knap) with a leather belt and sheath knife. Sometimes the bright 'California' waist sash was worn on special occasions. Blankets served as the swag, tightly rolled and tied with string or flax, with a shovel, pick, tin dish billy, and axe tied to the outside.

Women travellers (of which there were a surprising number) were obliged to wear long dresses, with a petticoat or two, which must have been an infernal nuisance. Some sort of hat or cap, with usually a long sleeved 'shoulder-of-mutton' blouse and a cape over that. Boots to cope with the mud.

For both men and women the dress conventions required a standard of clothing that today looks ludicrously overdressed for the bush backblocks of the nineteenth century. Well into this century male trampers and travellers wore trousers, and any sign of shorts would have been considered a sign of impoverishment, or madness.

Fox River — 'Bright Town'

In 1866-67 the gold boom town of Brighton sprung up on the spit just north of Fox River. Some people have suggested that it was actually known as 'Bright Town', but there's no evidence to support this attractive theory.

It's been said that this was the fastest growing gold town on the West Coast, fifty business places in three weeks, two weeks later and there were 160 buildings and fifty-three hotels. At its peak, it boasted about 6000 people. The river was named after the gold prospector Bill Fox, who made his reputation on the Arrow diggings, near Queenstown.

There's nothing left now, except for the remains of the old cemetery slightly up the Fox River. No doubt there are a few gold-diggers buried there who were drowned, or swept away, by this majestic but unforgiving coastline.

Te Oru Mata — 'A remarkable cavern...'

The spectacular T-shaped cavern at Kaipataki Point beside the Fox River was visited by Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner in May 1846. They found it comfortable if 'draughty'.

'Crossed the Potikohua stream [Fox River], a mountain torrent, running strongly, and immediately entered a remarkable cavern, teonumatu... The vault is in the form of a cross, and penetrates the rock at right angles from its four sides, the eastern entrance, however, being blocked up. It is about 30 feet high, 150 feet long, from north to south, and about 50 crosswise. In it the natives have erected bed places, and stages for the purpose of drying dogfish, which in the summer time the people from Araura catch on an adjacent isolated reef'.

Te Oru Mata has been translated as meaning 'oru' a deep hole or cave, and 'mata' a headland. The constant roar of the sea inside the cave is dispiriting, it feels and sounds like an animal scrabbling at the entrance.



Te Oru Mata Cave Access

The Te Oru Mata cave is 'inside' the prominent headland on the south side of the Fox River. From the carpark on the north side of the river, cross the historic bridge and follow the marked track under the road bridge and around to the baches and the cave entrance.

This is best visited at a low tide, for then you can clamber through the cave and wander around the headland past sea-stacks and smaller archways onto the beach south of the Fox River.

Allow 1-2 hours for exploring around the Fox River and Te Oru Mata cave. Beside the Fox bridge there is also the old road cave to explore, and there's a fine natural arch opposite the baches.



Looking up the Fox River canyon, the first stage of the Inland Pack Track.

Te Miko Cliff

After rounding Kaipakati Point travellers faced several short pretty beaches – Hatters Beach, Meybille Bay and Irimahuwheri Bay – interrupted by nasty headlands, culminating in Perpendicular Point or as it was then known ‘Te Miko Cliff’.

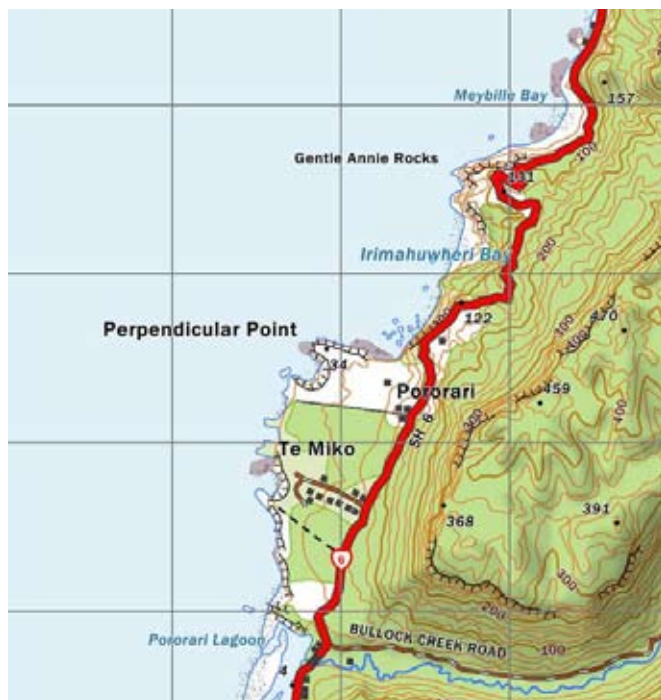
This was a famous obstacle for early European explorers, who had considerable doubts about clambering up the rotting rata vine and flax ladders.

‘The cliff overhanging slightly, the ladders are quite perpendicular and as several of the rotten steps gave way under our feet, our position was far from being pleasant. A number of cormorants and other marine birds, too, that had their nests in the crevices of the rock were screaming and wheeling about us at the intrusion’.

Heaphy thought it about 120 feet high though one nervous European exaggerated its height to 200 feet. With Germanic exactness Haast estimated it at two ladders totalling 46 feet (the first 31 foot and the second 15 foot) with a small ledge between. Authorities placed chain ladders during the early days of the gold rush, but over-use destroyed the wooden rungs and the men had to slide down the chains.

Some stories of Te Miko are hard to credit. G. M. Hasing talks of descending a 60 foot chain at the bottom of which were ‘several human bones scattered about’. One translation of miko is ‘the pith of the nikau’

By October 1866 it’s mentioned that the authorities cut a track to avoid ‘Jacobs Ladder’ (as the chains became known) which may have roughly followed the route of the current ‘Gentle Annie’ highway today. But this detour climbed significantly higher and soon degenerated into such a quagmire that the majority of diggers took their chances on the chains, even to the extent of improvising ‘rungs’ by jamming sticks between the chain links.



Te Miko Access

It is possible at low tide to walk down the Truman Track and scramble along the coastline past various coves and caves, and climb up onto the headland itself of Perpendicular Point. Irimahuwheti Bay (north of Perpendicular Point) was one of the settings used for the film 'Perfect Strangers' in 2003.

The Truman Track is also 15 minutes to a spectacular piece of coastline. A ladder drops onto a semi-circular beach where shallow sea-caves have been carved out, and at low tide you can get round the sculpted rocks to the next bay and fossick among the tidal platforms.

Truman track and Te Miko coast.



Te Miko was not an unavoidable obstacle. The prospector William Smart talks of being guided by Maori around the Te Miko cliff because the ladders were said to be 'rotten', and Charles Money never mentions the cliff. There was quite clearly a regularly used Maori trail on a higher terrace through the rata forest and kie kie around Te Miko, but for various reasons parties (particularly coming south) used the ladders.

It is always easier to climb up a steep face, and the cliff route was obviously suitable for faster and more daredevil groups. Other, less keen travellers, might have taken to the ladders because the alternatives were unknown (or unobserved) by them, so reiterating the 'obvious' route without considering the options.

Maori ladders and ropes were installed on several key bluffs south from Whanganui Inlet, but this may have been for the benefit of the hardier parties.

All the coastal bluffs were negotiable via inland routes, and it is a fair guess that the heavier-laden groups, perhaps with older people, young children or mothers with babies, would have taken an inland trail if there was one available. In places the ladders and ropes might have in some cases served a dual purpose for getting access to good fishing spots, or gathering shags eggs.



Rock patterns on the Te Miko tidal platforms.

Inland Pack Track – ‘perfectly useless’

Who first explored the limestone syncline behind the coast is still unknown. Some early prospectors must have looked up the Fox and other rivers fairly early on, and by the time Commissioner Kynnersley was sending out surveyors to prospect an alternative track to the Te Miko coastline he must have had some notion of what was there. There was a pressing need for a new track.

‘The heavy rains of the past few days have made the journey along the coast from the south exceedingly tedious and difficult, the various streams which have to be crossed being flooded. Several persons have been jammed between the rivers, unable to go forward or retreat, and without any food. Others have narrowly escaped drowning, and many have lost themselves in the bush’.

The authorities settled on an inland route, now known as the Inland Pack Track. This ‘Razorback Road’ was pretty well finished by October 1867, partly helped by a surplus of diggers who could be hired on the cheap.

‘The presence of thousands of men who were at one time wandering unemployed and dissatisfied in the neighbourhood of Brighton [Fox River] offered a most favourable opportunity for the execution of this much-needed road through an exceedingly rough country, whilst the employment of so many of them was a most important auxiliary to the maintenance of peace...’

But the pack track was not an ideal alternative. For starters there were too many river crossings involved, particularly in Dilemma Creek, with consequent delays in a ‘fresh’, and the diggers were generally in too much of a hurry to appreciate the roundabout nature of the track. The new road was costly – perhaps £10,000 – and when the diggers moved on it lapsed into neglect. By January 1873 the *Grey River Argus* was already berating the authorities for the ‘perfectly useless’ route. Again, travellers were preferring the coastal route, and the great Razorback Road may not have been used much after the mid-1870’s.

Inland Pack Track Access

The Inland Pack Track is a fine piece of travel, mingling history with spectacular limestone scenery and rich rainforest. In some cases the 'track' is actually the river but generally it is easy going and well signposted.

However after any rain the Fox River and Dilemma Creek can flood with remarkable rapidity and great care should be taken. The 'Ballroom' is a huge dry natural overhang 20 minutes above the Fox-Dilemma junction, an interesting place to stay the night. It's a weekend tramp to do the whole pack track.



Morning light and mist at Bullock Creek, on the Inland Pack Track.

Porari River

After Te Miko cliff most of the early travellers struck across the Te Miko plateau, then covered with rata forest, and so avoided the series of awkward bays along the Truman coastline.

Several caves and overhangs along the coast here show evidence of at least some seasonal usage from the Maori, and no doubt granted relief to an exhausted European or two who had wandered drastically off-route.

A traveller had to watch out for quicksand at the Porari estuary, and frequently people had to wait for a low tide. So often did this happen that on the north side a dry and convenient limestone overhang became known as the 'Post Office' and diggers left messages for their mates, and carved their names into the soft rock.

Some of the names go back to 1865, but have now been overlain with modern graffiti.

'...the old names that remain bring back visions of the miners taking their spell, maybe a nip, spinning their yarns, boiling the billy, and loosening or tightening their packs as they arrived or set off'.

Porari River Access

The Porari River Track follows up into the limestone gorge and eventually joins the inland pack track. Two hours one way.



Kiekie and reflections on the Porari River.

Punakaiki and Pancake Rocks

After the Porari River there is the spectacular obstacle of the ‘Pancake Rocks’ at Dolomite Point, except that all travellers seem to have cut across the headland and so completely missed what are the most striking rock formations on the West Coast. It is intriguing to note that there is no early European account of the pancake rocks, and the Maori never seemed to mention them to the likes of Heaphy, Brunner or Haast – though surely they were aware of their existence? A road suitable for motor cars wasn’t made along the coast till 1929 and finally closed the coastal gap between Westport and Greymouth.

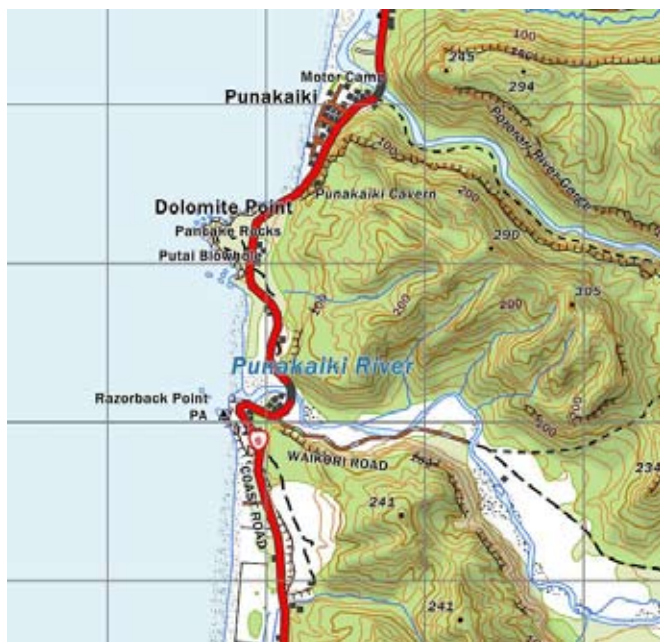
A short beach and a low tide crossing of the Punakaiki River brings the weary traveller to another nasty headland. Razorback Point probably got its’ name from a distinctive feature still visible today. Heaphy observed:

‘The descent of this point requires steadiness and care, as on the one hand is a deep chasm in the rock, and on the other a shelving descent to the beach, each about 80 feet deep, and the ledge dividing the two in places not more than wide enough for one’s footing’.

Haast found the flax bushes handy to hang onto though one of his party got giddy and had to be helped. It must have been a relief to have got onto the good beach sands south of the Razorback.



Pancake blowholes.



Punakaiki Access

The Pancake Rocks have a 15 minute walking track (wheelchair access) which would seem a sublime luxury to Heaphy and co. In a sou'westerly the blowholes are impressive.

Punakaiki Information and Display Centre illustrates the unique geology of the region, and its' flora and fauna.

Access to the Razorback is down a short gravel road 500 m before (south) of Razorback Point.



Highway near Punakaiki.

Canoe Creek

After five miles of good walking Canoe Creek and estuary are reached, and usually you had to wait for a low tide. This was Arthur Dobson's experience in the late 1860's. A Mr Denny Ryall had the ferry and a liquor licence (the two were often synonymous) which might help to explain why drowning was so frequent it was known as the 'national death'. However, digger impatience, ignorance and unfamiliarity with West Coast rivers, were other relevant factors.

The night that Dobson stayed there he was with an Irish priest, Father Larkin, and a wrestling match was 'got up' amongst the Irish miners which the priest entered and easily 'threw the best of them'. He had, so Dobson thought 'personality, the chief element of success, in my opinion, for the management of men'.

Canoe Creek had its boom in 1867, officially called Parkington, with a peak population of about 1500 for a few months. After Canoe Creek there is more beach walking to the first of a series of bluffs.

biographical profile

Arthur Dudley Dobson

'The surveyor in charge of the work was a thorough specimen of a gentleman, combined with the character of a rough colonial bushman. Though of very small stature, he was the fastest walker through a heavy bush I ever came across'.

This was Charles Money's impression when he was engaged by Arthur Dobson to help build a road in 1865. This same picture of Dobson also emerges from his autobiography 'Reminiscences'. Straightforward, efficient, adaptable and no-nonsense, he was one of the first Europeans to really understand the difficulties of travelling on the West Coast, and took 'very careful precautions and left nothing to chance'. For example, when he shipped his stores from Nelson to the Grey River he carefully soldered up the flour cases to seal them and had them strongly hooped. When the schooner the 'Gypsy' got to the Grey River it promptly shipwrecked itself, but all of Dobson's stores were unharmed.

The men he had hired for the West Coast survey were discouraged by several drownings and left him, so he eagerly utilised the services of the Maori '...I was not altogether displeased at the departure of the white men. They were not nearly as suitable for the work as the Maoris...' In three weeks he learned a basic conversational Maori.

'I found the Maori to be ideal bushmen, and they made very good chainmen, were quick to learn, and worked splendidly; in fact I could not have done this work under the same conditions with white men. They were always jolly and pleasant, could catch birds and eels, and knew where to find mussels on the rocks at dead low water, spring tides. They could light fires and pitch tents under any conditions'.

Dobson had canoes and whatas (rat safe food stores) made for him by the Maori at strategic rivers, used the Maori rafts and river pole techniques of crossing rivers, and generally made himself as comfortable as possible. He was proud to boast: 'I was for two years exploring the forests and mountains, and during all that time we were never short of food or had wet blankets to sleep in'. This is a remarkable record considering the untold miseries of starvation and hardships endured by so many European explorers and diggers at the time.

Arthur Dobson of course is most famously remembered in 'Arthurs' Pass and 'Dobson' place names scattered around the South Island, could be named after him, his famously murdered brother, or his energetic father. There is a township Dobson just out of Greymouth, as well as a Dobson Street in Greymouth.



Kararoa or Griegs

Seventeen Mile Bluff (this was the old name for Barrytown) was the first point that needed a low tide to get round. In *Women of Westland (Greymouth Branch) 1960* they list all the permutations of name ‘...the old miners called it Seventeenmile, the newer ones Barryville, the swells Fosberry, and the school people Kynnersley’.

Barrytown had its rush in 1869, when the raised sea beaches were attacked. The ‘seventeen’ is the miles from Greymouth. Then there is Fourteen Mile Bluff, Twelve Mile and finally Nine Mile Bluffs. At Kararoa (between Fourteen and Twelve Mile Bluffs now called Greigs) Heaphy described this scene in 1846 as he and Brunner arrived at the Maori village.

‘The whole population of the village, consisting of one man, seven women, and a tail of about twenty children now ran down to the beach, hailing us with shouts of Naumai, naumai! (Welcome, welcome!) while Etau, the ragged rascal! strutted along before us with his tomahawk in his hand, as proud as any two peacocks at having conducted the first white men to the Araura’.

The Maori knew every inch of the coastline from Whanganui Inlet to Jackson Bay: the good fishing spots, the mussel banks, where the best nikau were, the potato gardens, the routes around the bluffs, the rope ladders, the useable huts, the dangerous crossings — a detailed mind ‘map’ would have been built up over several centuries. European travellers were utterly dependent on the Maori for hospitality, food, shelter, guides, route and landscape information – in fact for everything.

Heaphy’s comment was typical of the assistance the Maori regularly gave to half-starved travellers:

‘The hospitality of this place [Kararoa] was extreme. The laid-up stores for the winter were freely and unhesitatingly appropriated to our use, and no mention made, and I believe, no thought entertained, of payment.’

Confusingly, Ten Mile Creek flows in right beside Nine Mile Bluff, so someone must have got their figures wrong. Ten Mile Creek was known by the Maori as ‘waianiwaniwa’ which has been translated as ‘rainbow reflecting water’.

Kararoa Coast Access

The highway closely follows the shoreline and there are many places you can scramble down to the raw beaches.



The well-known 'hole in the rock' near Motukiekie.

Motukiekie

Immediately south of Griegs or Kararoa there is a stunning set of bluffs and sea-stacks known as Motukiekie. Almost certainly there was a Maori trail around this obstacle, and the modern road takes the same course.

Just past Motukiekie there's a striking hole in the rock (you can just glimpse it from the road) where it is claimed the early gold diggers used to go through to get past the headland. However this romantic notion seems implausible, as it is relatively easy to go around the point at low tide.

This 'hole' is beside 10 Mile Creek, which was the site of Warrens accommodation place where 'Waratah' (W. S. Hindmarsh) stayed in about 1870. The sound of the surf kept him awake as the house was perched only just above high tide. Just below the house was a big cave where the milking cows and chickens were housed.

It also seems possible that this was the same cave that Charles Money enjoyed on his trip up the coastline in 1863.

'The first night after leaving the kind-hearted Maories of the Mawhera, we camped (or rather rested, for we did not pitch our ragged old tent) in a most charming spot. This was a natural cavity in the face of the cliff, with a ledge just wide enough for us all to lie down upon. Below us...were piles of rocks jutting into the sea, over which the waves came surging and roaring with 'fine frenzy' almost to our feet, whilst out in the breakers, about a hundred yards away, was a weird-looking, weather-beaten rock...The sunset was wonderfully grand, and I indulged in half-an-hour of that pleasing melancholy, so soft, so impressive, and so impossible to analyse or explain...'

There's a good sandy beach south of Nine Mile, a small rocky headland and another easy short beach to Rapa-hoe.

Motukiekie Access

The road almost exactly follows the sea line, but tends to stay well above the shore. There is access to the beach south of Nine Mile down an unmarked vehicle track to a carpark, and at a very good low tide you can walk along to Waratah's cave and the hole-in-the-wall at Ten Mile Creek. Further along are tidal platforms of conglomerate and the islets of Motukiekie, which can be passed at low tide to Greigs.



Motukiekie swimmers.

Point Elizabeth – ‘a most successful prospector’

Much of this track was cut by the gold diggers in 1865 to by-pass the dangerous headland, when there was a rush on the old marine terraces between Point Elizabeth and the Grey River. Who ‘Elizabeth’ was is a mystery, and there are two suggested Maori names Matangitawau ‘matangi’ meaning breeze, ‘tawau’ mist or light smoke’, and Komata ‘end of range of hills’.

Darkies Terrace (just behind Point Elizabeth) was named after ‘darkie’ Addison a negro whose strikes began rushes both near Point Elizabeth (spring 1865) and at Addisons Flat near Charleston (autumn 1867).

He was obviously an enterprising man. Hassing records Addison as ‘a most successful prospector’, and ‘News that ‘The darkie’ had arrived in the township for a prospecting claim spread like lightning among the miners assembled at the Buller’. In any case Addison’s name is all over the place: Addisons (which now mainly seems to feature the dilapidated and melancholy cemetery), Addison Road and Darkies Terrace at Charleston.

Once round Point Elizabeth it was an easy beach walk to the Grey River, which the Maori knew as ‘Mawhera’ or ‘wide open river mouth’. In December 1865 a thousand men were working the terraces between the Grey River and Point Elizabeth, the northernmost group of stores being dignified by the name ‘Raleigh’. There’s still a Raleigh Creek at Rapahoe.





Point Elizabeth Access

The Point Elizabeth Walkway has nikau palms in the gullies and flax on the headlands with a tremendous outlook over the rocks of Point Elizabeth itself.

A short side track to the site of an old dam. Three hours one way. There is an alternative low tide route from the Point to Rapahoe.

Cobden occupies the north bank of the Grey River and there is a good road to the start of the Point Elizabeth Walkway and access to the north bank of the Grey River.



Looking along beach to Point Elizabeth.

Tarapuhi

Tarapuhi te Kaukihi was the most significant Maori chief during the 1850's and early 60's on the West Coast. Arthur Dobson met him when the chief was in his seventies and was impressed. 'He had a great reputation as an athlete and warrior, was over six feet in height, and a very well made, muscular man, of handsome countenance'.

It was Tarapuhi who guided Leonard Harper down the West Coast from the Grey River some 'ninety miles' south in 1857, only the second European to visit that coast since Brunner. Like the earlier explorer Harper found it was better to travel Maori style and he was heavily dependent on the skills of the chief. Tarapuhi later accompanied Leonard Harper back over the divide to the east coast – a fast eight days actual travel – and accepted as a gift from Leonard Harper a 'gross of clay pipes, which he put in a sugar bag to take back to the coast. My father often wondered how many survived the rough journey'.

Tarapuhi seems to have played some role with nearly every European who came across: lending a canoe to Julius Haast in 1860, assisting Arthur Dobson in his surveying, and was a significant part of the success of James Mackay in securing the signatures of the Maori to the Westland Deed of Sale in 1860. Indeed the two became close friends, Tarapuhi gave Mackay a greenstone mere, and Mackay returned the compliment and gave Tarapuhi £5. The chief accompanied Mackay down as far as the Mahitahi [Maitahi], and it must have been of considerable benefit to Mackay to have the mana of such an important figure as adviser and confidant.

Originally the Maori rejected the crown's offer out of hand and replied with a demand for £2500 (Tarapuhi was one of the signatures) but Mackay increased the reserves allocated and this seemed to clinch the deal. Seven and a half million acres for £300... Tarapuhi died in 1864, and there is a Tarapuhi Street in Greymouth.

Tae-po 'an evil nocturnal visitor'

Arthur Dobson was travelling with Tarapuhi up the Arnold River, and wanted to stay in an old whare. Tarapuhi objected and said it was a 'bad place'. Dobson however insisted and so Tarapuhi agreed to stay. Late at night Dobson was awakened by Tarapuhi who described what he saw:

'Tae-po, the evil spirit, now comes...He comes in the form of a little pig. He often comes like that. He is now putting his snout in between the bundles of raupo, and pushing his head right through, now his body is all in. Cannot you see him? Now he is turning into a little man, now he is coming to the fire-log; alas, we shall perish. Now he stops, now he is sitting on the log warming his feet. It is well he is not looking this way... Now he is looking this way, and warming his hands, now he is getting fainter, now his head is again looking like a little pig, now he is changing all over, now he is the pig again, now he is squeezing between the raupo and going out. He is gone, we are saved'.

Dobson noted that Tarapuhi was shaking with fear, though he himself could see nothing. Tarapuhi said: 'Tae-po does sometimes come like that, and not do any harm, but I told you this is a bad place'.

'I cannot account for this vision of Terapuhi's; it was not a dream, as he was wide awake all the time. Of course I neither saw nor heard anything, but it was a solid reality to Terapuhi, and he considered that we had had a miraculous escape'.

Flax, and raft building

Flax was the most versatile plant on the coast for all the early travellers – about the only thing you couldn't do with it was eat it. Actually one settler recalls as a boy sucking out the sweet nectar juices from the flax flower, so there was nourishment to be gained after all!

The Maori developed extensive uses for flax and the Europeans quickly appropriated the technology. The leaves could be used for making sandals or 'parara', also for pack straps 'kawa', or entwined to make a base for making dough on. Flax mats were also used for drying whitebait (papaki), and elevated to improve circulation, otherwise the flax made the whitebait bitter. Flax fibres were useful for tying up pack rolls, stitching clothes, and became the universal 'string'. The dry flax stalks were bundled together to make primitive rafts or 'mokihi' which could support people and gear across the deep rivers.

This description by Charles Money in his book *Knocking About New Zealand* details the raft making process after they have collected the dry flax-stems.

'First of all, the sticks were laid side by side on the ground, the butts towards the centre, and the light and feathery tops towards each end. These were tied with blades of green flax, scorched in the fire to dry the slimy gum contained in them, and also to make them more tough and lasting. When the bottom had been fastened together in this manner, bundles similarly disposed were laid on the sides and lashed to the frame below, and the hollow thus formed was filled up with loose and broken flax-sticks, then another set of bundles were placed above the former ones, and filled in as before. Three layers having been lashed tightly down to the frame-work beneath, and also to each other, and the ends tied together in a point at the bow and stern, the moguey was complete. The first we made stood from three to four feet in height, according to the

comparative ripeness of the flax-sticks, and capable of supporting two or three men and their swags with safety. When it is considered that these sticks are as light or even lighter than cork, it will readily be understood how well they would answer the purpose to which we applied them. We had no idea how the Maoris were in the habit of making their 'mogueys', but we found ours subsequently to be very similar to theirs, and quite as serviceable').

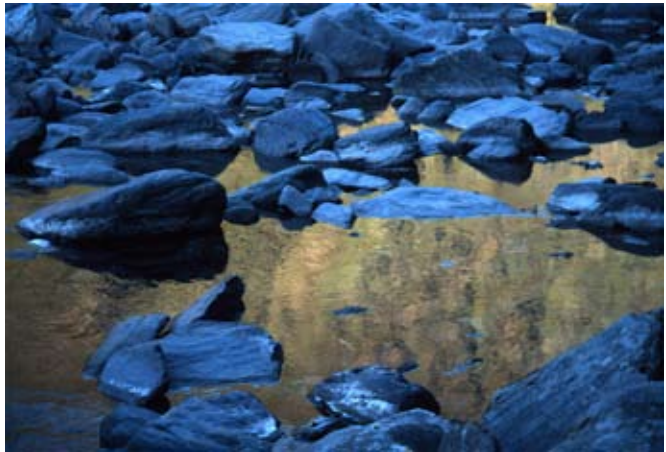
It took two and a half days to make the three rafts to carry seven men, and on these vehicles they proceeded down the lower Taramakau to the coast.

Flax was later used extensively for processing into rope and there were several small industries based around this. Flax mills sprang up all along the West Coast.



Chapter 4

Hokitika and Greymouth



The area from Greymouth to Hokitika and Ross, was where the first extravagant scenes of the great West Coast gold rush took place from 1864 to 1867. The landscape between these three towns has been dug over many times, and everywhere there are old tunnels, water races and dredge tailings. Greymouth and Hokitika were quickly rivals: both river ports, both subject to flooding and with dangerous bars, first one then the other would lead the race to be West Canterbury's 'leading town'. Scenery takes something of a back-step here, quite literally, because the mountains have shifted away from the coast, for about the only time in the entire ??? km shoreline of the West Coast.



Greymouth – ‘would be a suitable site for a town’

Mawhera was an important site for the Maori and a pa existed on both sides of the river at the mouth. When James Mackay was arguing with the Maori on how much to pay for Westland the significance of the site almost proved a stumbling block for him.

‘On the 17th May [1861] a dispute arose as to the site of a reserve of 500 acres for individual allotment at the Mawhera or Grey, I wishing the Natives to select it up the river, but they objected to do so preferring to have it near the landing place. As this spot had always been their home, and on the hill above it in a cave repose the remains of Tuhura [Tarapuhi’s father] and other of their ancestors, nothing could move them to give up this place, which I much regretted, as it enables them to retain the best landing place. I however found that further argument would have endangered the whole arrangement entered into at Poherua [Poerua], on the 26th April, and therefore deemed it politic to acquiesce in their demand. It may be imagined from the position of this reserve that it would be a suitable site for a town, but the whole flat portion of it is liable to be flooded, of which we had practical demonstration by finding on our return from the south that several of the houses at the Pah had been carried away by a flood which took place in our absence’.³

Why Mackay wanted the place as a site for a town when it was easily flooded, and on a Maori reserve, seems puzzling. However when the gold diggers turned up, they were not bothered by legal niceties and established their tents and stores bang on the Maori reserve. This calico town evolved into the main centre of Greymouth, from which the Maori still derive a rental income. And the flooding...? Greymouth’s floods made national news for many years and the problem was not finally tackled until the construction of a river-wall in 1991.

Greymouth and Grey River Access

You can access the Grey River historic wharf on the south side, as well as the long river 'mole'. The north side can be accessed as well.



Historic wharf at Greymouth looking up the Grey River, modern port facilities and Greymouth itself, on the right.



A storekeeper on the Grey River 1864

Storekeepers were the most essential and most disliked personages on the goldfields. Reuben Waite was the first storekeeper on the Grey River in 1864 and his story is typical. He landed with provisions and sold them rapidly to the diggers who had also arrived, spurred on by the rumours of gold up the Greenstone Creek. Although Waite had seen 50 ounces of gold dug out by the Maori, the diggers returned very aggrieved, having found nothing and prepared to take out their feelings on the first likely figure – ie the man that made profits from the business. Starting a ‘duffer’ rush was a heinous crime in a diggers eyes, and false claims caused some of the worst outbreaks of violence on the goldfields.

‘Vell, vot did you cors dis rush vor?’ asked a big Dutchman, who suggested to the other diggers they hang Waite and sack his store. Reuben Waite later wrote:

‘It was rather an exciting moment as, stepping outside the store, the thought struck me that my life hung as it were by a thread – that the weight of a feather would probably turn the scale either way’.

Fortunately he had enough support that day but had to buy back all the stores he had previously sold. Then more men turned up who showed good gold results and the rush was back on with a vengeance.

‘Then came a rush for stores again, and those who had been among the grumblers I charged an extra price, as they had compelled me to take back their stores and tools. From that time commenced the great rush, which up to the present date has brought out of the earth forty tons of gold, and for which I was to be hanged, because those first arrivals chose to call the expedition a duffer rush’.

In the 1860’s on the banks of the Grey River gentlemen were forced into strange occupations. G. O. Preshaw, the banker, had a wash day.

‘Immediately after breakfast made a start with my washing (my first attempt), which I would have made a mess of had it not been for Waite, who happened to be passing at the time. I had my flannel things in a bucket of water, which I intended to boil; fortunately for me I did not’.



Detail of the historic Greymouth wharf.

South Beach to Taramakau

South Beach was the main 'track', but several lagoons along this coast were a 'handy supplement' to the beach, and were in 1866 'enlivened with flotillas of punts and skiffs', some of the boatmen briefly enjoying such trade that they were making £3 a day.

A 'Packers Quay' in Greymouth is a reminder of the days when small usually temporary 'packer towns' would spring up, both a supply and dispatch centre for the eager diggers. By 1865 horse-drawn coaches were running twice a week from Hokitika to Greymouth a 'six hour' journey.

Taramakau River – 'we did the work of barge-horses'

'Tracking' was the curious name in the 1860's for the business of getting a well laden punt or boat up river, by poling, and then with the men wading chest deep in the water hooked to a belt across their shoulders, and 'track' the boat up. It was hard, dangerous work.

Charles Money did some tracking on the Buller and the Taramakau for a while.

'The work was pretty hard sometimes, when a heavy loading of stores had to be taken up the river; for when we arrived at a fall or rapid, we two got out of the canoe, leaving [Cincinnati] 'Bill' to steer it with a pole, and taking the end of the a trail rope, 70 or 80 feet in length, over our shoulders, we did the work of barge-horses along a canal bank, with the slight variation in the duties of those animals that a swift current was rushing us up to our hips at the rate of twelve 'knots' an hour. Wet through, both day and night, in bad weather the only way we managed to keep warm was by keeping up a flow of 'spirits' within!'

This was for ten shillings a day and cheap food. On the Taramakau he got an improved rate of £1 and five shillings a trip.

A plaque near the Taramakau rivermouth remembers Henry Whitcombe who drowned here, after achieving the first European crossing of Whitcombe Pass in 1863 with Swiss guide Jakob Lauper.

They lashed together two derelict canoes and once launched they quickly filled with water. Whitcombe started to swim across whilst Lauper, who was a poor swimmer, clung to the raft and was swept out to sea. After some desperate hours he got washed ashore and in the morning found the unfortunate Mt Whitcombe just a 'pair of boots sticking upright'. With some help from the Maori Lauper eventually reached Howitt's track cutting party by Lake Brunner.



South Beach Access

Several side roads lead down to the shoreline and South Beach is a sort of suburb of Greymouth now. There's a walkway to the beach off Pandora Avenue, and beach access by the Paroa pub.

Taramakau River Access

Just north of Kumara Junction, a short road gives access to the beach and river-mouth. This is also the start pont for the annual Coast To Coast race.



Evening light on tussocks and sand by the Taramakau river mouth, looking north to Greymouth.

Arahura River – ‘sterling hospitality’

Once across the Taramakau River the travel is good beach sands to Hokitika with mostly small streams to ford.

The Arahura River was very important to the Maori as it was a source for much of the West Coast greenstone. Even today there are greenstone claims and a Maori reserve over the riverbed to the headwaters.

The Arahura River was the awkward crossing, but by 1865 there was a ferry (sixpence usually, but a shilling in a ‘freshet’), a store, and three public houses. It was here that the special correspondent for the West Coast Times had his lunch (and his opinions).

‘The establishment wherein I obtained my noonday meal was presided over by a bustling landlady, good tempered and communicative....There is no mistaking the thorough colonial women when you meet them. Hardened by rough usage, they at first sight appear obtrusive, which, however, is more than made up by heartiness of demeanour, sterling hospitality, and a desire to oblige’.



A section of the historic road and rail bridge over the Arahura River has been preserved.

Pounamu

Greenstone is a term applied to nephrite, which is known as jade in other countries, which is found in the Arahura and Wakatipu regions, and in many rivers and beaches between Jackson Bay and Martins Bay, and bowenite (which is a type of serpentine) found at its most significant site at Anita Bay or Tauraka-o-Hupokeka 'the anchorage of Hupokeka' in Milford Sound, known to the Maori as 'Piopiotahi'. Bowenite is lighter in colour and called by the Maori 'tangiwai' or in the Southern Maori dialect 'takiwai', meaning 'tear water'.

The exceptional hardness of greenstone made it highly desirable for weapons of war, and its beauty, desirable for ornaments. One account refers to greenstone as 'kai kanohi', 'food for the eyes', and the chief Tuhuru, the father of Tarapuhi, had a prized greenstone mere named 'kai-kanohi'.

The Maori recognised several types of greenstone – kahurangi (light coloured), kawakawa (dark coloured), inanga (whitish, sharing the same name as whitebait), tangiwai (transparent) etc – all for different colours and properties. Greenstone type of rocks can be found in several places in Westland and there were a number of manufacturing sites.

More than anything else it was the lure of greenstone that established the usage of Maori routes across the divide. Only in the South Island could the valued mineral be found, and the most abundant source was in the Arahura and Taramakau valleys. The Maori had regular trails and knowledge of the Haast Pass, Browning Pass, Harper Pass, Whitcombe Pass, Lewis Pass, and even possibly Broderick Pass, before the European came along. Undoubtedly this knowledge considerably accelerated the European exploration of these areas.

Greenstone is not always obvious in its natural state, for usually there is an outer rind of rock that could be anything from almost white to deeper browns. The Maori traditionally looked for greenstone when it was wet, after storms or an outgoing tide, when the greenstone was more easily distinguished. Often some of the best greenstone pieces can be found on the coast, as they have survived the natural 'grinding' mechanisms of river and shingle. The milky-green inanga was particularly prized by the Maori.

In 1846 Charles Heaphy reached the Taramakau pa and commented on the greenstone activity.

'The inmates of each house were busily engaged in making meri poenamū and ear pendants of that material, for 'trade' or presents to the northward. They saw the slab with a piece of mica slat, wet, and afterwards polish it with a fine sandy limestone which they obtain in the vicinity. The hole is drilled with a stick pointed with a piece of Pahutani flint. The process does not appear so tedious as has been supposed; a month sufficing, apparently, for the completion of a meri out of a rough but appropriately shapen slab'. He later commented: 'A native will get up at night to have a polish at a favourite meri, or take one down to the beach and work away by the surf. A piece of greenstone and some slate will be carried when travelling, and at every halt a rub will be taken of it. Poor fellows! they had no tobacco, and a grind at a piece of inanga seemed to be a stimulant'.

Hokitika – ‘the most rising place on earth’

Hokitika has a wild romantic history. It was founded on gold and literally sprang from almost nowhere in a week, based on the rich (and richer rumours!) of gold discoveries at Waimea, Ross and the Totara River.

G. O. Preshaw, a banker working for the Bank of New Zealand, arrived in Hokitika on the 20th December 1864, observing that the place was just a mass of driftwood on sand and grass. The cargo was discharged and the storekeepers wasted no time. The ‘buildings’ may have been calico, but within days the first wooden structures went up.

‘When I returned to Okatika next day I scarcely knew the place, it had so changed in appearance, even in that short time; buildings were going up in all directions’.

Hokitika was a lively place, and at its peak boasted 102 hotels, which lined up by a happy coincidence, on Revell Street. William Revell was the Government agent who laid off the first streets in Hokitika. The hotels were required to have lights outside after dark and gave the place ‘the appearance of a Chinese town during the feast of lanterns’, and they advertised heavily in the local newspaper. One Dan O’Connell Hotel extolling its Dining Room, which under the management of the ‘Chef de Cuisine, Monsieur Bill Flowers, is a recommendation in itself’. Indeed.

Meat was very expensive. In Hokitika in 1865 one market report gave stock prices as: ‘One lot of fat steers averaged £38 per head, while choice beasts brought £59; wethers realised 30 shillings to 80 shillings.’

‘The stock breakfast [in the 1860’s] would be porridge, bacon, bread and tea. Such was the price of packing supplies of food that Haast recorded some diggers used not less than “£3 worth a week of bread, bacon and tea”.

It is no accident that names like ‘damper’ and ‘doughboy’ appear regularly on the landscape. Doughboys were a sort of flour dumpling, damper a sort of fried flour pikelet.

The population of Hokitika today is around 5000 people, not that much smaller than its gold boom population of around 6000.

Hokitika Access

The old wharf by the Hokitika River has been preserved and the Customs House turned into an information kiosk. There is a replica of the schooner 'Tambo' by the rivermouth. The Hokitika cemetery contains Charlie Douglas's grave, and also several distinctive Chinese gravestones. It's a short easy walk to the beach which is as wild as the day the first diggers and store-owners scabbled ashore.



A replica of the Tambo stands on the sandspit at the wide Hokitika river mouth. It is a reference to the numerous ships cast ashore during the heady gold rush days.

Hokitika River

This river was an obstacle to early travellers, but ironically it was the source of Hokitika's existence. Like Greymouth and Westport, Hokitika was an 'Australian port', closer in practical travelling terms to Australia than to Christchurch. Diggers would leave the Australian fields and sail direct to the West Coast, where the gold diggers could be transported 'hot' to the new fields at Ross and Waimea, so bypassing Otago and Canterbury – a fact which caused much anguish to the businessmen of both those provinces.

The river bar was the bane of shipping, beachings were commonplace, and it took brave boats to get across. There were 27 beachings between May and September 1865, of which 15 were total wrecks. More often ships anchored in the uncomfortable roadstead and ferried their passengers ashore, but even this could entail long delays for the impatient diggers.. 'The schooner *Wallace* lay off the bar for twelve weeks before entering'.

The river too could change, and in one notable period blocked up for four months. When it suddenly cleared 41 vessels came into port between the 12-15 September 1867, the 'high water' mark of shipping. The *West Coast Times* sometimes had an ironic column on 'Vessels Ashore' and it was a common sight to have several boats stuck at odd positions around the river mouth.

The business of getting these vessels afloat was lucrative – up to a £1000 a time — and a new class of salvagers sprang up, 'beach rakers' who would be out on moonlit nights to drag in spars, planking or whatever had been washed off from the wrecked ships. The port closed finally in 1954.

The first ferryboat across the river was noticed in November 1864 'a large tree scooped out' and the charge two shillings and sixpence for the crossing.

biographical profile

King Dick, Richard John Seddon

Richard John Seddon was one of the larger than life characters of the coast, the local boy made good, from digger to storeman to premier of New Zealand. He was a big man physically with a forceful personality. Born in Lancashire in 1845 he started his working life as an engineering apprentice, then went to the Victorian goldfields in 1863, setting up in Hokitika in 1866, first as an ordinary prospector, then as a storeman by 1868.

His fortunes were violently up or down, and though he filed for bankruptcy in 1878, his involvement in local body politics took him on a successful and meteoric public career. At 28 he was a member of the Arahura Road Board, and one of the members elected to the first Westland County Council in 1874. He was the first mayor of Kumara, and later went on to become Member of Parliament for Westland in 1878. He assumed premiership in 1893 and held it for 13 outspoken years till his death in 1906.

Many stories are told about him. W. Hill Chinn recounts that as a storeman in Kumara Seddon gave 'tick' to a miner who later refused to pay. Seddon pursued him, and they had a fight, Seddon emphatically coming out the winner. Whereupon the storeman promptly took out his pocket book and issued a receipt to the baffled miner: 'Here you are; we are square now. I have had satisfaction'. On one of his tours south Seddon stopped at the Wallace household at Waiho, and noticing one of the sons had a nasty boil under his jaw, lanced and dressed the wound.

His death after a tour of Australia was as sudden and ebullient as his life. He had earlier sent a telegram to the Victorian State Premier: 'Just returning to God's own country'.

Considering his 'mana' as one of the great figures in West Coast and New Zealand history, it's not surprising that Seddon has left his name all over the country. On the West Coast there is the small locality of Seddonville, a few street names in Runanga and Kumara, a fine statue in Hokitika and a memorial in Kumara, the latter stating 'Richard John Seddon, Premier of New Zealand 1893-1906 had his house on this site until he moved to Wellington in 1895'.



Beaches and Lagoon — Hokitika to Ross

When the new goldfields at Totara and Ross were uncovered in 1864 it was possible to take advantage of a curious topography that made it feasible to ‘ship’ the diggers down from Hokitika to Ross almost entirely by water.

First the ferry across the Hokitika River, then by 1867 you could travel up the Mahinapua Creek to Lake Mahinapua on the 15 ton ‘Golden Land’ paddle steamer, then a short tramp to ‘Lagoon Town’ which sprang up briefly at the north head of the Totara Lagoon.

350 people a day were recorded crossing the Totara River in August 1865, and during the gold rush ‘enterprising watermen cleared £15 a week’. Flat bottom skiffs ran down the long narrow estuary and up the Totara River to the diggings, though in practice this romantic mode of travel was too slow for the diggers, and the coaches provided stiff competition.

Coaches would leave the south side of the Hokitika River or ‘Packers Town’, travel on the beaches, and be ferried over the Totara river-mouth on a punt, where another coach would take them up to Ross. Soon there was a daily service, £1 one way.

Coaches had broad rimmed wheels suitable for sand and timetables were adapted for low water where the harder running surface were. The coaches were driven close to the breakers and passengers could reckon on a good drenching from surf spray. It was told that the coach drivers made a little ‘something extra’ by carefully washing the wheels whenever they drove through the rich black sands, particularly after a storm.

Henry Harper was impressed by the trip up the Mahinapua Creek in 1866.

‘Then we went to Ross by a new route, worth seeing. Into the southern side of the river Hokitika, flows a tributary stream of some eight miles. In most parts the water is deep, with very slight fall, winding its way through primeval forest, its banks fringed with luxuriant growth of fern and flax. Being extremely sheltered from wind, its surface is like a mirror, in which the reflections of fern and foliage is so vivid and clearcut that, looking down, you might fancy yourself on your back, gazing up at a vista of forest into the sky above. I have never elsewhere seen anything to compare with it’.



Mahinapua River and Lakes Access

The highway follows the shoreline fairly closely, crossing Mahinapua River and skirting around the lake Mahinapua. Good walking tracks here.

The Mahinapua Creek is still an easy and pleasant paddle for the canoeist. An old paddle steamer which was scuttled and then resurrected in 1977 is now on display at Shanghai Bay at the Lake Mahinapua rest area.

However this may not be the original Golden Land as two paddle steamers were built in 1867, and the displayed steamer was restored in 1883 from one of those.

Totara Lagoon Access

Access to the south end of Totara Lagoon is from Ross, down Moorhouse Road to the beach. The outlet 'migrates' in position.



Totara Lagoon looking north

Ross – ‘gold-getting’

‘Those who go to Ross do not usually visit it for pleasure – though I once knew a lady who spent a week there, but I think it was because she could go no further’.

This was Maud Moreland’s acid comment on the township of Ross around 1906, which in that year was exclusively a ‘gold-getting’ town, and the sluice workings produce huge debris piles right behind the township.

On the 10th September 1909 the largest gold nugget ever found in New Zealand was discovered by John Scott and Arthur Sharp at Ross. The nugget was the size of a man’s hand and weighed 99 ounces (3.1 kilograms) and dubbed the ‘Honourable Roddy’. It was later bought by the government and presented to King George 5th where it was prosaically turned into a gold tea service at Buckingham Palace.

These days Ross is now a sleepy and attractive locality, tucked in under the bush hills. There is an interesting visitor centre with several short walks, and the current cemetery has a fine view of the area — as they always do.



Ross Access

There is a goldfields information centre, museum, car-park, toilets and gaol (with inmate). The Water Race walk has a good view from the old cemetery. There is also a restored miners hut on the walk.

The large hole left by the open cast mine has been turned into a recreational lake.

The current Ross cemetery has a fine view of the coast. Philip Ross May's headstone is on top.



Old Ross cemetery.

Gold: the great West Coast gold rush

'In this country a man need live with his swag always on his back' grumbled one digger, and this perfectly conveys the crazy atmosphere of the gold days. One long rush and rumour, with just the whisper of a 'find' would send men working perfectly good claims pell-mell for some fantastic and spurious goldfield. When a rush was on no expense was spared to get there as quick as possible and prices, already high, skyrocketed. The peak of the gold rush did not last more than three years, from about 1865 to 1868, and some 'towns' enjoyed only a few months existence before being forsaken. The vast majority of diggers earned little and spent it mostly on food and grog, and it was the storekeepers and the packers who really made the money. Working conditions were often miserable. Rain, sandflies, mud, mosquitoes, rats, blowflies, dysentery, influenza, sudden death or injury, the 'romance' of the goldfields was largely invented by later writers who never experienced it.

Gold was noticed quite early. Leonard Harper reported gold at the mouth of the Taramakau in 1857, and Lauper got colour from the Whitcombe River in 1863. Rochfort noted some in 1859, Haast noted some, and the Maori were working some gold by the early '60's, but the time was not appropriate. Westland was isolated, no one was sure the gold was payable, and Otago had just struck it rich, and it was a far easier place to get to. But once the West Coast rush was on it came like fury. By the end of March 1865 the population of Westland (West Canterbury as it was then known) had jumped to 5000 from a mere 200 in 1864. 2000 people were in Hokitika.

The dispute over who first struck payable gold is ongoing,

Certainly gold was found in the Greenstone River (close to present day Kumara) and Albert Hunt got the memorial, but his role seems equivocal. William Smart's and Michael French's claim in May 1864 seems plausible, but the Maori have just as good a claim, perhaps better, and European prospectors watched their movements very closely. There were a number of able European and Maori prospectors in the Greenstone-Taramakau region in those crucial months and one can fairly observe that it was almost a 'joint effort' – except

that everyone was in wary competition. Smart and French got two fine peaks in the Waihohonu Range named after them, which did not please William Smart much as he complained it was 'the only thing we ever got'.

'Over the next two years the goldfields of West Canterbury boomed as field after field was prospected, exploited and then practically abandoned, except for a few reliables like the Ross, Kaniere, Rimu and Okarito. Prospectors were arriving from many parts of the world. The beaches became the main highway as thousands of prospectors and miners hot-footed it from one field to another, one week heading South and the next week bustling back North again to a new field or vice-versa. Many of the sea beach claims of black sand deposits were a nine days wonder, hordes of diggers would turn up at a new find, a small calico town would spring up in a matter of days only to find the available gold on the black sand beaches would only support ten to a dozen diggers'.

Accidents were frequent and amputations were common. There was often no anaesthetic except 'a piece of wood with a cloth wrapped around it' for the patient to bite on.

The great romanticised 'legend' of the gold rush is the 'rough brotherhood' of the diggers. However a glance at the Wardens Courts reveal they were kept busy with mining disputes, water right arguments and claim jumping. The roving and speculative nature of the diggings contributed to all sorts of petty crimes against other people that were not reported simply because both the victim and the guilty had moved on. Human behaviour then was no different or better than now.

Many commentators at the time – Henry Harper, G. O. Preshaw, etc – thought that the crime rate was low, but as Phillip Ross May points out this was true only in comparison to the Australian and Californian goldfields, but not in comparison to other parts of New Zealand. For example in 1867 the population of Canterbury was more than double the goldfields, yet there were 43 supreme court convictions on the east coast, and 40 on the west. These rates are maintained through all crimes, as indeed you would expect from such a high population of young males.

Over a three year period from November 1864 to December 1867 it was likely that three hundred sudden deaths occurred on the West Coast, that were 'known to the police'. An average of about two a week. Almost 50% were drownings, 20% mining accidents,

uncertain, and 14% 'visitations of God'. Only three murders were officially recorded, but there were plenty of examples of suspicious deaths. Inquest verdicts such as 'probably drowned' 'death by gunshot, accidental or otherwise not known' 'found dead' and the usefully vague 'visitations of God' suggest another story.

The Maungatapu gang of Burgess, Sullivan, Levy and Kelly, were widely suspected of murdering more victims (they called it 'burking') than they admitted to, and it would have been a relatively simple matter to dispose of an unwanted body in the bush. Or throttle your intended victim and dump them in the river as a 'drowning'.

At the height of the gold rush the population never exceeded thirty thousand, probably less, with women about 10-12 per cent of that. Local observers often mistakenly guessed higher figures. G. O. Preshaw thought 50,000, and the usually accurate Arthur Dobson thought there were 20,000 getting supplies from Westport alone. Most diggers came from the British Isles, often via the Australian and American fields, but Italians, French, Germans, Poles, Americans, Greek, Swiss, Dutch, Scandanavian, Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese were all represented.

There was a culture of gold and a language of gold. A 'duffer' was a dry claim, a 'duffers rush' (very common) was where no gold was found and the prospector who led it was likely to be in for a hard time. 'New chums' were the new arrivals on the goldfields. A 'hatter' was a digger who worked alone and several suggestions have been made for the term. Perhaps their isolation made them 'mad as a hatter', or because his whole world and goods could be kept 'under his hat', or the unlikely 'if they had nothing else to wash in they washed in their hats!'

'Surfacing' or 'beaching' was looking amongst the beach sands after stormy days to see if any gold had been thrown up 'Tucker ground' produced enough money for food only, a 'wages claim' comfortable, a 'riser' definitely a good ground maybe even a rich ground, and a 'piler' or 'homeward bounder' the best of all, where a man could make his 'pile' and head 'home' for Australia or England.

The reality was far from the dream. Phillip Ross May calculated that the average digger would recover an ounce a week, about £2:12 shillings. Remembering that it was easy to spend £3 a week on food, especially in remote areas, then individual returns were nothing startling. But 'average' is misleading, since there were huge variations in fortune, and it was the hope of a 'piler' that kept the digger going.

There are lots of gold stories, and the best ones are actually true. In 1886 R. C. Reid, then a gold buyer for the Bank of New Zealand, was carrying £2000 in notes, and when three men approached him he found he was still a few hundred pounds short. They had about 50lbs of gold dust worth about \$300,000 in today's money – and it took them just six weeks to collect it!²¹ Then there was the famous gold rush on a main street in Hokitika itself, some people obtaining forty ounces of gold for little work. The unexpected strike was eventually traced to a 230 ounce bag of Waimea gold which had been lost three months previously.

It was a crazy, ephemeral time, and it is hardly possible to follow every twist and turn of the great gold rush. Between 1864 and 1867 the West Coast had produced over one million ounces of gold, valued at over £5,000,000. So gold there was, and rumours of gold ten times more than the real stuff. Tremendous hardships, great stories, numerous deaths, and in the end, surprisingly few traces left on the landscape after the madness had passed. Tailings, rusting machinery, abandoned water races and the old pack tracks are some of the more tangible reminders of this extraordinary period, but most of these gold workings are being overgrown by gorse and native bush. However, much of this land is held under existing gold licences and there is the never quite extinguished hope that someday, someone will again make another 'pile'.

Chapter 4

Wanganui & Whataroa



For many new arrivals, particularly people more familiar with English or Australian landscapes, the bush was a strange and impenetrable landscape.

'A man named John Stamp was found on the 18th ult. wandering about in the bush, and on the very verge of starvation. He was taken care of, and has, we are happy to say, recovered. It seems that he was lost, and for fourteen days managed to support life. At length, when found, he was in the last stage of weakness, and had fallen into a creek whilst attempting to drink'.



View from Mt One One.

Bold Head — ‘a curious headland’

From Ross it is easy beach walking to the Mikonui River, then five more kilometres of beach to Bold Head (Paramata).

The 1908 Totara Geological Survey map still shows a railway from Totara Lagoon down to the Mikonui River, and a tramway south of that, stopping short of Bold Head. These were probably used for timber extraction.

Bold Head is one of the more noticeable coastal features if you are sailing a boat along the coast, and featured on at least one early navigation map of 1834. It is often mistakenly drawn into a prominent headland, and Brunner seems to have been unaware of the earlier map.

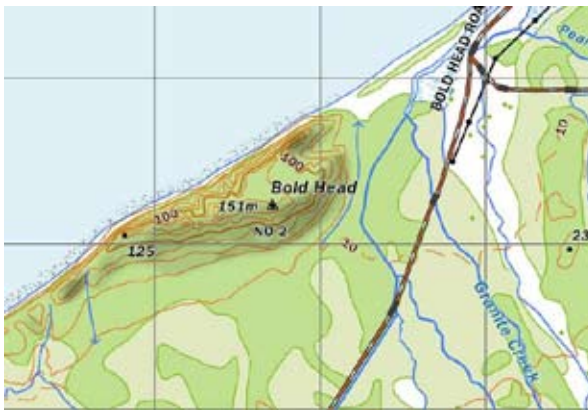
‘Started with the rising sun, and after proceeding about two miles, came to a curious headland or cliff, names by the natives Paramata, which projects some way into the sea, and, from it’s position and appearance, must be a bold head’.

‘If as I say, anyone wishes to get an idea of former travelling, then let him start from Bold Head along the beaches to Okarito, he will now find them in the same state as in the early days, no stores, no pubs, no ferries. He can learn how to make rafts, ford rivers, pitch tents or rig up a lean-to with flax or kiekie. He will find himself keeping a keen eye for derelict fish cast up on the beach, will take an interest in mussel banks he never felt before, and will often have to chase a weka before he gets his supper’.

Bold Head could be easily skirted at low tide and then there was a further short stretch of beach to the Waitaha River, a difficult crossing. Brunner found it ‘chin deep’ in October 1846. The first recorded ferry service was run by John Allan in 1869, who later farmed in the Waitaha valley. The first bridge was built in 1903.



Morning light and mist at Bullock Creek, on the Inland Pack Track.



Bold Head Access

An unmarked coastal road starts from just south of the Mikonui River bridge on Highway 6, and follows along the shoreline till short of Bold Head then cuts straight across to the junction of the Kakapotahi and Waitaha Rivers where it joins back to the main highway. Obvious access to Mikonui River mouth and Bold Head.

Beach Road leads from the locality of Kakapotahi to the Waitaha River mouth. At a rest area just after Ross there is a memorial to the early surveyors of Westland, and also a very good view of Bold Head and the flat swamplands and forest that gives it its curious and striking isolation.

Greens Beach – Waitaha River to Wanganui River

South of the Waitaha River is the Ounatai Lagoon and the elongated tidal estuary of the Te Rahotaiepa River. Easy beach travel to Greens Beach, and further towards the Wanganui Bluff.

William Green built and ran a boarding house here in the 1870's, and worked the black sands as well. He was born in London in 1838 and arrived in New Zealand in 1862, fought in the Maori Wars and as an ex-soldier was granted a parcel of land.

He chose here, and seemed to like the spot because he didn't shift when the inland track was put through (so taking most of his custom away) but turned to farming instead. He died in Hokirtika in 1930.

A. P. Harper remembers a certain Green who supplied 'beef' to the diggers, the trouble was that 'beef' was a universal term used for all meat – Green's 'beef' was mutton!

From here to the Wanganui river mouth it is straightforward travel on a wide shingle beach. Charlie Douglas commented:

'About a dozen small waterfalls falling over the cliffs varies the otherwise rather weary journey along this part of the Coast. These falls have nothing particularly splendid about them, their volume of water is small – about a sandhead – and they are what for want of a better name I call donkey tail falls...a straight streak of water spreading out in a tuft of spray near the bottom'.



Greens Beach.



Greens Beach Access

Just before Lake lanthe an unmarked side-road (indicated by 'Truck' signs) goes into the lanthe State Forest. A good shingle road, it passes through cutover forest and a messy gold claim area to the signposted 'Greens Beach Road' which leads down a rougher shingle road to the coastal picnic area, carpark, and five minute Lookout track. Huge sprawls of driftwood on the beach.

From here you can get access north to the Waitaha and the Te Rāhōtaiepea and Ounatai lagoons, and south to the seal colony towards the Wanganui River mouth. To reach the colony takes about 3-4 hours return, with up to several hundred seals present in season.

Hendes Ferry (Hari Hari) — ‘the great inconvenience’

By 1867 there was a store and ferry across the Wanganui River mouth, and it was this ferry service that in 1872 the Danish Hende brothers took over from William Bell. They dabbled at black sanding when things were slow. But by 1878 the inland pack track to Okarito had been constructed so the Hende brothers shifted their ferry service inland and set up an accommodation house as well.

Caroline Hende had an unenviable walk to get to Ross as the term of her pregnancy drew near. On the birth of her third child in 1878 she walked the inland track to Ross in two days, 14 miles each day, nine hours each day. Anna Hende was born twenty days later.

Traffic increased once the pack track was enlarged to a dray road. Usually people were rowed across and the horses swam behind; the first motor vehicles had the indignity of being pulled across on a punt by horses. Until the first bridge was built in 1912, the problems for the traveller in alerting the ferryman were perennial.

‘During my stay at Mr P. Hende’s my attention was forcibly drawn to the great inconvenience in communicating with the ferryman. A traveller arrived in the evening saying that he was an hour and a half on the opposite side of the river before he could attract the attention of the ferryman, and I was informed that some travellers have had to stay all night in the cold wind and rain through being unable to make themselves heard’.

The locality here was first known as Hendes Ferry but gradually the name Hari Hari was adopted. Hari Hari does not appear to be a proper name, and according to A. W. Reed it meant literally ‘a song to encourage the crew to pull together, and sung by the paddlers’. There is also a difference of opinion as to how to spell the word - with the space or without?

Wanganui River to Poerua River — ‘Colonial nomenclature’

Mt One One is the distinctive knob at the Wanganui river mouth, a landmark for coastal travellers. Charlie Douglas remarked:

‘One One is a round conical mass of drift 150 feet high standing entirely by itself. It had the honour of being the first scene in Westland which appeared in the Illustrated London News. Who sent the sketch I don’t know, but it was accurate enough to recognise the Knob. Home people must have had some fun over the name, so suggestive of the first numeral, and wondered at Colonial nomenclature, never dreaming the name One One is Maori’.

Christopher Steets was the ferryman at the Poerua in 1870, with the high subsidy of £100. A pack track avoided the Poerua Bluff, and often the Poerua river mouth was shoaled up, and traffic could carry on straight down the beach with no water to cross at all. The river-mouth must have been a fertile place, for Brunner mentioned:

‘...it is much noted for a pond on its bank abounding in eels of fine quality, which is a summer residence of the natives’.

Haast called the lagoon Lake Poerua and noted in 1865 ‘great quantities of waterfowl are living here, giving animation to the quiet foreground’. In 1955 Peter Adamson’s camp at the Poerua rivermouth caught 1200lbs of whitebait in one day.

The inland bush country was still mostly untouched and A. P. Harper recalled that when he and Charlie Douglas started inland from the Wanganui coast the land was ‘so densely timbered it took us two days at least to reach Hende’s Ferry from the river mouth’. It’s about 20 km.

Mt One One Access

The best access to the Wanganui River mouth is down La Fontaine Road from Hari Hari. From the carpark a walking track climbs up onto Mt One One with excellent views.

The track continues south long the beach to the Poerua River mouth (there is a high tide alternative) travels up beside the Poerua River for a short distance then picks up the historic pack track back across the pakihi and swamp to the carpark.



Walking towards Mt One One.

Saltwater Lagoon

South of the Poerua River there is easy beach walking beside the Hikimutu Lagoon and along the strip of sand dunes that captures the Saltwater Lagoon. A. P. Harper recorded that it was a tricky ford at the Saltwater outlet with a quicksand bottom:

‘This creek is responsible for many deaths,
and gave me a very bad time when my
horse got tangled up in the moving sand,
and large stones below it’.

130 men were working the Saltwater beaches in 1866, and still by 1872 there were recorded 53 men, 4 women and four children on the beach. But beach sands were initially often quickly worked out, leaving those behind to struggle on, waiting for storms to throw up fresh sand or expose a deeper layer.

At least three gold dredges operated on the Saltwater Lagoon — 1890's, 1903 and 1940's — all were spectacularly unsuccessful. Some remains from the 1903 dredge occasionally get exposed on the beach.

Arthur Woodham lived beside the Saltwater on a grazing lease from 1909-1913, and the beach was used as an emergency landing strip by Captain Mercer on his scheduled air service between Hokitika and Haast during the 1930's and 40's.

There were still modern gold claims along the Saltwater, one husband and wife team getting two ounces of gold a week for a period during the 1980's, but like all black-sanding this 'run' dried up. In 1995 there was a perfectly useable hut on the spit, which has subsequently got washed away.

Both Arthur Woodham and George Park were closely associated with the Saltwater Lagoon, see the biographical profiles on the next pages.



Saltwater Lagoon Access

Getting to Saltwater Lagoon is not particularly straightforward. Heading south from Harihari, as the main highway starts to climb to Mt Hercules a logging road is marked on the right. This is a good gravel road which goes fairly straight through the Saltwater Forest, passing several logging road junctions. After 6 km or so the road reaches an open clearing, and shortly turns sharply left for another kilometre then turns again to a carpark. There may be the occasional signpost. From the carpark in 1996 a muddy track wound for 2 km to the Saltwater Lagoon itself, and then you follow the tidal flats around to the spit. These road directions may change as the logging operations change.



Remains of gold dredge in Saltwater lagoon.

biographical profile

George Park



George Park was one of the first people to explore the Callery (or 'Kellery' as he knew it) in 1889, but it is his exploits as a canoeist that he is particularly noted. An unpublished manuscript by P. J. Lucas 'Flashing Paddles' tells his story.

Canoeing in the 1890's was a downright dangerous pursuit, but on the West Coast these difficulties were accentuated by heavy swells, tricky landings through the surf, and remoteness from any help should anything go awry. Park treated the Tasman sea on the West Coast almost as his 'highway' with a nonchalance which is quite astonishing. He regularly made trips in his hand-built fourteen foot canoe south from his home in Hokitika to visit a woman down in Okarito, obviously successful trips because they later married.

Later, in 1889 with his brother James Park, he canoed from Hokitika to Christchurch, via the Taramakau and Hurunui Rivers, manhandling the canoes across Harper Pass. The trip took 13 days to cover the 230 miles and it is doubtful if it has ever been repeated since – or likely to. He was also the first European canoeist across Cook Strait in 1890 with his brother William Park, and explored the Marlborough Sounds afterwards. He lost some digits on one toes in a factory accident, which slowed him down somewhat, but even at an elderly age was demonstrating 'eskimo' rolls to a disbelieving crowd at Hokitika.

Park built his own canoes and improvised his canoeing equipment, with a spray skirt, a cape that he tucked around his shoulders, and a canvas seat suspended from the sides of the canoe. He often carried a mast and canoe-sailed his way with relative ease with the aid of a 85 square foot calico sail.

The boats usually weighed about 42-45 kilograms, and were made from strips of native timber (kauri and cedar was one combination) glued and screwed together. There was usually a forward and aft hatch compartment. To build a canoe like this would take a substantial amount of time, especially if you assume all the preparation of timber necessary beforehand. Park probably built 10-12 of these canoes, perhaps taking 20-30 days full time for each one.

Some of George Park's history has been fortunately recorded in the landscape of the Saltwater Lagoon, which was a favourite haunt of his. There's a 'Park Inlet', a 'Sunbeam Island' and a 'Mermaid Peninsula', both the latter were named after the canoes on the Cook Strait crossing in 1890, the Sunbeam and the Mermaid.

Descendants of the Park family, living in Summer, still had one of George Park's original hand-built canoes (either the Sunbeam or Mermaid) in perfect condition.

biographical profile

Arthur Woodham

Arthur Woodham is an enigmatic and intriguing character. Intelligent, kind hearted, a good friend to Charlie Douglas, who he helped nurse when the old explorer had a stroke. Woodham gold prospected up and down the coast and was also something of an explorer himself. He was a guru to the young Peter Graham. 'He had brown wavy hair and a shortish well kept beard. His brown eyes were the most expressive I have ever seen in a man.'

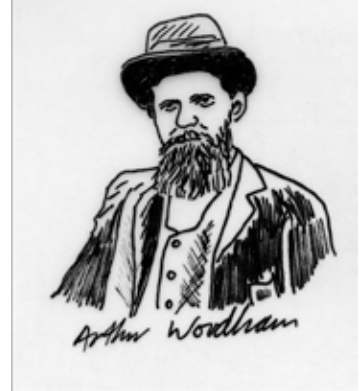
Woodham was born in England and worked as a gardener, taking up a farm at Pleasant Point. He got engaged, but decided to make his fortune 'quickly' on the West Coast gold diggings. Like most coasters then he tried his hand at lots of things, gold prospecting, timber milling, road making, cattle farming, but money did not really interest him, which was just as well because he seemed to have singular ill-luck when it came to making a 'pile'.

Peter Graham recalls several occasions when Woodham through natural generosity missed out on a good claim. Once after some considerable trouble he located a good gold deposit and told a man who immediately took out a claim above Arthur's. This turned out to be enormously rich whilst Arthur's ran out quite quickly. Another time Woodham started on a claim but had to get some more supplies in, and he gave permission to some other diggers that they could work and keep what they found. They got £75 in two weeks.

In 1894 Woodham helped A. P. Harper; blaze a trail up a spur beside the Franz Josef when Charlie Douglas was too ill to help. He was working a gold claim in the area. Harper records after one tempestuous night that Woodham remarked this exploration was 'very poor game' but Harper thought that Woodham was too 'enterprising a man' to be daunted. This proved to be true for in 1905 Woodham was helping Alec Graham cut a track up the Cook River, and whilst Graham, Dr Teichelman and Reverend Newton made the first ascent of La Perouse, Woodham fossicked for gold in the lower Cook River.

In 1909 Woodham took up a lease on a strip of grazing land between the Saltwater Lagoon and the shoreline, and ran some sheep and pigs, a large vegetable garden, grew cocksfoot seed, and dabbled in a bit of blacksanding. He regularly walked out to Waiho with huge loads of vegetables. He seems to have been lonely at the Saltwater at times, though he lived there until his death in Hokitika in 1920. He was buried in Whataroa.

The close connections with the Graham family remained after Woodham's death, for his nephew Fred Woodham took over the run, and Alex Graham met and married Arthur Woodham's niece, Louie (Louise) Woodham in England in 1919. 'Arthur's Cataract' and 'Woodham Ridge' were features named after Arthur Woodham just north of Cape Defiance on the Franz Josef Glacier.



Abut Head — ‘we could not lose a moment as the tide was rising’

Immediately south of the Saltwater Lagoon a 5 km long pack track avoided Abut Head and went across to the Whataroa River. When the track was built is uncertain but it was being repaired in the 1880's and the four foot pack track was reported to be still useable in 1983. Haast had difficulties around Abut Head in 1865 as he was travelling south with a ‘European’ and two Maori.

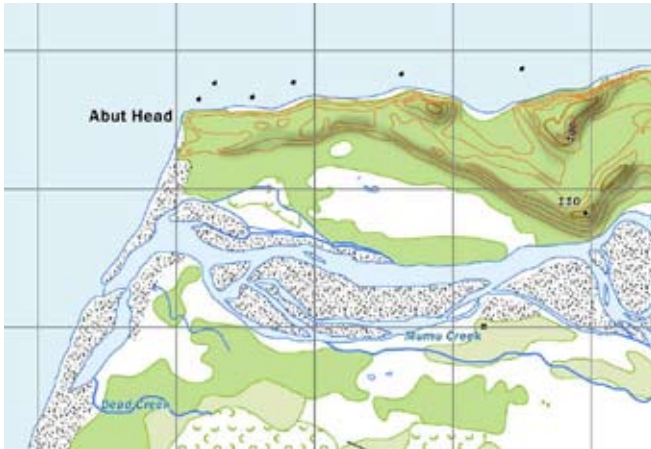
‘So we toiled on, now and then caught by a great wave; the feet of the horses slipped between the boulders, and were sometimes only extricated with the loss of a shoe; and although the poor animals were bleeding and exhausted, we could not lose a moment, as the tide was rising. So we unpacked them with haste, and brought them near high water line, where on examining the ground, I had discovered a better track, made by a party of diggers who had preceded us with horses. By filling up the interstices between the large boulders, and cutting through smaller cliffs of silt, they had made it possible to get round the last point before reaching the Whataroa river... Thus I again had the opportunity of observing that the digger, when once bent upon exploring a country, will not be beaten by any obstacle in his way...’

The ‘European’ in fact was Charles Money, who had been hired by Haast as a guide, but was not too impressed.

‘I could not help laughing as I described...the grand air with which our german ‘boss’ tendered the price of two nobblers [tots of spirits] for the purchase of four men’s dinners. The doctor’s mode of travelling was by no means laborious. Well clothed, and booted, with a cigar in his mouth, he toddled, or rather rolled, along with a pompous air, stopping occasionally to inspect the washing of a dish, or to turn over the gravel heaps of stuff with the end of his stick. A fortnight of this sort of thing satisfied me with regard to the onerous responsibilities devolving on so important a personage as the provincial conchologist’.

Abut Head Access

There is no easy way to get here unless you have a jet-boat to take you down the Whataroa River.



Abut Head, looking north from Waitahi bluff near Lake Windermere.



Abut Head, looking south from Saltwater Lagoon.

Whataroa River

The Whataroa was obviously a dangerous river to cross (Brunner called it an ‘ugly stream’) and a ferryman was established here early on. The first inland bridge was built in 1909.

The *West Coast Times* of 1 July 1867 reported this awkward situation. At Whataroa Bluff the mail carrier got his horse stuck in the rocks, and with the incoming tide threatening the animal, he had no choice but to shoot the poor horse and shoulder the mail bags himself the rest of the way to Okarito. South of the Whataroa there is a short stretch of sand travel and then a deep ford of the Waitangitaona and Waitangiroto Rivers that combine in a small lagoon just before meeting the sea.

Waitangitaona and Waitangiroto Rivers – ‘the crowning beauty’

Gerhard Mueller canoed up the Waitangiroto and discovered the white herons (kotuku) in 1865.

‘But the crowning beauty was a cranery which I discovered up the river, and that was a glorious sight... Of these birds (near 4 ft high) imagine seeing around you from 50 to 60, sitting on high pines and lower trees, in a circle of about 150 yards, their pure white feathers shining in the sun. It was a glorious sight – I gave up pulling, and watched the tribe for a long time. They were not at all shy – kept up a continual ‘plap-paring’ among themselves, and seemed to be astonished at me more than afraid’.

Waitahi Bluff to Okarito Lagoon

From the Waitangitaona River it is easy beach travel to Waitahi Bluff. At low tide the bluff can be negotiated, but there is a high tide pack track. Another short beach section past Lake Windemere, and Commissioner Point can be rounded at low tide.

Then its a long, long beach trek down to the Okarito Lagoon outlet. Sometimes this is closed so the travellers could have walked straight across, at other times they would have needed the services of the ferryman.

White Heron Colony Access

There is now a commercial jet boat operation from Whataroa township to view the white heron colony. You can also obtain a permit from DOC (usually the day before) at Franz Josef and walk to the wardens house by the Waitangitona River.

The walk starts from the same place as the commercial jet boat operation and is not signposted at present. Follow the vague vehicle tracks and keep the river close to you on your right. About two hours one way. DOC provides map.



Lake Windemere.



White heron on Okarito Lagoon.

Waitahi Bluff Access

The old pack track around Waitahi Bluff is partly overgrown with flax and gorse, but is well made and in good condition. There is also a track around Commissioner Point.

Chapter 6

Okarito & the Glaciers



‘Travelling on foot along the beach is not pleasant under any circumstances. I have tried it in solitude, and then it was unbearable, the dull everlasting roar of the surf, varied only by the scream of the seagull, giving rise to anything but a cheerful train of thought, and causing the first view of a human habitation to be a positive relief’.
West Coast Times 18 November 1865.



Okarito – ‘Such stupendous growth! Such sparkling returns!’

Okarito went from nowhere to nowhere. After the discovery of the beach sands, particularly down at Three and Five Mile lagoons, by December 1865 Okarito suddenly had a population of 800, with 33 stores.

‘Everybody who does not dig sells grog,
and everybody who digs drinks copiously’.

Okarito never really gained any respectability of tenure. All too soon the rich beach sands were exhausted, and Okarito’s glory years were two, perhaps three in number.

‘..now it has only two pubs a store a gaol and a monthly magistrate. The few citizens spend their time shouting for each other and talking about the good times never to return; how it still exists is a mystery even to themselves. But in the early sixties Okarito was a flourishing place, sections changed hands at high prices, and it sprung into the weatherboard era all at once. In those days it was entirely a public house town with a resident warden and staff of police to maintain order, a survey and custom house, harbour master, and a remarkably rowdy class of inhabitants and visitors. It made a desperate effort to reach the borough stage but ignominiously failed. A town council was elected who at once started to tax the citizens, but as they had no power to do so, no one was fool enough to pay, so as there were no funds even for the councillors beer it was judged best to retire’.

By the end of 1866 the whole network of South Westland towns had collapsed, and by June 1867 Westland from Ross to Big Bay had less than 500 people. The abruptness of the population decline rather caught the authorities on the hop.



Okarito Access

A good sealed road to Okarito. The old wharf shed has some good historic photos and it's interesting just to walk around the shoreline. The track to Okarito trig platform gives you a superb view over Okarito Lagoon and the Southern Alps.



Morning light and mist at Bullock Creek, on the Inland Pack Track.



Historic Okarito school.

They had only just conceived the plan of a continuous track along all the West Coast, and there had been an intensive period of track cutting in 1867. Tracks were cut from the Five Mile to Waiho Gorge (Franz Josef), Hokitika to Mikonui, around the back of Bold Head, and in several other areas. In August 1867 the track work was abruptly cancelled.

Oddly enough, it seems that plants could travel as quickly as diggers, and would often settle in long after the miners had left. One visitor to Okarito noted:

‘I recognised several indigenous to the lake country in Otago, amongst which were the wild fuschia, convolvulus, geraniums...’

Kohuamarua Bluff (Te Kohuamaru) – ‘this fine piece of Queen’s Highway’

‘It used to be a study watching a long line of loaded pack horses with perhaps only one man driving. Going round a bluff in heavy weather, the loads were usually from 250 to 300 lbs of very mixed character. The horses that were up to the work could watch the seas far better than most men. A good packer never swore, or threw stones at his horse, but let them take their own time, the animals would all stop and watch as sea coming in, then make a run for it. If by chance they got caught, they had a way of propping themselves face or back to the waves, and holding their own, then as the sea receded off they went at a trot’.



Canoeing Okarito lagoon (above) near the north end, (below) in the Okarito delta channels.

Okarito Lagoon Access

The only decent way to see Okarito Lagoon is by boat, and canoes can be hired from the 'township'. The tide tables should be studied carefully to get the maximum benefit of a high tide and there are extensive mud flats in the lagoon at low tide.

Various baches are tucked away in the bush beside the lagoon, and apart from the extensive flocks of black swans you should see several white herons in solitary feeding mode.

At the far end of the lagoon it is possible to go through a curious natural channel into the mostly freshwater Lake Windemere. It seems at one time a dam was put across here to raise the level of the lake for sluicing purposes.

From the old hut at the head of Okarito Lagoon it's possible to walk along the coast at low tide as far as the Waitangitaona River.

Three Mile Lagoon

It is good beach walking at low to middling tide south of Okarito, and there was the pack track to Three Mile if the tide was in. There's a short beach walk on the Three Mile beach and by April 1867 it's recorded that a high tide track had been cut around Blanchard's Bluff between the Three and Five Mile lagoons.

Five Mile Lagoon — 'it's glory has departed'

Five Mile (Totaranui) was the richest sea beach in Westland and in July 1866 could boast five hotels, forty stores, two butcher shops, and two bakeries, with a population of 1500.

But the sands were quickly exhausted and by December the population was down to 300. And this was one of the more 'substantial' towns on the coast.

'One of the most flourishing places on the coast for several years, and when at the height of its prosperity had a double, sometimes a treble line of stores and shanties extending nearly the whole length of the beach. There were Stores, Pubs, Shanties, Dance houses and other places of even less repute, but never a church or a schoolhouse. Like Gillespies it was never a surveyed township but it passed the calico era and nearly arrived at the weatherboard. But like other famous places its glory has departed. One or two diggers huts are now all that is left of the once famous Five Mile'.

Both lagoons had dredging schemes, most of which were failures. With some rare exceptions, more money was spent on schemes to dredge the various West Coast lagoons, than was ever got out of the lagoons themselves. Both Charlie Douglas and A. P. Harper record that many of the early South Westland communities were riven by disagreements and personal conflicts.

'This is an awful shop for back-biting & scandal; all are at loggerheads with each other, but I suppose the poor devils having



Perhaps the best view on the coast, looking across the Three Mile lagoon to Mt Cook.



Three Mile Lagoon Access

You can follow the two swaggers pictured on the front cover of this book by walking south along the beach at low tide past Kohuamarua Bluff. There are tide tables pasted up on a notice board by the carpark. Alternatively, at high tide, take the original bush pack-track, which is still in excellent condition, to Three Mile Lagoon (To-taraiti).

There's a bridge here and by following the coast you can get round Blanchard's Bluff to the Five Mile Lagoon. A much older and rickety bridge (still useable in 1992) gets you back onto the beach, where you can continue along to the Waiho headland.

no other occupation in their leisure moments’.

Stores held only the most basic of goods: flour, salt, sugar, etc, often running out. However one commodity was always available, as A. P. Harper noted wryly:

‘There were three or four places where one could get accommodation, along the old southern pack track, also food and bed, but no whisky or beer – or, at least, one was not supposed to, but the ‘cold tea’ which was always procurable was remarkably like the former!’

Waiho River — ‘the current runs with frightful velocity’

The Waiho was a difficult crossing because of its milkiness, caused by glacial ‘flour’, small flakes of rock scraped off by the Franz Josef glacier and washed down river. The current is also strong, evidenced by its Maori name ‘Waiau’ translated as ‘strong current’.

In 1865 it was two shillings to cross by ferry, and in the days before the government licensed these operations the passengers took their chances.

‘It is a very great convenience, and safe enough when the tide is in, but I must say when the tide is out it is very unsafe, for the current runs with frightful velocity, and should the rope break (and it is far too weak for the purpose) nothing could save the passengers as the ferry is not more than sixty or seventy yards from the breakers’.

In *Women of Westland* Mark Wallace tells the tale of the old ferryman on the Waiho who refused to go away. Incidentally, Peter Graham’s autobiography also mentions a certain Harry Wolmer or ‘German Harry’ who was the first man who went over Mount Burster into the Callery River, getting several ounces of gold.

‘German Harry’ managed the Waiho river ferry until the younger Wallace children could take over. He shared meals with the Wallace family and his Prussian pro-boer attitudes got him involved in many ‘heated

Waiho River Access

The best access to the Waiho river mouth is down a side-road off Highway 6, 1 km south of Canavan's Knob. It is courteous to ask permission at the farmhouse here but there is a public track, only suitable as four wheel drive, that leads down to the coast. You can hire mountain bikes at Franz.



Three Mile bridge in the early morning mist.

verbal duels' with British diggers. He felt ill one day and struggled home, collapsing on the floor. Only the younger daughters were at home and they got him onto the bed with an effort. A traveller passing by took a look and pronounced him dead, and by the time the older members of the family got home rigour mortis had set in and they had to break his legs to get him in the casket. He was buried on the beach, but some years later the sands eroded and revealed the coffin sticking out. He was reburied and some more years later two gold diggers were working in the vicinity and 'succeeded in sluicing Harry out again. One fled in terror, but the other earthed over once again Harry's pathetic remains'.

Mark Wallace who grew up on the Waiho River gives a good idea of the sort of diet a family living in Westland at the time had to exist on.

'Flour, tea, sugar, salt, oatmeal and syrup would arrive at infrequent intervals by coastal steamer if the Okarito bar was workable and packed or carried from there to our home, round three bluffs and across the Three Mile and the Waiho rivers. For the rest we depended on what the bush would yield by way of bird life; the sea, and the Omeroa Bluff of fish, wet and shell and of course eels, fresh in summer and smoked in winter.

The garden too was a stable source of supply... potatoes and onions. I guess we younger members of the family were reared on fried bread and onions and eels when they were to be had. We never saw meat, but good pigeon stew. There was no edible berry in the bush that missed our attention.

The kiekie, flowered and paw, was our favourite – if the rats didn't beat us to it. Next, the fuschia, and third the miro and supplejack. There were a host of others. Yet we thrived and were thankful and happy, though on occasions hungry. To mix some squashed fuschia berries with a little sugar, if we could scrounge it, or squeeze the nectar from the flax blossoms into a bottle to suck, were special treats'.



A Westland mum, Catherine Markley

Westland women had to be tough, and there were many revered 'little mothers' at every settlement, juggling domestic duties, raising broods of children, and often taking a lively hand in the business of making a living as well. For example, the records show several female proprietors of West Coast hotels in the 1860's. Mark Wallace recalled his mother from 'Recollections of Early years in South Westland' in the book *Women in Westland*.

Catherine Markley was a typical West Coast mum. She was born in Ireland in 1854 and emigrated to Australia and then New Zealand. She married James Wallace in Okarito and moved down to the Waiho River where her husband got the job as ferryman for £50 a year. She had fourteen children, seven girls and seven boys. Her husband died in 1896 and for six years she managed the family at the Waiho, running the house, the garden, shooting pigeons with an old muzzle-loading gun, nurse, doctor, seamstress, cook, and counsellor.

'Mum was an amazing personality. No traveller arrived at mealtime without being offered the hospitality of our home'. These so-called 'sundowners' could be quite a strain for already stretched family budgets.

In 1902 she and her family abandoned the ferry house and moved to Kokatahi. She lived to see one son die of typhoid, another drown, and two more die in the First World War, and put up with ill-health for the last thirty years of her life, dying in her eighties.

On one occasion Mrs Wallace travelled to Christchurch to see a famous stomach specialist who asked her how she was: 'Fine doctor' came the rejoinder. 'Then what did you come all this way to see me for it?' questioned the specialist. Such was Mum'.

biographical profile

Peter Graham

Peter Graham was born at the Five Mile lagoon in 1878. His father was an adventurous man, for he sailed from Dunedin in a whaleboat with three others around to the West Coast, but their boat got blown 100 miles south of course and they ended up in Jackson Bay, and were lucky to get through the surf alive. They were looked after by the local Maori and then had to face a hard tramp back up the coast to the Five Mile diggings.

Peter Graham's mother remembered sitting on Charles Dickens knee in London, before her uncle and aunt took her to Bendigo goldfields in Australia. She became a nurse in Melbourne and then Hokitika. Peter Graham's father tried gold mining and a bakery before accepting the government position of a ferryman. He also had to maintain the three miles of horse track to Okarito. Both the lagoon diggings were black sand and quickly worked out, although dredging was tried later on both lagoons with little success.

It was a marvellous place for a boyhood. The mountains looming over the lagoon, a swan as a pet, the gold diggers passing up and down the coast, and the daily school walk to Okarito dodging the tides. Once they saw what they thought was ghost of a previous ferryman who had been murdered. Another time came a Syrian hawkler who used to sell 'stop vatches' that certainly did do that remarkably quickly!

In his teens Graham tried his hand at goldmining on the black sands, and then with Arthur Woodham, gold prospected in the Callery, probably one of the last times the Callery gorge was ever systematically explored: 'The gorge was so deep and narrow that the sunlight never penetrated into it and I could see the planet Venus shining brightly in the heavens at midday'.

Peter Graham went on to become one of New Zealand's most famous guides and climbers, noted for his superb safety record and mastery of ice-work. With his brother Alec they guided the first woman, Freda du Faur, to the top of Mount Cook, and later guided her on the first Grand Traverse of the three peaks of Cook. After several failed attempts the notoriously egotistical English climber Samuel Turner called on Graham's skills to complete the first ascent of Tutoko.



Waikukupa River and Galway Point

Immediately south the beach was good travel and then a pack track avoided Omoeroa Bluff. Omoeroa River had to be forded then it was along Sandfly Beach to the Waikukupa estuary, where a store and farm were being maintained by the Gibbs family in the 1870's.

The Waikukupa River was tersely described by Brunner as 'deep and not fordable', and has been translated as 'the water where there is plenty of mussels and pigeons'.

From Moonlight Beach it is easy travel south to Galway Point, and past the seal colony on Galway Beach. Here a tunnel was constructed that took the traveller off the beach and along a track that avoided Waikowhai Bluff and Gillespies Point out to Gillespies Beach.

Galway Point Access

This is accessible from the Gillespies Beach tracks, though the old Galway Beach track is overgrown, and may not be useable now.

You generally need a low tide to get around Galway Point, but from then on it is easy travel to the Waikukupa River.



Wreck of a fishing vessel near Galway Point.

Gillespies Beach — 'no women here at all and I advise them not to go south'

Remembering that the peak gold extraction years were in the sixties, it is interesting how quickly Westland slumped back to obscurity. In January 1871 James Fyffe of the *West Coast Times* and *Observer* made this short and revealing summation.

‘Beaches south of Gillespies were still favourably talked about but this is all hearsay to me. At Gillespies about 70 people are not getting much gold, but all are hoping. 14 miles north at 5 Mile there are about 100 men left, and one hotel for every 11 men. All had a fair xmas, but no sign of drunks, storekeepers are giving credit to the ones they trust. People thinking of going south should have enough money to support themselves as they will not get credit there, and the cost of goods is very expensive. At Okarito most big buildings were empty and rotting, most miners were barely making wages. Saltwater 16 mile north, has about 45 diggers and with hardships and hard work they were struggling to make a living. No women here at all and I advise them not to go south.’

James Edwin Gillespie had found gold here in 1865 and Gillespies Beach soon ‘rushed’ to 700 miners, 3 hotels, 2 bakeries and 2 butchers shops, but it started to decline just as quickly once Five Mile was rushed.

‘Gillespies got beyond the calico era and almost attained the dignity of weatherboard but not quite. It now contains a few diggers huts a store and school house with of course the usual pub but its life cannot last that long as the beach is nearly worked out. It has however lasted longer than any of the diggers townships of Southern Westland, and contains a chapel – still standing – a building none of the others ever possessed’.

A. P. Harper thought the view from Gillespies Beach the best on the West Coast, though he had a poor opinion of the township, ‘a god forsaken place imaginable’ with most of the inhabitants not on speaking terms. He and Charlie Douglas passed through in 1894.

‘As [the traveller] passes each home out come the inhabitants, and by the time he has reached the shelter of the bar room, the whole available population of ten adults and thirty children are gazing at him’.

Their ice axes aroused great interest at the pub. No one had seen such things before and after a good deal of argument they settled on the notion that they were ‘fixings which Charlie has made for spearing eels’.

Gillespies Beach Access

Gillespies Beach is ?? km from Fox Glacier, the last section of road is narrow and winding in the forest.

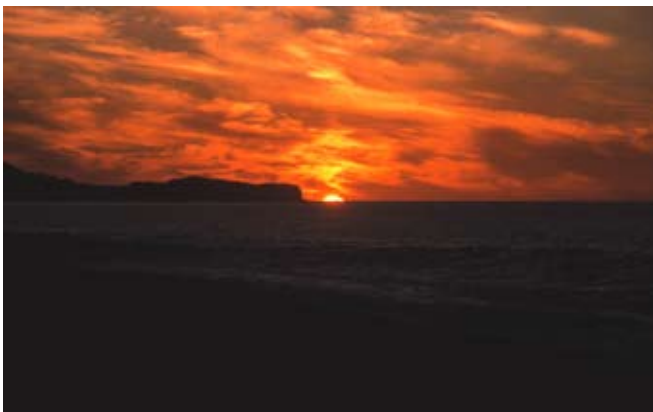
Because it is away from the mountains, Gillespies Beach generally gets finer weather than Fox Glacier. Indeed, it can sometimes be raining in Fox and sunny at the beach. It's a good day out if you are based at Fox Glacier, though sandflies can be pretty bad.

The beach is wild and driftwood strewn, and the lagoon walk leads into the bush and follows the historic pack track around to the miners tunnel.

The seal colony is further along the shore from the tunnel, but you need a low tide.



Remains of old gold digging dredge.



Sunset from Gillespies Beach.

Inland Road – Franz Josef and Fox Glacier

Arthur Dobson spotted the Franz Josef Glacier in 1863 from the deck of the peripatetic Gypsy, made a sketch (see Reminiscences), but did not name the feature because this ‘right’ belonged to the surveyor Robert Bain who was supposed to survey the southern block. As Dobson recollected, he might as well have done so, because the other surveyor never got this far, and it fell to Haast to do the honour.

In fact the Maori had of course beaten all the Europeans to it – Ka Roimata o Hinehukatere ‘the tears of Hinehukatere’. Fox Glacier has its own name – Te Moeka o Tuawe ‘the bed of Tuawe’. The glacier attractions of the Franz and Fox Glaciers had been noted for some time, and there were hot pools as well.

‘...some twelve years ago, when visiting the St Francis Glacier, I enjoyed a hot mineral bath taken in a hole dug in the gravel at the edge of the Waiho River, the particulars of which was that by extending the arm into the flowing river one could catch lumps of ice floating down. One of these lumps so caught I wrapped in flannel, and actually brought a piece of it to Ross (fifty-five miles on horseback), and in the evening our party had the unique pleasure of drinking sparkling Jura wine iced with it’.

Franz Josef was originally known as ‘Waiho’ or ‘Waiho Gorge’. An English couple named Batson arrived in Waiho in the 1890’s with ‘no means at all’. Some miners working there were disturbed that the woman should have nowhere to stay and built a ponga house for the couple. Batson thanked them and invited them round for a meal in gratitude, which he then charged them half a crown each for! Batson’s ‘hotel’, as it became known, was the first accommodation at Waiho, and he ran the usual sly grog shop as well.

Maud Moreland stayed in the hotel in 1906 and remarked that ‘a house of this kind may even grow – for the ferns are very tenacious of life’.

Franz Josef Access

The village has several attractive walks, including to the glacier, and several cafes for when it occasionally rains.



*Walking track to Franz Josef Glacier.
This photo was taken 10 years ago and
the track route has changed,*

Fox Glacier

'Weheka' was an early name for Fox Glacier which was virtually 'invented' by one man – Mick Sullivan. He swapped a parcel of land owned by the family with a small area of eleven acres from the Crown.

'When the Commissioner asked why Mick wanted the 11 acres the reply was 'If we are to stay in this region we need a village'.

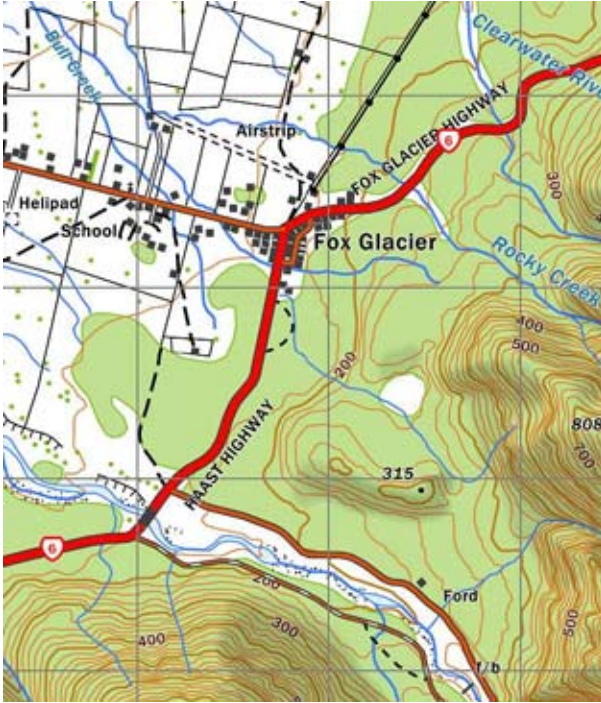
The land was divided into freehold sections which became Fox village.

From 1912 to the early 1930's (about 22 years) Charlie Smith was packing supplies by horse and mule from Fox Glacier to Okuru, with an interruption for the First World war, averaging about a week return. He was mailman, packer, fixer, and counsellor, probably one of the last of the packers to work on the West Coast. He was made obsolete by the development of Captain Mercer's aerial 'packing', in about 1932.

Fox Glacier Access

Road access is good, and there is a walking and biking track from the town to the glacier carpark.

The hot pools in both townships have vanished at present, but one reappearance was noted in the Waiho riverbed for a couple of years (and taken advantage of) during the 1980's.



Dramatic evening light on the Fox Glacier Hotel.

Making Tracks

The discovery of gold triggered a huge demand for tracks for the miners, but making tracks in the 1860's was a largely haphazard affair. The Maori coastal routes were exploited and storekeepers might fund the construction of some crucial access tracks, but at the beginning most tracks were self-made by the gold-diggers themselves hacking a hasty route through the bush to the gold fields.

The majority of these tracks or 'roads' (as they were euphemistically called) were simply gaps in the bush and they quickly became mud-holes. Julius von Haast in 1865 on a track near Lake Brunner gives a good idea of how desperate the tracks became after use.

'After we had waded through a broad swamp, we entered a forest and ascended a terrace, on which we soon had a foretaste of what we had to expect during the next few days. We sank to our middle in the half-liquid marsh, or had to climb over colossal tree stems which lay half rotten in it or stumbled over blocks of stones and roots of trees. I do not think the best walker could possibly make more than a mile an hour here'.

With the huge pressure of people wanting to go to previously remote places the local authorities were quickly obliged to provide funds to construct more substantial tracks. Matters were helped along by the cheap availability of unemployed miners. With pack animals tracks had to be upgraded further still, with gentler grades, and clearance overhead and at the sides for the heavily laden mules and horses.

Simple track engineering techniques were used at first: ditching and drains to take away the surplus water, shingling where the stones were available, and corduroying the streets and dray roads. The word corduroying refers to the laying of saplings or tree trunks (pongas were often used) side by side like a 'corduroy' weave in a pair of trousers. Today we would look at it and call it a primitive form of boardwalking.

Sometimes the corduroys were topped up with shingle for a better surface, for to put the shingle straight down on the track would simply see it disappear in the mud. Tracks were all made by hand of course, pick and shovel, and the wage in 1865 for a road-worker was about twelve shillings a day. Regular roadmen were employed after a while, to clear the track of debris, keep it drained, and repair slips. It says something for the skill of these early track makers that so many of the pack tracks are still in such excellent condition, and once the regrowth has been cleared away, perfectly useable.

The gold rush boomed and busted spectacularly, and after this shifting population had moved on, groups of people intent on making a more permanent living from the landscape arrived. Farmers, sawmillers, coal-miners, flax millers, gold companies (with more elaborate equipment than pick and shovel) even a rare few early tourists.

In 1867 the provincial government launched an ambitious scheme to provide tracks for the whole West Coast region, but the scheme abruptly lapsed for want of that crucial ingredient — money. The West Coast was exporting all of its wealth and already by the 1870 gold revenue was so far down that it was exporting ex-miners as well.

For the next hundred years the tracks and roads shifted away from the coast, to provide essential supply routes for the remote farming settlements that sprang up. These tracks were later widened into dray roads, which in turn became upgraded to motor car standard. A good many stretches of modern highway still follow the line first cut by an enterprising bushman.

If you think about the huge amounts of earth and rock that had to be shifted by hand during the sixties and seventies to make pack tracks, then in terms of time and resources it is comparable to the current maintenance of roads and bridges today on the West Coast.

Chapter 7

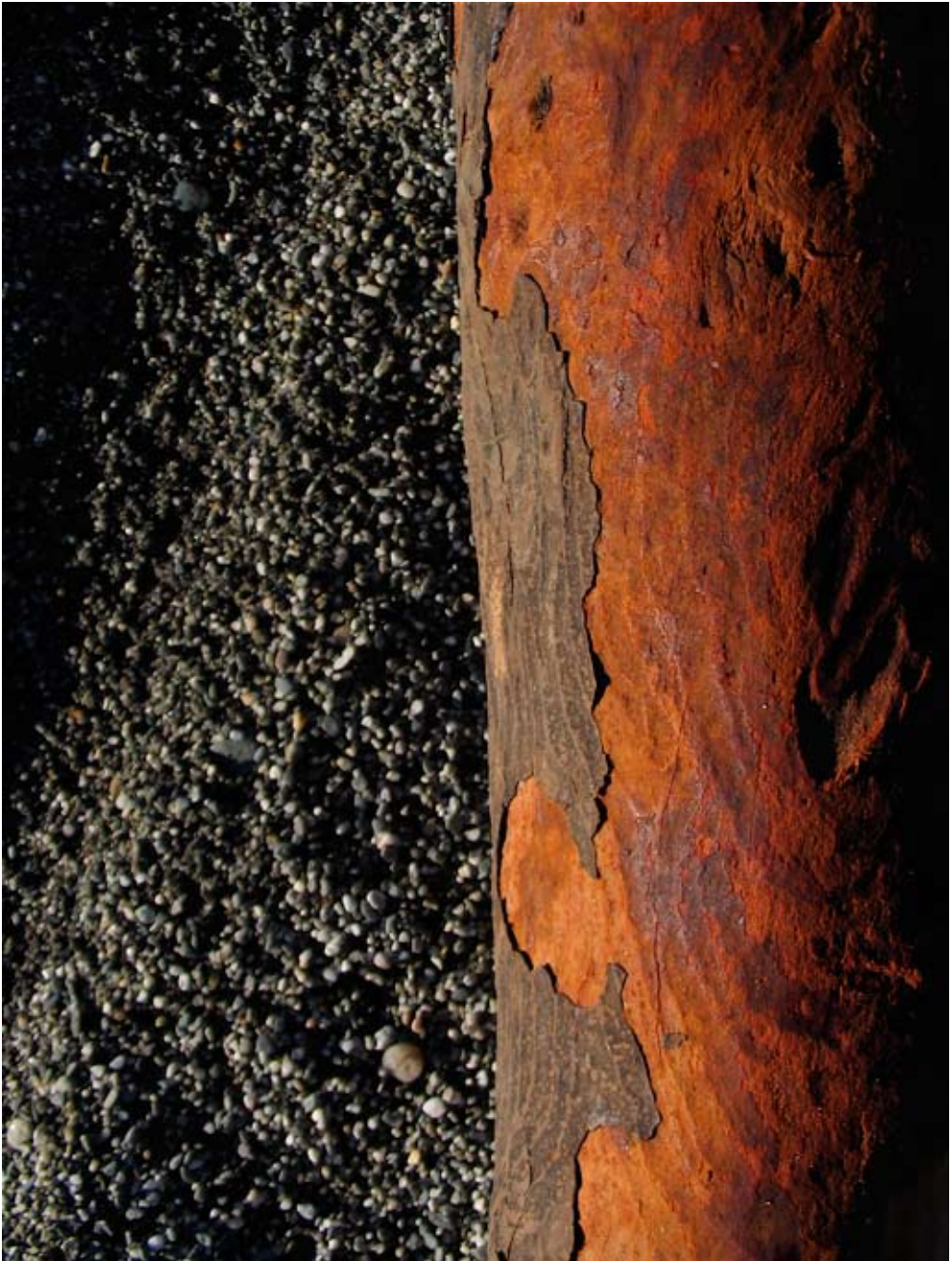
South Westland



A great many of the early travellers did not spend much time admiring the South Westland scenery. The business of surviving, crossing rivers, getting a feed, and finding gold were quite time consuming enough, without stopping and leisurely enjoying the views.

After the gold rush the vast majority of diggers went elsewhere. Numbers down in South Westland had never been great in any case, and the brief gold adventures of Five Mile, Bruce Bay and Haast could not keep many people occupied.

Those that stayed did so for more intangible reasons, and so a great collection of characters, romancers, vagabonds, hermits, misfits and storytellers drifted into the region – Charlie Douglas, William Docherty, Maori Bill, Arawata Bill, Bill Hindley, Joe Collyer and many more that history did not sufficiently record. These characters will gradually emerge as we head down south.



Gravel and log.

Cook River and Bluff

From Gillespies Beach in the nineties, if travellers rounded Otorokua Point and walked down the spit of the Cook River estuary they would wait for the ferryman, known as 'California Bill', William Reader, a 'forty-niner' with a patriarchal long white beard 'down to his waist'. The previous ferryman Robert McIntosh had managed the Cook ferry for seventeen years, but was drowned in 1892 in the notorious Saltwater.

There was an interesting clash of personalities here. When a party of five men including the English climber Fitzgerald and the New Zealander A. P. Harper used the ferry Fitzgerald later commented that the boat leaked at every seam and almost sank, yet Harper repudiated this comment in defence of California Bill because:

'such a statement to pass unchallenged...
might lose him the ferry'.

The Maori name for the Cook River was 'Te Wehenga' 'the parting – one go one way, one another', but the southern Maori replaced the nasal 'ng' with a more guttural 'k' sound, hence 'Weheka'.

South of the Cook River the Cook Bluff has to be negotiated, then it was along the Saltwater Beach crossing the Saltwater River (Ohinetamatea) down to the Karangarua River. Once over the Karangarua River it was a long beach bash down to what is now know as Hunt Beach, which was the scene of a famous goldrush.

Hunt Beach

The precise location of the gold diggers Weld Town is unclear, but it's likely to have been where the houses are now standing on Hunt Beach.

'Another paper town [Weld Town] situated on the beach in Bruce Bay bight. Its existence lasted about a week when, the historical Hunts rush took place, and it collapsed as suddenly as it rose. It never even got as far as the dance house and skittle alley era, although for a couple of nights it could boast of a population of two or three thousand souls'.

Hunt Beach Access

A short side-road leads to baches and houses at the southern end of Hunt Beach.

A long 7km walk to the Karangarua river mouth, and you have to wade the Manakaiua River. South it is 3km to Makawhio Point and 2km onto the Makawhio River.



Hunt Beach looking south.

Albert Hunt, the great hoaxer?

Albert Hunt prospected in the Greenstone (near Kumara) and made one of the first significant finds of payable gold in 1864. However his claim for a share of the reward for finding a goldfield (originally a £1000 offered by the Canterbury Provincial government) was disputed and ignored, and then watered down to £200, and to add insult to injury he got virtually stamped off his claim. He vanished for a spell, and then turned up with a prospector's claim at Bruce Bay.

There seem to have been two rushes to Bruce Bay, the first genuine in September 1865 when Hunt was getting gold at Bruce Bay along with 200-250 other men. This spot was eight miles north of the Bay at the place now called 'Hunt's Beach'. However this claim soon petered out 'a virtual duffer', but the fun really started later in March-April 1866, when he was granted a prospectors claim at Bruce Bay (four grains to the dish) and started the greatest of the 'duffer' rushes.

The vast majority of diggers had no real knowledge of gold prospecting and were reliant on the experienced few to locate the gold, whereupon they would then dig it out by the proverbial barrel load. Hunt still had a reputation, and his comings and goings were always followed closely. 1500 hundred miners took off from Okarito following the wild rumours. As Philip Ross May explained 'Whether he liked it or not Albert Hunt had been credited with discovering a great new goldfield'. Storekeepers also rushed down hoping to get the best sites.

Hunt arrived 'escorted' by another 500 or so miners, and the thing quickly became a grand farce. The mob of miners closely watched Hunt, guarding him with firearms, some of them literally holding onto the prospectors coat. He gave them the slip once, was re-captured, and as things began to get nasty, slipped away again. A miner named Samuel McMeikan (known as 'Black Sam'), was one of the diggers who shared Hunt's second claim at Bruce Bay. It was McMeikan who rescued Hunt in a cutter, and they went on to Southland.

Then began the riot, as the miners turned on the storekeepers (usually fiercely disliked in any case because of the high prices they charged) and looted five or six stores. The warden was verbally abused, but by evening the whole sorry affair had collapsed and 'Weld Town' at Bruce Bay must have almost the record for the shortest lived town in New Zealand – three days.

'The golden dreams indulged in during the past week have been dispelled, and miners, as well as business people, are fully aware that they have been completely sold. Everyone in Bruce Bay is lamenting; and find vent for their feelings by heaping curses on Mr Albert Hunt...It is truly a pity that there is no law that can reach him, and make him pay dearly for his deception'.

About the first Bruce Bay rush the West Coast Times called it a 'moral epidemic'. It might have been a hoax. Albert Hunt may have been aggrieved from his treatment on the Greenstone claim, or he might have just enjoyed this somewhat dangerous joke. He appeared in a court case near Riverton in 1866, also in connection with a hoax, and his brother William Hunt appeared at Coromandel, claiming a reward for discovering gold at Thames.

Tony Nolan in *Historic Gold Trails of the Coromandel* suspected that the two 'Hunt's' might have been the same person, however this tempting theory seems unlikely. The West Coast Times 29 August 1865 ran this advert: 'If this shall meet the eye of Albert Hunt, his brother William would be glad to hear from him. Address the office of this paper'. For a fuller account of the brothers Hunt and their activities see *The Colours* by the same author.

The obscure memorial at the Greenstone River (which is in the wrong place), and the name's Hunts Beach, Hunts Creek and Hunt Hill at Bruce Bay, record for posterity this elusive miner.

Bruce Bay (Porakiraki) — ‘the hearth of the South Westland Maori’

Makawhio Point had to be negotiated at low tide but later a pack track was established that fell into disuse once the land road was built. Around the point there was the Makawhio (or Jacobs River) to consider next. The Makawhio River was bridged in 1938, and the Karangarua in 1940, with one of the longest and elegant suspension bridges in New Zealand – still used today.

After crossing the Makawhio River (Jacobs) there is Sandy Beach and Maori Beach (exactly the same beach) down to the locality of Bruce Bay and the Maitahi River (Mahitahi). Makawhio means ‘blue duck branches’ and Maitahi refers to the fact that a woman called Maitahi died there at some time in history. ‘Aotea’ is the name of a blue malachite, a semi-precious stone found only in the Makawhio River.

Bruce Bay is the most significant Maori kaika in South Westland, the traditional arrival point of Maui some 1500 years ago and at times the largest Maori population centre on the West Coast.

‘The South Westland coastline harboured four main kaika at Okarito, Maitahi, Okahu [Jackson Bay] and Whakatipu waitai [Lake McKerrow], with various other seasonal camps in between but throughout the centuries Maitahi has endured as the papakaika – the hearth of the South Westland Maori’.

Flower Pot Rock was a small rock outcrop where during the twenties and thirties cargo could be winched from the rock to a surfboat that transferred it out to the waiting ship. Passengers were transferred from the steamer to a rowboat, then winched up in a basket to the rock, where they crossed a short boardwalk to land. At that time Bruce Bay township was on the southern side of the Maitahi, and closer to Flower Pot Rock. A small steam train ran between the two.

Heretaniwha Point

Heretaniwha has been translated as ‘to tie up the monster’, a reference to the story of Maui slaying two sea monsters with his axe ‘Tihe-mauriora’. The monsters had been left there to guard Bruce Bay and were called ‘Mako-tipua’ and ‘Mako-horopekapeka’. After this deed Maui sailed south and reached Milford Sound which he named ‘Piopiotahi’ after his pet bird. Once across the Maitahi there may have been a pack track over Heretaniwha Point.

After the point, there is a long and little visited beach, which leads around to Buttress Point, and passes by Hanata Island to the Paringa River mouth.

Bruce Bay Access

A short side-road leads to baches and houses at the southern end of Hunt Beach. A long 7km walk to the Karangarua river mouth, and you have to wade the Manakai-
aua River. South it is 3km to Makawhio Point and 2km onto the Makawhio River.



Heretaniwha Point from Bruce Bay.

Maori — 'A bountiful supply of food'

The first few paragraphs about Maori and their food resources comes entirely from Paul Madgwicks book 'Aotea'. It is an intriguing insight into what food was available.

'Their life was patterned around food gathering, with seasonal excursions up and down the coast; each season had its purpose and each area its special food. Te Weheka (Cook River) and Paringa were favoured for their weka and pigeons in winter; Tawharekiri (Ship Creek), Ohinemaku (Black River) and Moeraki for their eels in summer. Weka were preserved in their own fat and packed into seaweed bags, and the eels were usually pawhere (stripped of their backbone) and dried in the sun to provide food in the leaner months. Their bird diet consisted principally of tui, weka and pigeons, although even the small mokimoki and robins were eaten as supplements. Occasionally the pigeons were speared, but more often they were caught, six or seven at once, in snares made of cabbage tree leaves or flax and set in kowhai trees. The pigeons were food to be savoured but, according to local superstition, anyone finding their nest was cursed to die...

November was the time to rob seagull nests on the beach at Karangarua, Ohinemaku and other sandy spits. A fire would be built in the sand to heat stones and 200-300 eggs roasted at a time. Sea fishing was another occupation and there were regular expeditions to Pauareka (Abbey Rocks), Heretaniwha and Tahikeakai (Jacobs Bluff) for kelp and moki. Groper was caught in canoes offshore from these places, but only in calm weather, while the rocks off the mouth of the Makawhio River provided a handy store of fish and crayfish. Round nets baited with mussels were lowered down off the rocks and the catch was boned either for smoking or drying in the sun. In the estuaries at Maitahi and Makawhio, flounders were speared in big numbers, often at night with the aid of rama (torches) made from the resinous heart of the rimu tree...

The South Westland bush was also a bountiful supply of food in the form of edible berries, fern fronds and kiekie fruit. Several variety of ferns were edible, including the tender young fronds and the heart of the mamaku, which were steamed in the umu. Leaves

of the piupiu fern [crown fern] were wrapped around weka and other birds being cooked in the umu, and were eaten as a relish to the flesh. Small areas of bush close to the settlements were cut and burnt to provide ideal growing conditions for kumara, taro and potatoes. The West Coast is mistakenly thought too cold for kumara, but they were growing at Makawhio as late as 1900 along with the Polynesian taro and several varieties of potato, the repe, waitah (kidney shaped) and katote (a derwent).'

Some sort of dried food such as whitebait, eels, or fern root were carried for the mountain areas, where it was not possible to live off the land. Kelp bags are recorded as being used as well as flax. The Maori dog, the 'kuri', was trained for catching birds and itself would become a meal if food was short. In Brunner's journal he discusses the Maori methods of preserving birds:

'I have tasted birds kept for two years in this manner, and found them very good. They also keep eels and seals in the same way, using whale-oil for their preservation'.

West Coast Maori wore seals teeth pendants and used seal blubber for fuel, and Captain Cook noted how the Maori gathered whenever they were melting seal blubber:

'They relished the very skimmings of the kettle, and dregs of the casks; but a little of the pure stinking oil was a delicious feast, so eagerly desired, that I supposed it is seldom enjoyed'.

A Ngai Tahu man, Kaiwhataeruakai, was famed for killing seals with one blow of his fist, and in the Christchurch Press August 1996, Sir Tipene O'Regan claimed that fur seals were a traditional Ngai Tahu food, which they should be allowed to harvest.



Paringa — ‘we passed a terrible night’

Charlie Douglas and Robert Ward were ferry-men over the Paringa River for a while in the mid 1870's, with the usual subsidy of £50 per annum. The ferry-men had to also erect a wire bridge over the right hand branch of the Paringa. Ward and Douglas bought 700 acres for ten shillings an acre to establish a cattle and sheep farm at Paringa, but it was not a success. Ward was drowned in the Saltwater quicksand on the way to a court sitting according to one account, although another version says he drowned driving cattle home. Ward's wife returned to Hokitika, and it is believed that Douglas went bankrupt, or at least the farm was a failure.

It was this later at this same cattle station that Andreas Reischek arrived ignominiously in 1887. On the first night he was landed on the beach and slept in an old gold diggers hut, getting woken by the combination of an incoming high tide and a flooded Paringa River, as it swept into the hut. Three rather miserable days followed till the farm manager rescued him.

Reischek's employer Haast also had a grim night in the Paringa area. He was exploring Hall's Creek with Charlie Douglas and William Docherty to Lake Paringa in 1868.

‘We passed a terrible night, owing to millions of mosquitoes, which, together with a similar torment by day from legions of sandflies that had almost devoured us, did not improve our tempers’.

Paringa was unlucky for Thomas Brunner as well. It was his final point on the long journey from the Buller in 1846-48. Here, a damaged ankle forced him to return, and a plaque by the Paringa road bridge commemorates his exploration.

Hanata in local South Westland Maori dialect means ‘fur seal’, but another name for the islet was ‘Kotewhatiwhati’ which has been translated as ‘break the stick in killing seals’.

biographical profile

Andreas Reischek

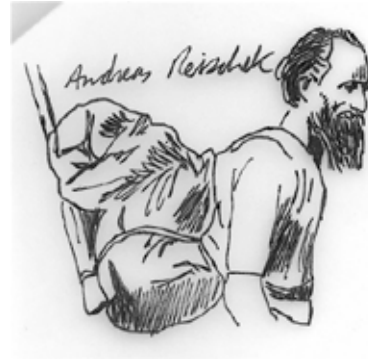
Andreas Reischek arrived in New Zealand in 1877 as a taxidermist for the Canterbury Museum. However, he quickly developed a taste for the back country and set off on his own account collecting rare specimens, exploring and travelling widely in New Zealand. His collecting was wide and indiscriminate. He broke Maori tapu and collected 37 Maori skulls.

On Little Barrier Island, whilst collecting specimens of the already very rare 'ti-ora' [presumably this is the 'tieke' or saddleback] he commented on their scarcity whilst shooting them. He even noted on his return that their numbers had increased ('great joy') and shot some more!

This attitude however was not unusual. Reischek's employer, Julius von Haast, also collected avidly, buying specimens from all over the country not only to add to his own museum but as 'swaps' for overseas specimens. In 1878 the museum committee rapped Haast over the knuckles when they realised that soon some rare species would be represented as 'extinct' in museums. Haast however was unrepentant.

Reischek had an unhappy marriage. He left his 'young and lusty' bride of two years in Austria whilst he went to New Zealand for 'three years'. Haast found himself embroiled in Reischek's matrimonial difficulties, as well as Reischek's undoubted paranoia 'everyone in Vienna was against him', but twelve years later the naturalist returned, somewhat reluctantly, to a wife whose hair was 'streaked with silver'.

However a reading of Reischek's account of his travels Yesterday's in Maoriland will not reveal any of these matters but only a naturalists deep affection for the wilds and freedoms of New Zealand, especially in comparison to the 'domineering caste spirit' in Austria which he inevitably felt obliged to return to.



Abbey Rocks —Paringa River to Moeraki River

From the Paringa there is a difficult stretch of coastline with a number of dramatic sea stacks and islets. Piakatu Point marks the start of the first real beach down to the Abbey Rocks. The Maori knew the distinctive shaped rocks as 'Pauareka' 'sweet shellfish', and the bush from Paringa to Abbey rocks as 'Kapohia' 'catch them'.

The area around here has some smooth and fine rock that was once thought suitable as lithographic stones, ie for the printing process. Several tons of stone were even shipped hopefully to England, but the samples were flawed and the scheme, like so many on the coast, collapsed.

Charlie Douglas' career ended abruptly here in 1906. In the company of Arthur Woodham and Jim Gunn, Douglas was collecting samples of lithographic stone. He had a stroke and had to be ferried by boat and carried to Bruce Bay, where a steamer took him to Hokitika.

In a visit to Abbey Rocks in 1989 the author found some metallic remnants including a bogie wheel. One suggested alternative road to close the 'Paringa gap' was to go via Lake Rasselas to Abbey Rocks and along the coast to Moeraki.

From Abbey Rocks the travel was again slow, very short beach sections with numerous headlands, eventually reaching Otumotu Point. Monro Track was cut through to avoid the section around Knights Point. This track continued up beside Lake Moeraki and joined onto the Haast-Paringa Track at the head of the lake.



Abbey Rocks Access

Not very easy to get to Abbey Rocks. The route we took started from the Monro Track, used the rope over the headland for good beach walking to the Tokaroriri Creek.

Then bash up the creek (not to bad) and over a low bushy saddle into the swampy Rasselas Creek, and down to the coast at Abbey Rocks. Good luck.



Abbey Rocks.

William Docherty

William Docherty was one of great characters of South Westland during the last half of the nineteenth century. Born in Scotland in 1830, he was part of the Otago rush at Lindis Pass in April 1861 and at Gabriel's Gully in September 1861 (500th miners licence issued, Sept 2), just missed out on discovering Hartley and Reilly's spectacular finds in the Arrow River gorge, and was the first to have a gold claim in late 1862 on the present day site of Cromwell.

Then he paired up with G. M. Hassing, and they explored and prospected in the lower reaches of the Clarke and Landsborough Rivers in 1865, eating kakapo that tasted like 'prime turkey'. He joined in the West Coast gold rushes, and was a jack of all trades — explorer, miner, prospector, road maker, bush guide, bird collector (and watcher), entrepreneur, and even his own dentist:

'Fancy me this winter sleeping on the wet ground as I had to shift my camp every two days, always wet feet, suffering from toothache so that I drew two of my own teeth, and came to Hokitika to get the third one drawn. But all this brings philosophy...'

He met Haast on an exploration trip in 1868, who taught him how to skin and prepare birds, and Docherty regularly supplied bird skins to the Doctor (and others), corresponding with him regularly on his bird observations.

He was always on the lookout for the main chance, whether it was coal at Paringa, copper and asbestos at Dusky Sound, marble at Caswell Sound, or gold at Haast. He seemed to have some of the entrepreneurs knack of persuading richer people to subscribe in these ventures and then selling out before the scheme collapsed.

In 1875 he found lithographic stone at Abbey Rocks, and got a quarry going, till he sold half his share for £3000. Docherty remarked 'I never had a days happiness since I had anything to do with it' and moved south to a more hermit-like existence.

When Docherty headed south for Preservation Inlet from Dusky Sound, in a boat 'tied up with wire and string', he called in on Richard Henry on Resolution Island. Henry was irritated by the 'queer old general' trying to cadge, and get Henry to fix his boat.

By 1878 Docherty had established a hut in Dusky Sound, from where he prospected and collected bird skins. Andreas Reischek stayed in Docherty's hut in 1884 from April to October, and remarked that Docherty had adopted the timetable of 'summer in the sounds and winter in Dunedin'. Docherty obtained a licence to mine copper, but the 'lode' at Mt Solitary disappeared with the first dynamite blast, and although he prospected diligently, Docherty found (like Arawata Bill) little payable mineral wealth.

The old prospector played a concertina and liked reading the Illustrated London News in preference to novels. Alice Mckenzie records:

'There was great jealousy between Docherty and Sutherland of Milford Sound, for both of them claimed to be the explorer of the Sounds. Docherty later moved down to Dusky Sound and died, I believe, at Preservation Inlet in 1896'.

It was the last gold rush for the old prospector and he was buried on Cemetery Island in the Inlet by the respectful miners. There is a Mount Docherty and a Docherty Creek, both just south of the Paringa River, and a Docherty Peak (and Hassing Peak) at the head of the Wills River.

Inland Route – Haast-Paringa Cattle Track Track

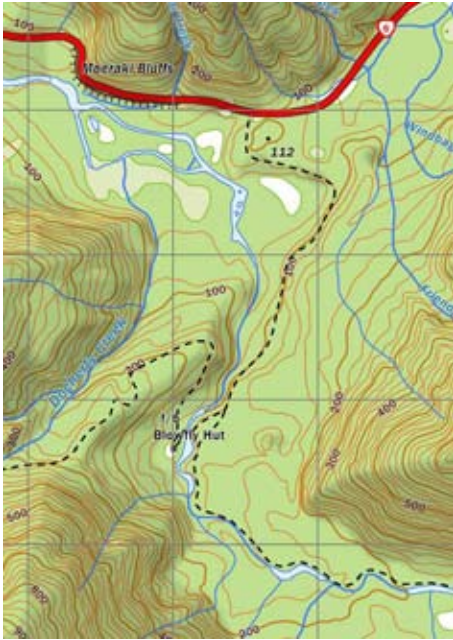
The Haast-Paringa Cattle Track started life following the line of a Maori trail, and then developed as a pack track for diggers. It was designed to avoid the awkward tangle of coastline around Knights Point and climbs over a 2000 foot saddle (700 metres). It would be interesting to know what condition the Maori trail was in at the stage that the Westland County Council issued track contracts in 1871, for tracks south from Bruce Bay to Haast, offering £1380 for 37 miles, and £800 for 19 miles.

Charles Douglas, McGloin and Julies Matthies won the latter contract, for a five foot clearing track from Abbey Rocks to Waita River, which included the Paringa Cattle track.

Contractual obligations were explicit. Usually the track to be cleared to a specified width, anything from 5 feet to 30 feet, then formed or benched between 4-9 feet, then metalled for the final 4-5 feet width. Even the depth of metalling was precise, for the Paringa contract it was 6 inches. The contract price probably varied according to the terrain, and it seems likely that the Douglas contract was just for clearing the bush.

Contracts for shorter mileages were subsequently let out for forming the gradient, and metalling the top. The result was a 'road' capable of taking horses and packing mules, and which later it could be enlarged for a dray road. Progress was slow and expensive. 9 miles and 30 chains of the 'Mahitahi-Haast' track were completed in 1882 for the total sum of £2779, and Gerhard Mueller in his report to Parliament talks of only 'three and a half miles' of track left to finish in 1883 — that's over ten years for 50 miles of road.

Roadmaking was hard labour, a pick, shovel and wheelbarrow might be the only tools, and living in a tent along beside the track. On the West Coast this sort of work went to unemployed gold miners, and Councils used road schemes as a means to soak up surplus labour that might prove troublesome. Pay was about 10-12 shillings a day.



Haast-Paringa Cattle Track Access

The Cattle Track is signposted shortly past Lake Paringa itself. It is one hour to Blowfly Hut which replaced the 'Blue Hut' that Moreland suffered in.

The track is well graded and continues up to a saddle and a 10 bunk hut on Maori saddle, then descends into the head of the Waita River where another hut stands at Coppermine Creek.

Here on the track is unmarked and the route follows the shingly river down to the road. There may be several deepish fords. At the Waita river mouth there was a bach called the 'Drovers Return' and was the southern road builders hut, about 80 years old. It was demolished in 2005.



Originally the track was designed as a communication and supply link to Haast, which was acutely isolated from the rest of the West Coast. There was a bridleway over the Haast Pass, but this route was almost 80 km of rugged travel, with a trip down Lake Wanaka to reach Pembroke (the old name of Wanaka). The Paringa Track offered a shorter route for the cattle farmers, and cattle were already being taken over the saddle by 1875.

Cattle were taken in mobs of about 200 from the South Westland river valleys like the Arawata and Cascade, mustered along the beach to the Waita River, and brought to graze near Copper Creek Hut. In the pre-dawn the cattle were broken into smaller mobs to stop them bunching on narrow parts of the track, and pushed over the saddle to be coralled at the Moeraki River, near Blowfly Hut.

The next day involved getting them across the river and onto the roadhead at Paringa. At the turn of the century, before the road had got that far south, it took two weeks to take the cattle from the Cascade Valley to the Whataroa yards. The last mob was driven through in 1961, and then cattle were trucked out over the newly completed Haast Pass road. In 1965 the main highway down the coast was finally breached through.

Roadmen's huts were established at either end, and it must have been in one of these that Maud Moreland had a 'desperately uncomfortable night' in the 'Blue Hut' just before the cattle track. The mosquitoes were not much put off by the lighting of 'Himrod's Powder'.

Joe Driscoll, a man who became well known for his evasion of military service during World War II, worked as a roadman at Copper Creek for 12 years after his term of imprisonment. He was the last roadman. His hut still exists though is almost derelict.



Blowfly Hut.

Moeraki River and Monro Track

The Moeraki River is deep and slow moving at the coast. Monro Track was a gold miners route cut inland to avoid the Moeraki River and difficult coastal section coming up, and link up with the Paringa Cattle track route.

Tastes and times change. We would now look forward to visiting the coastline of Westland, enjoying an easy stroll on a well benched pack-track to some spectacular vantage point. It was not always so, as one writer remarked in 1886, and incidentally gave me the original title for this book:

‘The southern journey can now be accomplished from Hokitika to Jackson’s Bay on horseback. It is somewhat tedious, and difficult in places and few travellers have undertaken the journey for pleasure’.



Monro Track Access

Monro is a well graded pretty walk to a penguin frequented beach. For the keen if you head north to Otumotu Point a crumbling slab of rock can be scaled (there is a rope) and you can head around to the next beach as far as Tokoriri Creek, which has some lovely sculpted rock shapes further upstream.

There is also a short road down to the Whakapohai River mouth, where the cable to the island illustrates an ingenious way of getting fishing boats off and on the water past the dangerous surf.

Canoe Access

Both Lake Paringa and Lake Moeraki offer pleasant paddles, although the best times are usually early morning or late evening when the lake waters are still.

Lake Paringa has a rest area with a bush walk, toilet and information boards. Just off the Monro Track there is a short shingle road which gives access to the lower Moeraki River. There are interesting back-waters to fossick about it and a short paddle down the placid Moeraki and white-baiters stands to the lovely beach.

Coastal Route – Knights Point ‘run or be damned’

From the Moeraki River mouth the going is difficult, indeed this is the hardest travelling section south of the Paparoas. Numerous headlands, sea stacks, sand beaches that were sometimes there and sometimes not. The fact that the scenery is stunning may have been lost on the anxious traveller.

‘Sometimes but very rarely this point can be rounded by doing a smart piece of running, but it is hardly worth the risk. In the early days some of the diggers gave this point, the ominous name of run-or-be-damned – there is a fine cave under the cliff but as might be expected people have no time to admire it’.²⁸

After crossing the shingly Whakapohai there is the formidable obstacle of Knights Point, which can (supposedly) be dodged at very low tide with a light swell.

There’s a seal colony around the islands at Arnotts Point, and no doubt a few travellers took advantage of that food source. After some tasty headlands, the landscape eases somewhat and it is fair walking to Ship Creek at low tide.

Knights Point was the last crucial bit of roading to link the rest of the West Coast to Haast. The road over the Haast Pass to Otago had been put through in 1960 but it was another five years before the Knights Point section was joined. A lookout and plaque commemorates the site. ‘Knight’ was apparently the road foreman’s dog.

Murphys Beach Access

Sorry, the access is a secret.
You will have to work this
one out on your own!



Murphys beach.

Arnotts Point – ‘petrified with fear and astonishment’

For such an insignificant bump on the coastline Arnotts Point has seen some eventful moments. This was the scene of a bloody and violent pre-dawn clash between Okahu [Jackson Bay] Maori and sealers in 1826, graphically told by John Boulton. In this instance it seems that the Maori were on a raiding party after ‘white man’s treasures’.

‘...I fired the musket towards the natives, who, through the darkness of the night, I could not distinguish individually, they appearing like a cloud at that time. Whether I hit any body or not I cannot say, & indeed it was no time for conjecture. I ran direct to the boat, where all hands made a simultaneous rush & attempted to launch her, but the close approach of the natives prevented us, & we could not move her. I was on that side of the boat next to the cannibals, as were also three others. Seeing we should be cut down if we did not remove out station, we retreated, God knows where. I only recollect I stooped underneath the steer oar which lay over the stern of the boat, and found myself defenceless, petrified with fear and astonishment, standing about 4 yards on the opposite side of the boat: my musket I had laid down in her on endeavouring to launch her, and I had neither balls or powder at hand, and even if I had, I could not get them out of the boat, surrounded as it was by natives, who now kept up a most horrid yell, scarcely human...’

Boulton with desperate strength fended off the attackers with an oar and the sealers managed to launch their boat leaving two dead behind. Boulton later marvelled that the fifteen foot steering oar he had used in his furious defence he could scarcely lift in normal conditions. When Boulton later told his story to the Southland Maori they approved, since they too were not then on the best of terms with the West Coast tribe.

Arnotts Point Access

There's a good lookout at Knights Point carpark, which is the easiest way to view Arnotts Point.

If you have sharp eyes, you can see the black dots on Arnotts Point beach which is the resident seal colony.



Arnotts Point from the Knights Point carpark.

This battle had many subsequent aftermaths, with bloody attacks by sealers on Maori at Anita Bay and Jackson Bay. Maori and sealers had a love-hate relationship, sometimes bitter warfare, at other times great accommodation. It seems likely that the Maori conversion to Christianity and the European sealers departure, after a fairly thorough slaughter of most of the seals, eased tensions considerably, for subsequent contacts between European and Maori showed the latter gave great assistance on many occasions.

At Arnotts Point in 1868 Julius von Haast, Charlie Douglas, and William Docherty arrived after a hazardous small boat journey down the coast. 'I decided to hire a small boat, belonging to the storekeeper, described to me as a whaleboat, but which, after all, was only a dinghy with a square stern'. They spent some nine days on the beach here waiting for the swell to subside.

It was here too, in 1863, that Robert Bain the surveyor in charge of the southern section (Arthur Dobson had the north), after having failed to make an entry into the Waiatoto River was forced to run in a hazardous heavy sea north for 50-60 miles, and made a landing at Paringa. Eventually they got back to Jackson Bay after three days to find their land-based companions had given them up for dead.

Bain had a horrible time on this survey. Two men died, the boat he had hired was wrecked, it rained interminably, and one day, after putting on his waterproofs to divert flood water from the tent:

'Having done so I took off the coat and found myself covered from head to foot with live maggots. The flies had blown the inside of the sleeves, without my being aware of it and it took me two days to get entirely free of the vermin'.

Bain eventually abandoned his task and the party walked out overland via the Hollyford. John Rochfort was hired to finish the survey in 1864.

Ship Creek

information supplement

Sandflies

'There was no more sleeping in of a morning now and man once up found out that he might as well be doing something useful. Regular work had commenced and man's brain was fairly started on it's career of progress. The Mosquito and Sandfly did it. In future I will look on those two Insects with respect and never injure – Ah – Smack – D – you, ye buzzing Vagabonds I got you that time – I mean I'll never injure them if they will only be reasonable'.

This was the C. E. Douglas theory of why sandflies and mosquitoes existed, and in lieu of any better information it may still have to serve. The Maori called the sandfly 'namu', and it was Captain Cook in 1770 who misnamed the Blackfly (Simuliidae) as a 'sand fly'.

There are 13 species of sandfly in New Zealand, only two which bite humans, the other apparently preferring penquins, bats and seals. Only the female sandfly bites; her saliva contains an anti-coagulant that casues the irritation to your skin. She uses her saw-like jaws to stab the skin creating a pool of blood, which she laps up with her tongue. She needs the blood to produce her eggs, which she lays on rocks in fast flowing fresh water.

The males live off sap and nectar and sandflies do not like hot sun, windy days or cold weather. They especially seem to enjoy long grasses, humid weather (particularly before rain) and areas where humans congregate.

What a sandfly contributes to the eco-system is unclear, but you have to admire the little buggers for doing so well in filling that unwanted niche. It's hard to suppose that any insect on the coast causes quite so much irritation – mosquitoes and politicians aside – so perhaps they should put up a memorial?

Not a particularly difficult stretch of coast at low tide, the early travellers would have found the going good and be relieved to see the long straight stretch of Haast beach ahead. They probably would have bagged a few mussels from off the tidal platforms at low tide as they passed. Even so, it's likely that the majority took the inland track, especially after it had been improved in the late 1860's. The Maori name for Ship Creek was 'Tauparikaka'.

The discovery of the remains of a large wooden ship encouraged much speculation: 'Story of Mysterious Old Vessel' said the *Christchurch Press* 1938, 'Hull thought to pre-date Cook's visits'. Charlie Douglas was sardonic as always:

'Some supposed it was the remains of a Spanish Galleon laden with gold. Others said it was the remains of Perouse's ships and a hunk of it was sawn off to be sent to the Paris exhibition...The Maori of course were consulted and as usual were equal to the occasion and had a yarn ready, about men in iron coast and hats – armour no doubt – who were shipwrecked there and killed by the natives'.

The 'ship' was actually a small part of the *Schomberg*, a wooden clipper, 26,000 tons, grounded on her maiden voyage on a sandbank at Cape Otway in Australia in 1855, which then broke up and a part of it drifted to the West Coast. There's no trace of it now.

The Circumnavigators by Derek Wilson explains that the captain of the *Schomberg* was the famous 'Bully' Forbes. In 1852 Forbes managed the fastest six months return sailing time England-Australia-England on the *Marco Polo*, and on the *Lightning*, in 1854 sailed from Melbourne to London in 64 days — a feat which has never been surpassed.

The *Lightning* was worthy of her name, for in the Atlantic in 1854 she established the remarkable record of 436 miles in 24 hours. *James Baines* beat *Lightning's* circumnavigation record in 1855 with a time of 133 days 6 hrs and 15 mins.

The *Schomberg* however turned out to be a sluggish ship, and Forbes was so disgusted with the ship's progress that he was busy playing cards with the first-class passengers as the clipper drifted onto a lee shore. 'Let her go to hell' he yelled, and continued playing, so the ship went to hell.

'Bully' Forbes was sacked after the wreck of the *Schomberg*, and at 34, with his captain's career at an end, he died a broken man aged 52 in 1874 in Liverpool.

Waita River and Lagoon



Ship Creek Access

There are two elegant and popular walks at Ship Creek, a dune walk and a swamp walk, plus toilets and a lookout tower.

Maori River Canoe Access

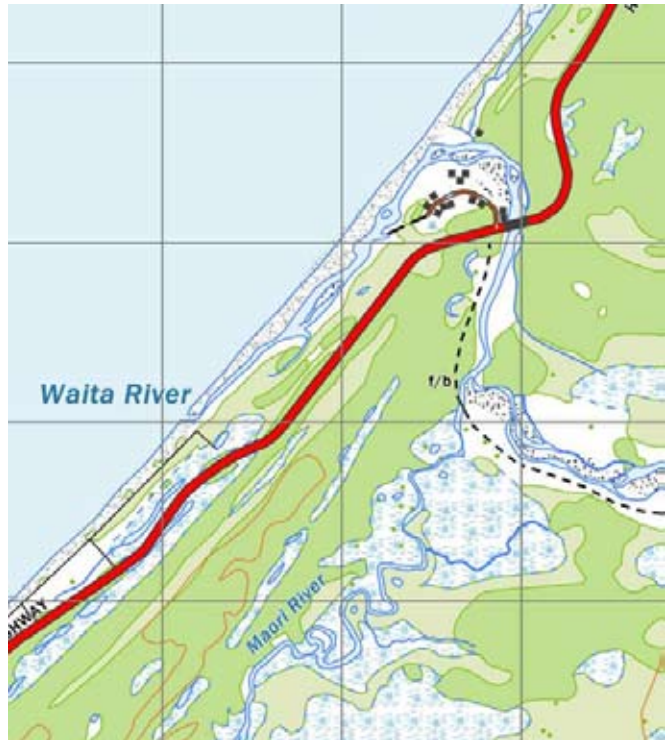
To reach the Maori River from the Waita bridge follow the short vehicle track to the south bank. Some of the stretches up the Waita can be paddled, but otherwise pull the boats till you reach the entrance of the Maori River, about half a kilometre.

The Maori is a deep black swamp river, easy to paddle up and lined with flax, with some stunning reflections that can get disorientating. Occasional copses of beech forest by the banks. The first two lakes indicated on the inch/mile maps seem to exist only as grass filled swamps, but the largest lake does exist. Time is about a day return to the large lake, ten kilometres all told.

Ship Creek, looking north.



The long beach down to the Haast River is only interrupted by the Waita estuary. Cattle had been driven along this beach for many years before the roads finally reached Haast. At the Haast river mouth is 'Kwitcha Town' an eccentric bach community.



information supplement

The Weather

The weather is a powerful personality on the West Coast, and every visitor suspects it must affect the character of the people who live there. Does the broodiness of the clouds encourage introspection and depression? Does the rainfall drive you to madness? It is unlikely there are any more madmen on the Coast than anywhere else, but there are plenty of bush philosophers, and that might have something to do with the long days of rainfall. West Coasters develop standard responses: asked by a visitor if he thought the rain would ever stop the 'coaster' replies laconically 'Well it usually does'.

Some weather statistics are surprising. Hokitika on average gets about the same sunshine hours as Christchurch, though the rainfall is approximately 3000 mm a year compared to Christchurch's 800 mm. Hokitika gets about 180 rainy days, compared to Christchurch's 100 rainy day. Any area of flat land on the coast away from the mountains, usually gets better weather, especially during the drier months of winter. Rainfall in Haast during August can be less than 100 mm, not bad considering the yearly average is around 3000 mm.

For the record books, the aptly named Waterfall raingauge in the Cropp River, a tributary of the Whitcombe River, just inland from Hokitika, holds the New Zealand record for highest annual rainfall — recording 14.4 metres in the 12 months to November 1983. Enough to submerge a four-storey building. Milford Sound settlement on the other hand only gets a piddling 6 metres a year, though one raingauge close to the Sound recorded 13 metres in one year. If these figures seem astounding, then there is one more record to literally drown you in disbelief.

Alex Knob at Franz Josef is a lowish peak right on the edge of the mountains, at the critical height where the breaking rainstorms are likely to be at their most intense. It was reported in the Christchurch Press 11 November 1994 (see also Christchurch Press 18 March 1999) that in March 1982, after a dramatic storm in the Franz Josef settlement a park ranger made the arduous slog up to the top of this hill to record the rainfall. He tipped out 181 centimetres (that's seven feet) in three days.

The raingauge itself was only seven feet high so the amount could have been considerably greater, at a rainfall rate of about an 30 mm (inch) an hour. It's certainly not impossible that the rainfall on some of these front range peaks could be in the 20 metres a year category.

Chapter 8

Haast & Jackson Bay



Haast is remote. Even today with good road access Haast is still one of the obscure corners of the South Island, and this isolation has lent the area its romance, and caused most of its hardships. The weather really isn't that bad, for despite the 3000 mm of yearly rain, Haast township receives as much sunshine as Christchurch.

Because of the heavy rainfall in summer it was generally assumed by the early travellers that it was worse in winter. Robert Bain an early surveyor in the 1860's, was told there was 'incessant rain' in the winter season, when in fact the exact opposite is true. Brunner seems to have been misled in this regard as well, and even today many modern visitors steer away from the Coast in winter because they fear the most appalling conditions. It's a hard myth to shake.



Haast River (Awarua)

The Haast River was a formidable barrier. The first travellers built their own makeshift rafts but later ferry services were established. John Marks is recorded as one of the first ferrymen, about 1866, operating a store as well. This unofficial position became official in 1874. One family, the Crons, were running a ferry over the Haast River from the 1930's to the 1950's. John Cron was still operating the ferry at 76, but later his daughters Ivy and Myrtle took over. The first and only bridge was built in 1964. South of Haast there is a succession of good beach walking interrupted by deep Westland rivers.

Douglas criticised Julius von Haast for using his name for this big river when there was already a Maori name – the Awarua. 'It requires inspiration to put a name on a natural feature that will last'. Awarua has been translated as 'two streams', which was a common Maori name, but since many of Westland's rivers might have several streams at the river mouth the name hardly makes sense – unless the two streams referred to were the Landsborough and the Haast?

Haast

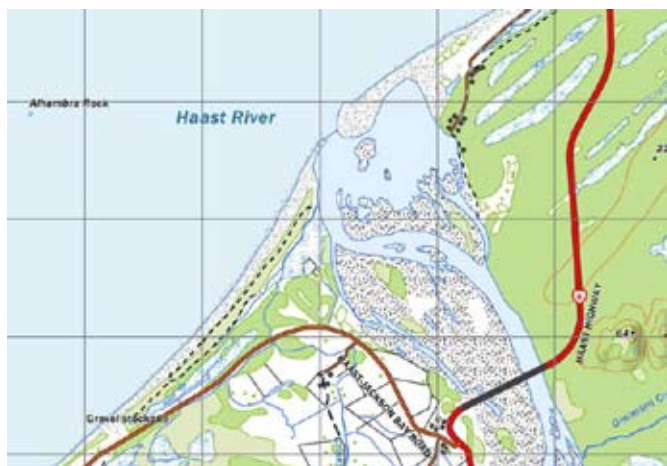
Haast's history is one long and often acrimonious saga of access, and getting a decent road to Haast was always going to be a formidable problem, and numerous provincial and government departments got bogged down over the intractableness of the land and the excessive costs involved.

Haast was not finally connected by road (via the Haast Pass) till 1960, and the full coastal road joined up in 1965.

Haast's unique isolation caused the inhabitants of South Westland to have an exciting fling with the aeroplane. Entrepreneurial operators like Captain J. C. Mercer, who operated from bush strips and beach sands, established a regular service. Dropping newspapers, carrying goods, people to hospitals, kids to boarding schools, crayfish, whitebait, anything at all. It has been said that some of Haast's inhabitants flew in a plane before they drove in a car. Between the late 1930's and 1960's the plane was unrivalled.

Haast River Access

You can access the north side via the 'kwitcha town' track. There is a new subdivision planned here in 2012.



Haast road bridge, with two passing bays.

The harbour was another saga. Undoubtedly Jackson Bay is the best natural harbour on the West Coast, but it took some fifty years from the first letters to provincial authorities asking for the money for a wharf, to actually achieving a result.

The Haast gold rush was very brief, barely four months and the beach workings were soon exhausted. At its peak there would have been about 1500 hundred men there. Indeed there was little payable gold south of Okarito and Five Mile, although small groups of miners worked almost every beach from Okarito down to Milford Sound, often living a marginal existence.

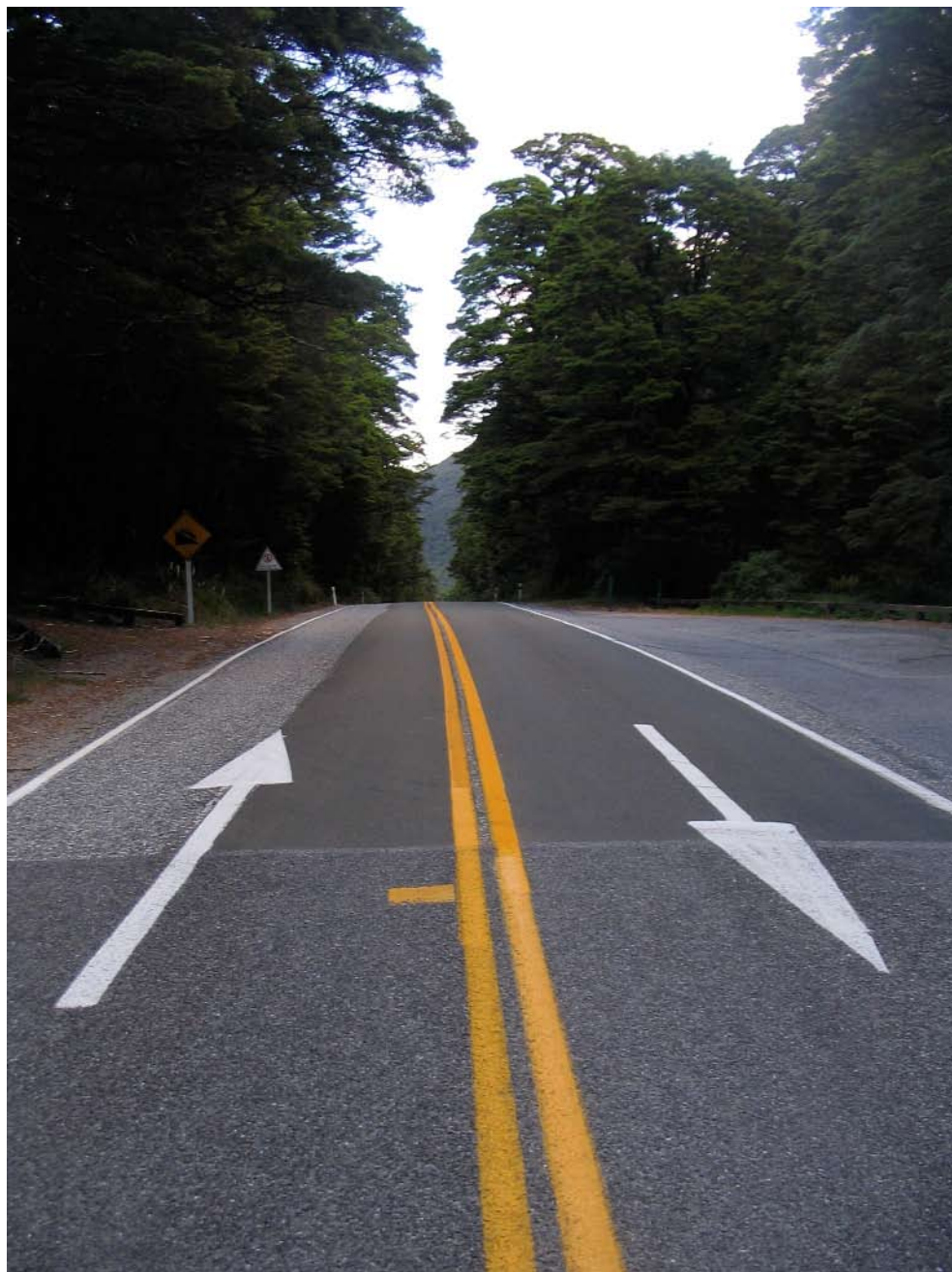
There were short lived 'gold rushes' at Big Bay in 1886 and a minor gold strike at Madagascar Beach. Throughout the end of the nineteenth century there were isolated diggers working around the coastline. One digger family at Jackson Bay in 1880's was found living on 'mussels, fern sprouts and tea brewed from bidi-bidis'.

Haast Pass — 'Tiori-patea — the clear path'

The Haast Pass road was given the derisory label 'a hundred years of progress'.

The Maori had used the pass for centuries, for greenstone and a famous, and in the end disastrous, war party by Te Puoho who was killed and most of his followers enslaved. The Europeans then had a squabble over who had first rediscovered the pass, the general agreement being that the first ascent was by John Baker in 1861. Charles Cameron reached the pass in about October 1862 and sought a £1000 from the local government to reveal it's location, but Julius von Haast and his party made the first complete crossing and named it after himself 'according to the direction of the Superintendent'. The Maori knew the pass as 'Tiori Patea' or the 'clear path'.

By 1876 a track suitable for stock had been put through over the Haast Pass, and that, with various repairs, complaints, and petitions was about the sum of progress for a considerable time. By the 1940's a road had reached the gates of Haast, and the first vehicle through to Haast was a 23 ton bulldozer in 1953 from Paringa (the 38 miles of forest took 38 days) but it was not until 1960 that a true motor vehicle road went over the pass to the sea.



Haast Pass Access

The main highway crosses the pass and there are several short walks and camping areas further across. The original bridle path starts from the pass itself.

One of the most interesting journeys was undertaken by the Cuttance family in 1907, emigrating to better and drier pastures in Otago from Jackson Bay. Husband, wife, six sons, three daughters, twelve pack horses, 58 head of cattle (mostly cows) and three dogs. Daniel Cuttance refers to one period of eight days delay in the Haast, so after seventeen days of actual travel they arrived in their new home in Blackburn, near Balclutha, a distance of 350 km.

There was also the curious tale of a party of miners who crossed into the Haast River from Otago in 1865: 'Here, they used the last of their provisions, and having n

either guns nor ammunition for nine days, existed on a peculiar blue bird that abounded there...'

The birds it was said were unable to fly, very nimble, and weighed 7lbs each when plucked. Were they takahe?

In 1900 A. P. Harper; was prospecting a claim just north of Haast and took a bicycle down by boat to Okuru. When he landed he was obliged to give an hours exhibition of the vehicle, such was its novelty.

He later rode the bike over the Haast Pass, or carried might be more appropriate. 12 hours to Clarke Bluff for 25 miles, then 35 miles to Lake Wanaka head in 15 hours. Steamer down the lake to Pembroke [Wanaka], an all night cycle ride of 130 miles to Lawrence, train to Dunedin and then Christchurch.

Five days, instead of at least the eight days if he had gone via Hokitika. Perhaps the first mountain bike ride?

biographical profile

Bill the Maori

Ruera te Naihi was a ferryman on the Waitoto for a while in the late 1900's and he worked with both Douglas and Harper on their explorations, notably in hard trips in the Karangarua and Landsborough. Not to be confused with 'Maori Bill' who lived at Big Bay, Ruera te Naihi was actually Maori and had seen Harper's father (Leonard Harper) as a young boy as they passed through to Haast in 1857. He also remembered Julius von Haast as 'Te man who chippy chippy te stone'.

A. P. Harper noted that Ruera te Naihi was: 'a good mate in many ways, though terribly slow in rough country, absolutely no use as a climbing companion, but very useful for catching birds and carrying his full share of the swags'. Ruera's dog 'Jack', 'a yellow three-legged mongrel' was a famous and persistent thief. Bill used to tell some interesting stories as A. P. Harper related in his book *Memoires of Mountains and Men*.

'Ahapa he travel pery fast over rough country – we were often pery hungry-no food – bellies quite empty. Ahapa sometimes he pinch my leg and he say "Bill, you got fine fat leg" – my golly when he did that I went after te wekas damn quick!'

Ruera te Naihi married te Owai (Ripeka te Owai, Kere Tutoko's daughter and a grand-daughter of Chief Tutuko) and later the couple moved down from the Makawhio River to the Waitoto River (Waitoto) where Bill was a ferryman, and he used to make regular mutton-birding trips to Open Bay Islands five kilometres offshore.

Ruera would light a signal fire on the island to give his wife some idea of when he would return, and his wife reciprocated to give him directions. Ruera was drowned in 1902, possibly from a heart seizure or stomach cramps, as he was crossing Hindley Creek, although another version suggests he drowned whilst returning from Open Bay Islands. It is believed he was buried in Okuru cemetery, though no headstone either in Okuru or Bruce Bay cemeteries seems to exist.

There is a Ruera River, flowing into the Copland, a Ruera Creek flowing into the Makawhio, and a Te Naihi River in the Waitoto valley.



Okuru and Hapuka Rivers and Ferrymen

The Okuru and Hapuka Rivers join together in an estuary, which made crossing awkward. The Hapuka in particular is a deep swamp river, typical of lowland Haast Rivers, and is in consequence quite treacherous. The Maori knew the Okuru as 'Putaiwhenua' and the Hapuka as the 'Opuka', 'an anchor'.

The necessity for ferrymen was well demonstrated by the early travellers. Building your own raft was no fun and dangerous, and drowning was such an occupational hazard (all over the country) that it was known as the 'national death' or 'national disease'. It was the gold rush that caused the establishment of ferrymen, but even then only on the very busy Hokitika or Totara Rivers could a living be had out of it. Eventually, in 1874, the authorities established a subsidy on all rivers of £50 a year. Licence conditions would typically be something like this: 1) the ferry to be worked by boat; 2) subsidy £50 per annum; 3) 25 acres (this was to augment the ferryman's meagre income); 4) protection from private ferry-men half mile each way on both sides; 5) five year lease; 6) horse and rider 5 shillings; 7) police and prisoners free.

Ferrymen were a unique breed – jack of all trades, carpenters, diggers, fossickers, philosophers and most of all yarners. Charlie Douglas asked:

'Can any one explain why ferry-man are in general Characters, do ferries make them so? Or are they a special case born to create Ferries and how is it that they are in general sociable & talkative, while the Tollman, who's occupation is about the same, is a gloomy Misanthrope?'

As late as 1933 at Okuru there was no other way to get a sick boy suffering from appendicitis to a hospital but to carry him. A horse trap first to the Haast River, a boat across, and stretcher bearers along the beach and over the cattle track to the Mahitahi River. A distance of 54 miles where a car took the boy to Hokitika hospital.

Okuru and Hapuku River Access

The Hapuka Estuary walk is an attractive circuit, and the lagoons are a nice spot for a paddle, especially if someone else does the work (see below!).



Top photo looks across to the Hapuka estuary walk platform.

Waiatoto River and Lagoon

Another beach stroll to the Waiatoto (or Waitoto) where Arawata Bill and the garrulous Bill Hindley both served for a time as ferrymen. Hindley was an original Jackson Bay settler.

‘Found Bill Hendly in a state of Mental Collapse. He could [not] even pitch a yarn, three of his teeth were aching, and, awful to relate, his boat got smashed in last night’s Gale, through risking his life putting a horseman over. All the ferrymen on the Coast have lost a boat some time or other; carelessness on their part as he says – now they have him. Collyer will be down to condole in a voice of hypocritical sympathy, and Bromart will forget to swear in his delight when he hears of it’.

Of Bill Hindley in the Waiatoto Charlie Douglas (himself a ferryman for a while on the Paringa) remarked.

‘...in fiction Bill is unapproachable. He is compound of the Ancient mariner, Sinbad the Sailor and Baron Munchausen...His stories always put me in mind of those rivers which rise no one knows where, then they flow on for miles in a steady defined channel, till entering flat country they branch into a hundred mouths and finally disappear in the sand. But long may he and others rule the ferries south, but for their eccentricities we would have nothing to talk about’.

Several accounts later mention the habit on these rivers for travellers to light a stick of gelignite to attract the ferryman’s attention. ‘Nolan’s cooee’ as it became known locally, after a well known Haast family. The eels in the Waiatoto lagoon were famous. Charlie Douglas:

‘As a rule every lake and most of the rivers in Southern Westland contain one or more of these mysterious monsters, they are got up on the bank at times with the assistance of tackle but somehow they always get away. The record eel of this class holds it’s court on the Waiatoto, near the mouth, it’s actual dimensions are unknown but it must be a fearful beast, as it nearly took a whaleboat over the bar with nine men pulling their best against it – so they said – personally I can say nothing about it, the fish must clear out whenever I go to the place it is said to be in’.

biographical profile

Joseph Collyer

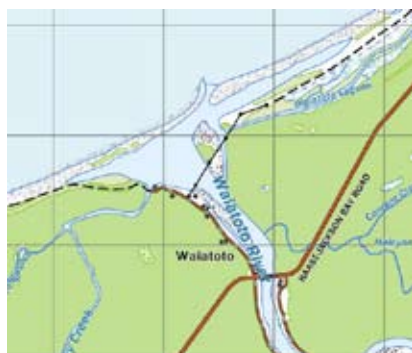
There were ferrymen on many of these rivers and Joseph Collyer is an interesting example of the varied natures of the ferryman. He arrived in Okuru about 1874-75 after a hard overland journey from Hokitika.

He became a sort of institution as the ferryman and storeman at Okuru during the 80's and 90's, described as a man 'happy in his solitude'. Collyer kept his daybooks on chips of wood, shingles or pieces of bark, and officiated as 'harbour-master, signalman, boatman, wharfinger (someone who manages or owns a wharf), guide, philosopher, and friend to all who visit Okuru'.

He was very well educated with bookshelves of the classics in their original language. If Collyer heard that Archdeacon Henry Harper was visiting Ross, he would ride up and the two friends would spend the evening talking in Greek or Latin.

[Joe] '...used to say that he'd got thirty pound a year, enough to buy tobacco, flour, etc., and be able to live well with the help of the birds and the fish – free to do as he liked, with no worries. "Why don't you stay down here," he'd say to me. "It's a happy life, no worries or responsibilities. Why go back to civilisation?'

The ferryman is remembered in Mt Collyer and Collyer Creek. There is a Joseph Collyer buried in Hokitika cemetery, who died on the 22 November 1905 aged 75, but it is not known whether this is the same man.



Waitatoto River Access

There is a short side road down to whitebaiters baches on the south side of the river but the best access to the river mouth is 5km before the Waitatoto bridge, following a vehicle track to the coast.

Open Bay Islands – ‘dancing hornpipes’

‘What the Maori name for the groups is I don’t know but no doubt they have names, and they ought to be put on again, as it is a shame that Westland’s only islands should have such an absurd name as Open Bay’.

Actually the islands did have names: Taumaka and Popotai, and were used as a source of mutton-bird and sea-bird eggs by the Maori, and are still retained in Maori ownership. Wekas were later introduced to the islands which drastically reduced the huge population of wetas. It is a curiosity that there are no sandflies on Open Bay Islands, a fact which may help to explain the presence of New Zealand’s only blood-sucking leech, which feeds on birds.

The bay was originally named by Captain Cook as ‘Open Bay’, but was changed to Jackson Bay and the name fell onto these two small islands. A sealing party were landed there in 1810 from the *Active*, and they gathered some 11,000 seal skins, but their ship was lost at sea and they were marooned for almost four years, surviving on seal meat and a ‘species of fern’.

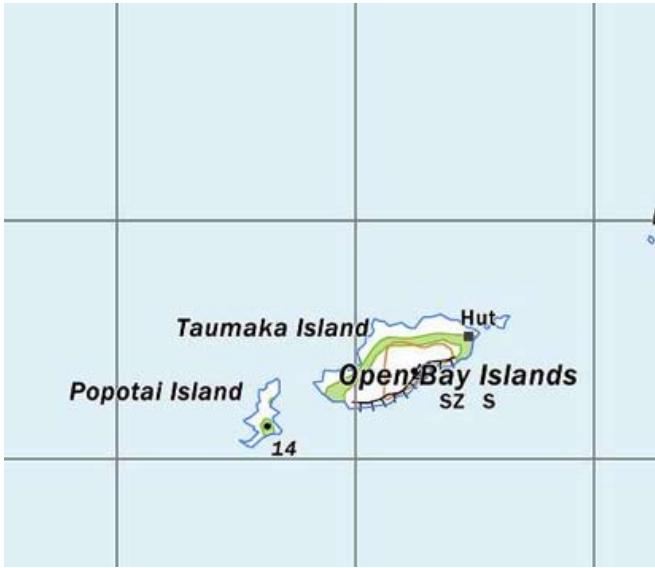
Their whaleboat was in poor condition but they got to the mainland, and repaired another boat they found there, but a storm destroyed both boats. They fabricated a seal canoe and returned to Open Bay island, where they continued with the curing of the skins. They had just begun to make a third wooden boat when John Grono on the brig *Governor Bligh* coincidentally arrived.

(Incidentally, it was John Grono who accidentally ‘discovered’ Milford Sound, by being driven onto the Fiordland coast, where the ‘cliff’ turned into the entrance to the fjord. He originally named it ‘Milford Haven’).

A sealers shanty records the Open Bay sealers, David Loweriston was the officer in charge. This shanty may well be the oldest European song about New Zealand (see below).

Open Bay Islands Access

There is no public access to the islands.



A distant view of Open Bay islands from across the Okuru estuary.

*My name is Davie Lowston, I did seal, I did seal
My name is Davie Lowston, I did seal
Though my men and I were lost, though our lives 'twould cost
We did seal, we did seal, we did seal.*

*We were set down in Open Bay, were set down, were set down
We were set down in Open bay, were set down
We were left, we gallant men, never more to sail again
For to sail, for to sail, for to sail.*

*Our captain John Bedar, he set sail, he set sail
Yes, for Port Jackson, he set sail, he set sail
'I'll return, men, without fail!' but she foundered in a gale
And went down, and went down, and went down.*

*We cured ten thousand skins for the fur, for the fur
Yes, we cured ten thousand skins for the fur
Brackish water, putrid seal, we did all of us fall ill
For to die, for to die, for to die.*

*Come all you lads who sail upon the seas, sail the sea
Come all you jacks who sail upon the sea
Though the schooner Governor Bligh, took on some who did not die
Never seal, never seal, never seal.*

Arawhata River

After the Waitoto its another 8 kilometres of beach to the last and most massive of the South Westland rivers – the Arawhata. Then it is a short beach and a rocky coastline of 4 km to Jackson Bay.

Arawhata River Access

The road runs down the south side of the river and you can get access to the river mouth from Neils Beach. The Arawhata cemetery is 1km on from Neils Beach.



Arawhata road bridge. A monument to the roadman Dan Greaney has been established next to the bridge.

Arawata Bill

'You should have been told Bill, only in you was the gold'.

William O'Leary was a roadman, ferry-man and prospector, made famous by Dennis Glover in his sequence of poems called 'Arawata Bill'. He fossicked in the country around the Dart, Arawhata, Cascade and Hollyford, but he seems to have found little actual gold.

He certainly was the first person to cross O'Leary Pass between the Joe and Dart Rivers in the late 1890's, so Charlie Douglas put Arawata's real name on the pass – though the two famous wanderers never seemed to have met.

Born in Lawrence on the Otago goldfields in 1865, he was a ferryman on the Arawhata River (which is perhaps where he earned his famous nickname) and also on the Waitoto River between 1912 to 1929 – 17 years. He was paid about £75 a year plus the 2 shillings a head for ferrying people across the rivers.

He also seems to have worked as a roadman on the Haast-Paringa road at times. He had extraordinary resilience.

'In 1937 the Olivine explorer Jack Holloway was amazed to come across 'Arawata' clad in thigh gumboots cutting steps in the ice on O'Leary Pass with a long handled shovel. No mean effort for an old timer of 71!'

When you sift through the various opinions of people who met Arawata a certain picture emerges. He didn't like heights, could not swim (like Charlie Douglas), was of small wiry build, and usually carried a favourite camp oven filled with a week's supply of porridge.

Generally he stuck to the valleys, leading Dolly his packhorse up to a base depot, and patiently back-loading his food and equipment further up valley. He probably only travelled a few kilometres a day. Some people suspected that Arawata's 'prospecting' was just an excuse to escape to the hills.

He claimed to have found a 'ruby mine' somewhere near Lake Wilmot and had a watch adorned with 'uncut rubies', although they might have been the sort of red garnets that Alice McKenzie played with in the Kaipo river. In his later life he would spend winters at Lake Wakatipu then head for the hills again for the summer.

Getting enfeebled he was taken to the Little Sisters of the Poor in Dunedin, and there are several stories of him 'escaping', once getting as far as Queenstown. He died in Dunedin in 1947 aged 82, and is buried at Andersons Bay.

Dennis Glover believed he may have met Arawata Bill without realising it, when Glover worked as a boatman on some of the Wakatipu launches during the late 1930's. Glover's poem sequence was published in 1953.



Jackson Bay (Okahu)

Maori have lived in the vicinity of Okahu (Jackson Bay) for some centuries, and in the 1850's one account suggests up to 200-300 people in a kaika at Arawhata or Okuru, but this seems an exaggeration. The area was probably a major base for manufacture of tools for greenstone and greenstone ornaments. It's likely that sealers and possibly whalers used Jackson Bay, perhaps for out of season work, taking advantage of the good harbour and timber to do repairs on their boats, and buying vegetables off the Maori.

In the 1870's Jackson Bay seemed to offer opportunities for settlement. Flat land, some access (over the Haast Pass) or along the coast, heavily timbered, good fishing and the only safe harbour on the whole of the West Coast. Despite the problems with the Martins Bay settlement and Jamestown the government decided to support the project. The early colonists at Jackson Bay settlement were a mixed bag: Irish, English, Polish (who chose to go to Smoothwater Bay), Scottish, German, Scandanavian (mostly at Waiatoto) and Italian (mainly at Okuru). Some settlers worked hard with little success, some settlers were clearly out of their depth. Pietro Tofanari a former hotel waiter wrote ‘..the beginning I find very bad in this bushy bushy country’.

It never worked. The weather was poor, communications erratic, the colonists mostly not of a type suited to the hardships, and despite repeated requests the money from the government for a jetty was never forthcoming. By 1885 apart from a few families that stayed the settlement was finished. It cost the government about £30,000, and the wharf was finally built in 1938.

Charlie Douglas made the final ironic comment.

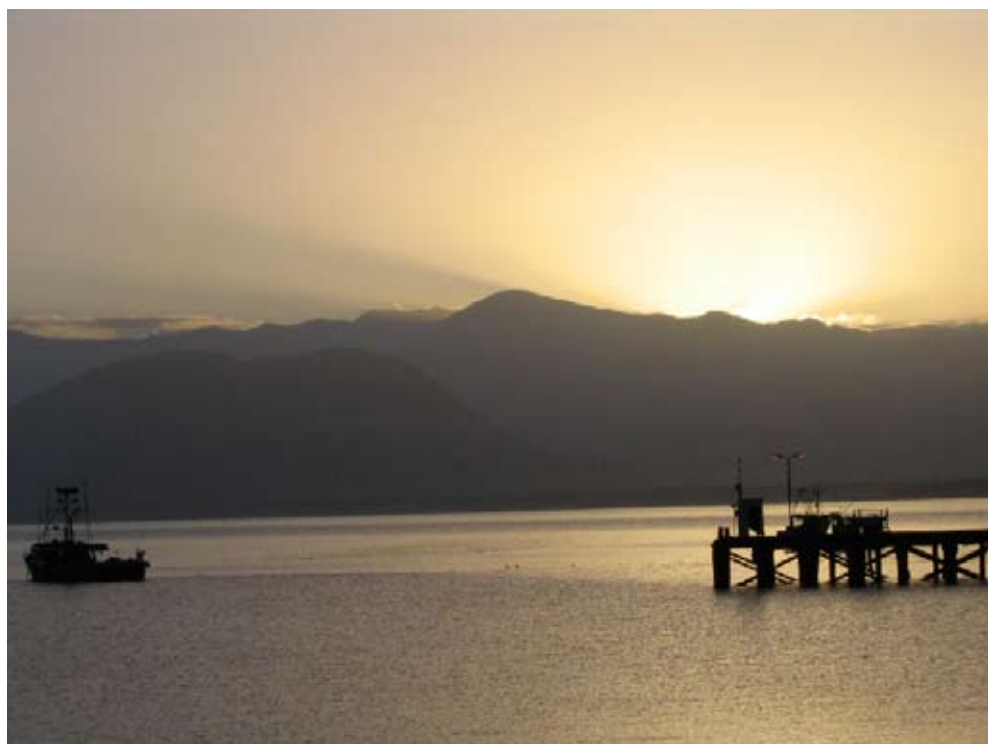
‘A settlement on the lines of the Hollyford, only on a more liberal scale was started at Okuru Waiatoto and Arawhata, with Jacksons Bay as the main city. Town sections went a high prices. A store, a public house and a gaol were built – the latter always a sign of prosperity’.

When Douglas visited Jackson Bay a few years later he found only the gaol standing ‘the latter had both doors open with a reproachful look about it, as if inviting some one for mercies sake to come in and be locked up’.

Jackson Bay Access

The road is right beside the coastline here, and leads to the wharf and an information shelter.

As well as the popular Smoothwater Bay track, there's a track over the peninsula to a small bay.



James Teer

He was a six foot two inch Irishman and not a man to let the grass grow under his feet, leaving Ireland in 1845 at the age of 18. He is first mentioned by George Preshaw as the boatman that helped guide the Nelson, the first steamer across the Hokitika bar in December 1864. 'The sea was as smooth as glass; so smooth that he crossed the bar alone in his boat and piloted the vessel in safety'. Some reports suggest Teer was a crew member of the Nelson, others that he was a pilot.

Then Teer turned up on the ill fated General Grant which was wrecked on the Auckland Islands in May 1866. The ship was famous not only because of the gold she was carrying, but for the extraordinary endurance of the fourteen survivors, who had to survive for almost two years before being rescued.

Teer by all accounts was the natural leader, scavenging every piece of iron from previous wrecks, and ingeniously making six knife blades from the blade of one shovel. When eventually the brig Amherst turned up the captain thought the unruly band of survivors approaching him might be mutineers, but they managed to persuade him otherwise. The survivors got to Invercargill in January 1868, a few months short of two years after the disaster. Teer went back to the Auckland Islands to try and locate the gold, but with no success, and by 1865 was in Australia.

Preshaw again mentions Teer as pursuing his old occupation of boatman (and possibly signalman for a while) back on the Hokitika River up to 1874. Although the General Grant had been on its way 'home' to England, Teer seems to have given up on that idea for the scene changes and he turns up in Jackson Bay.

Roxburgh records him as helping the Nolan family out with food in 1875-76, Wises Directory of 1883-84 describes Teer as a 'farmer', and Pascoe refers to him as a 'prospector' who wrote some vitriolic letters complaining about the Jackson Bay settlement: 'a complete public swindle...and no one is wanted here unless he can crawl like the most loathsome reptile'. The cause of Teer's complaints seem

to be that he applied for land but was rejected on the grounds he was really a 'digger'. He also had a run in with the Resident Agent for killing seals, which he claimed as 'his natural food' – not unreasonably perhaps after eighteen months on the Auckland Islands.

Teer was forever getting into scrapes. In the 1890's he was involved in a seal skin expedition down the coast of Fiordland (Harry Cuttance was one of the party), and they travelled by boat as far south as Chalky Inlet. On the return they decided to try the seal colony at Cascade Head, but the boat was damaged when it tried to land, and Teer was stranded, as the others rowed the stricken boat back to Hominy Cove, just before Jackson Bay. Two men walked back along the coast, and up Teer Creek to the plateau, and managed to lower food and clothes to the disconsolate sealer. It's not clear how long he spent there, possibly 2-3 nights, before being rescued by the repaired boat. His mates complained that he hadn't collected many skins, but he said the seals kept him awake by moving around at night so he had to sleep during the day!

James Teer died in Jackson Bay in 1887 and was buried in the Arawhata cemetery, and it is pleasing to note that there is a 'Teer Creek', 'Teer Hill' and 'Teer Plateau', all located on the Cascade Plateau just south of Jackson Bay, to commemorate the name of this fearless and enduring man.



Chapter 9

Cascade & Big Bay



South of Jackson Bay the West Coast starts to reclaim its remoteness. The last road trickles up the Jackson River valley, the last bulldozed track reaches Barn Bay. It's a long way to Milford Sound and the shoreline looks much as Charlie Douglas would have experienced it, but he would get a few surprises today.

Whitebaiters and crayfishermen are working this landscape, zooming their precious cargoes by helicopter to foreign markets. Trampers arrive to the coast via the Hollyford Track, some in the luxury of jet boats.

So a wild shoreline, yes, majestic scenes certainly, but remote, well, not so much these days.



Smoothwater and Stafford Rivers

The Smoothwater track was probably started by the Polish settlers who chose to live in this bay when the Jackson Bay settlement of 1875 was established.

From here, this track was extended via Stafford Saddle into the Stafford River, and hereon wound it's way onto the scrubby Cascade Plateau itself, edging around Teer Creek before descending to the Cascade River.

This 'road' may never have been finished, as the £300 granted was only sufficient for ten miles of track. The inch to mile maps (Jackson Bay 1975) may confirm this for the track stops halfway over the Cascade Plateau.

There are some parts of the benched track still in good order between the Stafford River and up to the Cascade Plateau, but no sign of the 'road' on the plateau itself, or between the Smoothwater and Stafford Rivers, or over the Stafford Saddle.

There is a good coast route from the Smoothwater to the Stafford River, with two short sections of track over headlands. Strange rock formations abound, with 'rock flowers' and other unusual shapes. Seals often straggle to this coast.

Smoothwater Bay Access

Well marked track from Jackson Bay to Smoothwater River following the old pack track, then you can easily walk down the flat Smoothwater to the the ill-sited Polish settlement.

At low tide a good route exists around to the Stafford River, with two short headland tracks. A well-marked inland track links the Stafford and Smoothwater Rivers.



Stafford Hut.

Cascade Plateau and Cascade River

From the Stafford River the coastal travel became hard again, with formidable cliffs around Cascade Plateau and Cascade Point. This was where James Teer was stranded, trying to get skins from the seal colony.

‘No human ingenuity can ever travel round this point and there is in general the heaviest sea running on the Coast’, and t

The alternative thrash over the scrubby, broken plateau itself would be little fun, so it’s no wonder that the Jacksons-Cascade ‘road’ was constructed, and then the Jackson valley road developed.

The Maori knew Cascade Point as ‘Katake’ and the Cascade River as ‘Tahutahi’. Cascade Point is believed to be named by Cook’s party after the ‘three grand natural cascades’ that fall over the bluff to the sea.

Another version has it that the whalers called in ‘Caskhead Point’. Certainly a ‘whalers track’ still existed between Jackson Bay and Cascade Point in the early 1850’s, and might have been used to get access for timber.

In 1857 eight crew members of a wrecked whaler were stranded near Cascade River, and with help from the Jackson’s Bay Maori walked to Collingwood in about three months.

‘These unintentional explorers were probably the first Europeans to traverse the whole length of the West Coast’.

Theophilus Daniells and John Howell applied for a sheep or cattle run on the Cascade Plateau in September 1865, though it’s doubtful if it was ever stocked.

The Cascade River emerges from the Red Hills, and winds sinuously down to the sea. It was observed that the Cascade had ‘fifty miles of navigable rivers’ and is famous for its white-baiting.

‘The name will always be a standing protest against the absurd nomenclature current in many parts of New Zealand. Here is a river that stands alone in Westland as the only one that is in no hurry to gain the sea’.

‘...a sail in a boat or canoe, up the Cascade will be a bright spot in their existence, once experienced never to be forgotten, especially in the early spring when the banks are yellow with Kowhai blossom, hanging in gorgeous festoons over the Water’.



The Cascade plateau juts out as a broad flat headland.

Cascade River to Barn Bay Access

From the Arawhata river bridge a shingle road goes up the Jackson River and over the Martyr Saddle (600 feet) to the Cascade River flats and old homestead.

The Cascade is a deep river, and the best crossing is by the vehicle track. The track continues along the line of an old bulldozed track, which is a useable but rugged four wheel drive 'road', down to Barn Bay and the private huts there.

The Inland Track – Jackson Bay to Pyke and Hollyford

Gerhard Mueller explored the possibilities of a road to the Hollyford in 1883 and 1884, and marked out a road line going from Jackson Bay settlement ('Arawhata') up onto the Cascade Plateau, along the Cascade Rivers into the headwaters of the Gorge River and out over the low Pyke Saddle and into the Hollyford, 'a splendid inland line of road', an assessment that seemed overly optimistic. This proposed road is marked on an 1884 survey map.

The road was desirable on two counts. First, it would help stabilise the troublesome Jackson Bay settlement, that had no real roading access except for a overgrown bridle path over the Haast Pass. It might also encourage new settlers from Otago and Southland, to replace those disillusioned with the prospects of Jackson Bay, and had already shifted elsewhere. Second, a through road would 'improve' the general prosperity of the West Coast, an argument still touted today for the Hollyford Road.

Cutting a track from Jackson Bay to the Hollyford was a formidable prospect. The route chosen went either via the Stafford-Cascade line, or the Jackson River line, and then followed up the Cascade Valley, slowly sidling till it reached a 1500 foot pass into the Gorge River. Then it rambled down the Gorge River, climbed around a series of creek catchments into the head of the Jerry River and over Pyke Saddle to the Pyke.

This was the area that Alphonse Barrington and his mates Farrell and Simonin explored over the Pyke saddle arriving at the Gorge River on the 4 April 1864. They could 'smell the sea' but pushed on upstream, always looking for better gold prospects. After enormous hardships they got back to the Dart as skeletons. Later Barrington and others went into the Cascade, having no more luck in finding gold, and then went onto Hokitika where George Preshaw mentions the arrival of the by now famous, or infamous, Barrington

From the head of the Gorge River a more direct route was available up the Duncan to a pass at 2400 feet, though this does not seem to have been considered. The total track from Jackson Bay to Pyke was approximately 50-60 kilometres long, and the Pyke-Hollyford section adds another 30 km – a massive effort for a 'road'. Of course initially Mueller's road would have been envisaged as a horse track.

Another track was made up the Jackson Valley in 1885, and it was presumably this track that in 1886 Charlie Douglas and G. T. Murray and party extended onto the Gorge River, and by 1892 was made up to a horse track, and a survey line was taken onto Lake McKerrow. For some reason this work seems to have come under the Mines Department.

By now the Jackson Bay Settlement had collapsed and the whole roading scheme seemed to lapse, although the NZMS 1 map shows a foot track (that looked as if it was graded) right through from the Gorge River to the upper Pyke. However it is believed that only the Cascade River section of the ‘road’ was ever benched, and this is still followable in places, particularly close to the saddle between the Cascade River and the Gorge River, becoming more obscure as it gets lower down the Cascade.

The author confirmed this in a tramping trip in August 1993. The 100 year old pack track can be picked up just before Kappa Creek on the true left of the Cascade River. Kappa Creek itself is full of waterfalls and should be avoided. The pack track sidles slowly and steadily up to the Gorge River Saddle and although there are many windfalls, it is in remarkably good condition. Near Saddle Creek a large slip has washed the track away, but the pack track is believed to continue at least to the mouth of the Duncan River.

Speaking to Robert Long ‘Beansprout’ (of Gorge River), he had not so far found any trace of a pack track in the head of the Jerry or Gorge River, which may confirm that the track was not benched beyond the Duncan.

The local council improved the Jackson River road up to motor car standards into the Cascade in the 1960’s and 1970’s.



The Coastal Route – Barn Bay to Big Bay

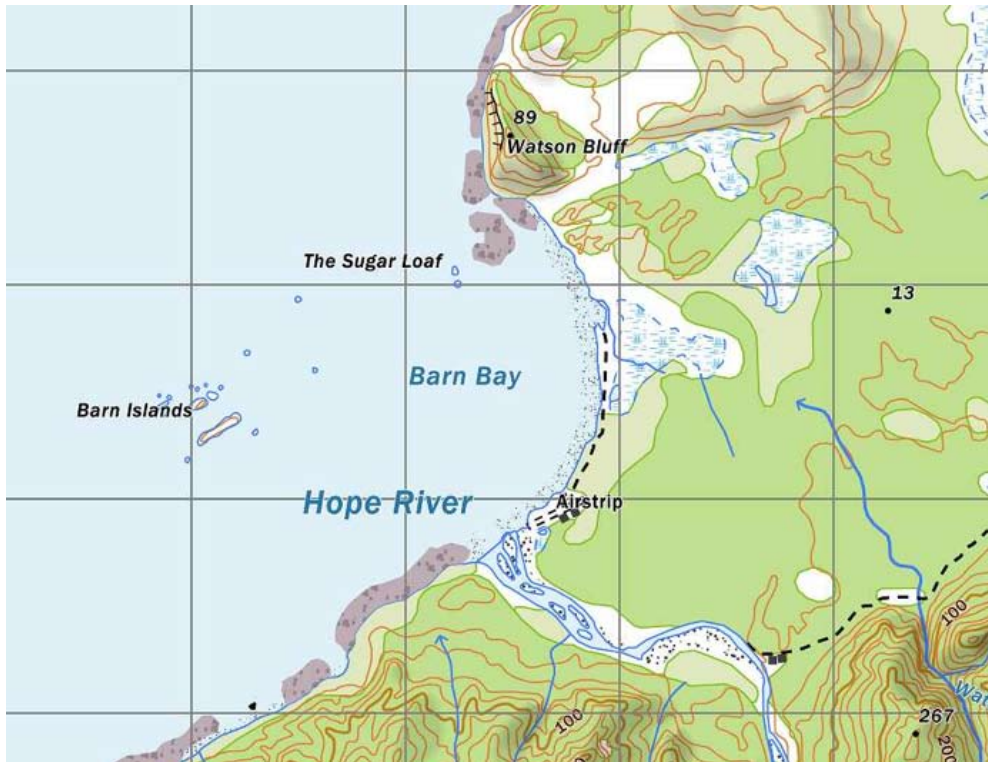
There are several small bluffs between the Cascade River to Barn Bay, the most difficult being Iota, which in a big swell cannot be got around. From the attractive high curved beach at Barn Bay, there is a distance of some 35 kilometres beach walking and boulder hopping to Big Bay. However, it's not pleasant seaside sauntering, the boulders are hard work.

‘...it can't be called good walking by any means, the beaches are steep slopes of boulders about the size of sixty-four pound shot and move down in an aggravating way when walking...The boulders are interesting for their variety and hardness, Olivine Jasper, granite, serpentine & porphyry are all to be found, and they would have been splendid ammunition for an ancient catapult...’

The author can confirm the aggravating nature of the boulders along this coast. Iron Bar Point received it's odd name from:

‘a mysterious relic of civilisation...a bar of wrought Iron three feet long and four inches square, and the puzzle is how did it get there...Billys innumerable have been boiled against it’.

There are a wealth of locality names. Starting from Barn Bay there is Iron Bar Point, Sandrock Bluff (actually moraine), Browne Island and the unlikely harbour of Browns Refuge. Bonar Knob is an offshore rock, then Cutter Rocks at Big Reef Point, then Cat Point, Fish Point and Rocky Point (neither of which are ‘points’ or obstacles), then the attractive Steeples and Gorge Islands at the Gorge River.



Barn Bay Access

The coastal route along to Big Bay is reasonably straightforward, with the river crossings at the Hope and Gorge Rivers providing the largest difficulty. Usually these can be forded at low tide, or by going upriver. Since about half the route is on boulders, the travel can get slow and even tedious.

It's a long day from the Gorge River to Big Bay, but there are camping places at the Hackett River, which would split this day in half. There are DOC huts at the Gorge River and Big Bay, and there is a rock biv just short of the Gorge River on the north side. At Sandrock Bluff, buoys mark the old bulldozed trail, that goes over the headland into Bluff Creek. This bluff can only rarely be got around in a low tide.

Gorge River

The Maori name for the Gorge River has been translated as 'Hautai' 'see ship a long way off'. Here, Andy Williamson and mates were working a gold claim in 1870, and Charlie Douglas's remark to the effect that 'Boating stories down the Coast, if continued long enough, have only one ending – Davy Jones locker' was sadly true in Williamsons' case, as he and five others were drowned off Big Bay in 1878.

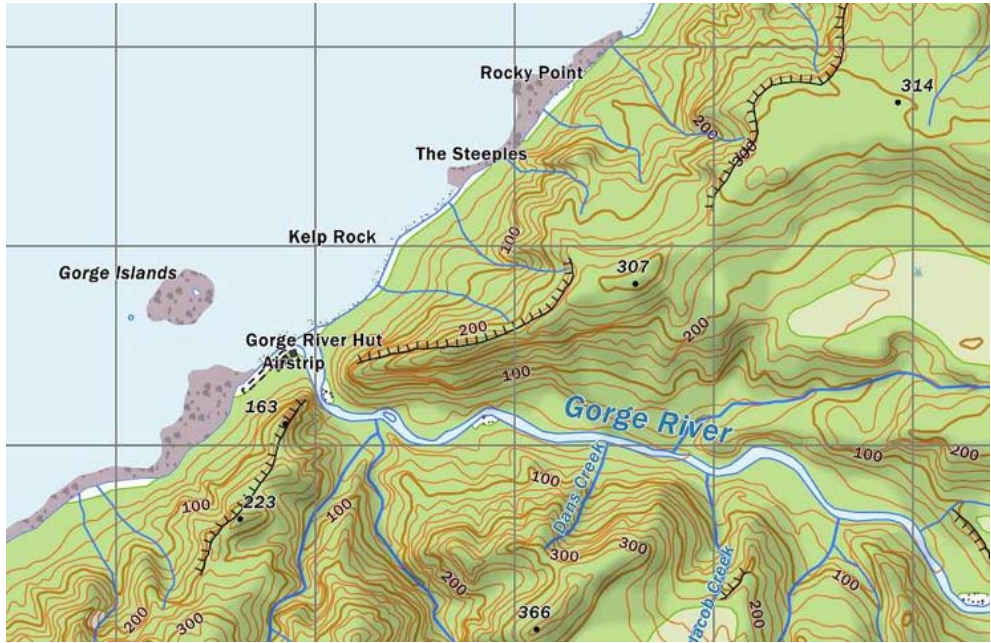
'Beansprout' or Robert Long, was another solo dweller in the South Westland tradition, but now he has been joined by Catherine and two children, all currently living beside the Gorge River. They frequently help travellers across the river in their dingy. There is also a 4-6 person bivy rock 10 minutes north of the Gorge River should you become stranded. Long has published book in 2010 on the families interesting life-style.

The saga of the coastal bulldozer line is related to various mining company operations.

The 'Nickel Spoon Mining Company' bulldozed a road down the Cascade to Barn Bay, and along the coast to the Gorge River in about 1969-70, and produced a prospectus that promised 'large quantities of tin'. Some airstrips were built. However, they soon faded from the scene, and were replaced by the more thorough multi-national company Kennecott, which was interested in the asbestos possibilities of the Red Hills. Two large bulldozers were driven along the stretch of coast from Barn Bay to Big Bay in about 1973-74, trundling steel sledges with accommodation huts and fuel behind them.

They took about five months to get to the Pyke River, and the displaced lines of boulders can still be seen in many places on the coast. The Pyke airstrip was built and huts installed in the Pyke and Barrier regions, but the mining operation failed, whether through conservation pressure, or whether the resource proved economically unprofitable, is not clear. It seems that the upper Pyke Hut (with it's core samples) was still there in 2002. Another bulldozer was taken down from the Jacksons River Road to the Cascade coast in 1977 to remove a large nephrite boulder.

South of the Gorge River the travel is straightfoward along the beach past the aptly named Longridge Point and Hackett River, before rounding the big shoulder of Awarua Point into Big Bay.



Big Bay — ‘record den for sandflies’

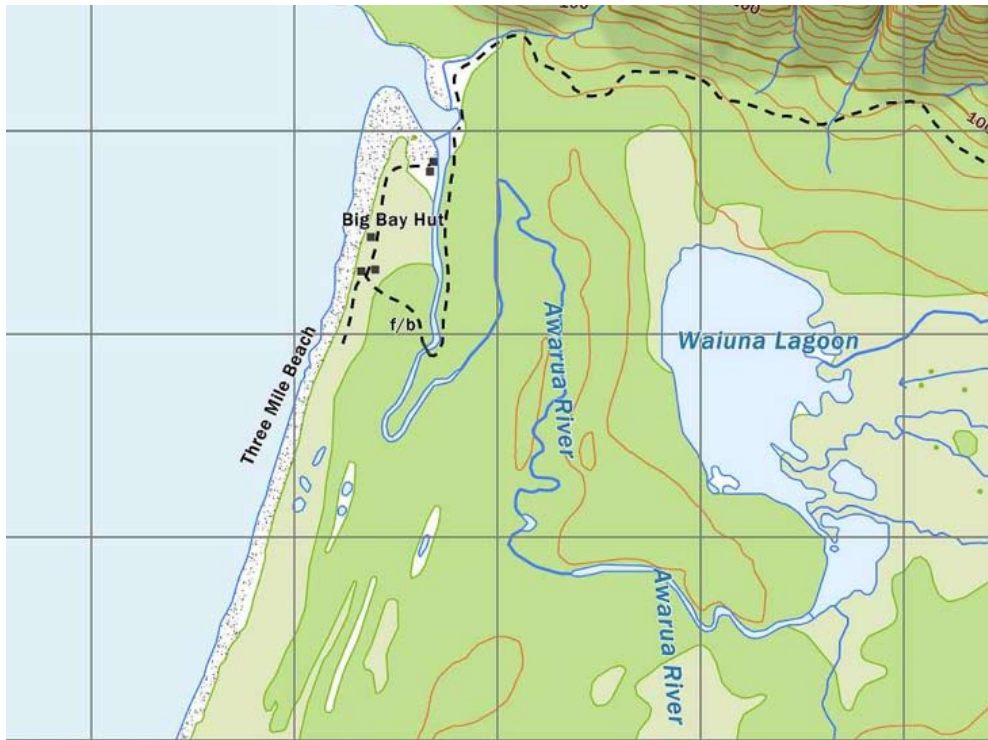
‘Although Big Bay on the map looks an ideal shelter for ships it is not so. The seas roll almost straight in during rough weather and in a Southerly it is touch and go weathering the boulder bank if a run to the open sea is necessary. But as a record den for sandflies it cant be beat’.

At the north end of Big Bay is the Awarua River ‘a mean bog creek’ that can be easily crossed at low tide. There are several white-baiters huts next to the Awarua, which because of it’s associated wetland, is highly regarded for it’s ‘bait’. Planes land on the beach at low tide, with usually only an hour to spare either side. A bulldozed ‘road’ goes inland to the Pyke River.

Prospectors, surveyors, and diggers in South Westland occasionally suffered from a very mysterious complaint. This was Robert Paulin’s experience in the Big Bay and Arawhata district in the 1890’s.

‘The “birch-itch” must be experienced to be appreciated. It seems to be limited to certain portions of the country where much water and beech trees prevail, and it is to be hoped for the sake of humanity that it will not acclimatise itself elsewhere. I have seen men perfectly frantic with it. I cured myself of it, on one occasion, by lathering myself all over with carbolic soap, letting the lather dry on, and turning in for the night in that condition. It was not pleasant but it was happiness compared to the itch. Only one man of our party escaped it, and he always carried camphor in his blankets. As far as I could make out, this itch is bred in dead beech leaves and boughs, and on that account old camping grounds should be avoided’.

The nature of the problem seems obscure. Some sort of rash? Poor hygiene? Dietary deficiency? Certainly one rarely hears of modern travellers suffering these agonies.



Big Bay Access

The whitebaiters fly into Big Bay, and there are several private huts as well as the DOC hut.

There is a serious tramping circuit, that takes about 8-10 days from the Hollyford Road. Hollyford Track-Martins Bay-Big Bay-Pyke River-Hollyford Track. This circuit is hard going in places, particularly in the upper Pyke and parties should be experienced and well-equipped.

Maori Bill

'The immortal wild man Maori Bill... actually planted a patch of strawberries, the only piece of work he was ever known to do'.

This was Charlie Douglas' comment when meeting Maori Bill for the first time in the Cascade. Alice McKenzie in her book *Pioneers of Martins Bay* writes a colourful account of 'Maori Bill', who was believed to be an Irish deserter from the Maori Wars named 'Timothy Kelly'. He lived for a while at Bruce Bay with the local Maori then shifted down to Big Bay eventually, occupying Andy Williamson's old house. His dogs kept him supplied with meat, and he wore flax sandals and clothed himself in kiwi skins.

'Anyone unexpectedly going to the house would hear Maori Bill pacing up and down reciting Shakespeare's plays, most of which he knew by heart'.

He displayed some cunning as well, as Alice McKenzie recalls.

'..whenever a stray prospector arrived with a few months provisions, Maori Bill would play the madman, talk of shooting and of burning down the huts. This usually frightened away the stray prospector, who would depart in haste...leaving behind any provisions, clothes and other articles he could not carry. There was a method in Maori Bill's madness for he would then enjoy a change of diet and perhaps a new outfit of clothes'.

In the *West Coast Times* 1 October 1866, there is an account of five men washed out of a boat at Haast as they tried to launch it through the surf. One man died, and two more were rescued by 'William Thompson, who is better known as Maori Bill'.

In Jane Campbell's memoirs she has an anecdote of how Maori Bill lived: 'He used to snare wekas by getting a fairly long stick with a string and a slip knot on it, then another stick with a weka's wing fastened. Then he cut a piece of flax about two inches long, softened it by passing it through the fire then folded it double and put it in his mouth and blew. It would squeak just like a weka. The weka would come on the run, he would wave the wing, he would draw up the stick and the string would catch the weka around the neck. I tried it but was not smart enough - the weka getting away on me'.

Maori Bill lived at Big Bay for perhaps forty years, and although he received a government pension he kept his gold stored in a sock and the McKenzie brothers were obliged to feed him. The story goes that eventually he became too feeble to manage by himself, and in his nineties he was taken to Hokitika where he died.

Although much of this story seems to be true in outline, it now appears that Maori Bill's real name was William Edgar Thompson. A journalist on an excursion trip to Fiordland in 1888 mentions a 'miner' William Thompson, known as Maori Bill, living at Big Bay, and the Hokitika Guardian and Evening Star records the following death notice in November 1918.

'Mr William Edgar Thompson, a very old resident of South Westland, well known as 'Maori Bill' passed away at the Old Men's Home, Kumara on Wednesday last. The deceased had followed gold mining for many years, and was a typical pioneer, held in high respect by all who knew him. Deceased was a native of Ireland and said to be 88 years of age, though probably his age would be over ninety. The funeral took place at Kumara cemetery on Thursday, Rev. Knight conducting the service'.



Big Bay to Martins Bay

The route was along the bouldery beach and around Reef Point into what the Maori knew as 'Kotuku'. Martins Bay was an important settlement for the Maori for several hundred years, combining the advantages of a good food supply and access to the greenstone at Anita Bay and at the head of Lake Wakatipu through the Hollyford Pass.

Their name for the Hollyford River suggests regular usage – 'Okare' or 'carry a swag'. Another name for the river was 'Whakatipu katuku' 'descending from Whakatipu'. Lake McKerrow was known as 'Whakatipu waitai' 'salt water Whakatipu'. The timber at Lake Alabaster was so good that a small canoe building 'industry' was established and the name 'Wawahiwaka' 'to split trees for canoes' applied to the lake. However those prosperous days had passed and when James Hector visited Martins Bay in 1863 the only Maori in residence were Chief Tutoko, his wife Hinepare and two daughters.

Patrick Caples made a solo overland journey to the bay in 1863 and is now remembered in 'Capleston' near Reefton where he discovered a gold reef. Shortly after Caples, 'Skipper' Duncan with Captain Alabaster and others arrived, Duncan becoming famous as the discover of the 'Skippers' gold field near Queenstown, and his name is remembered locally on the Skippers Range.

Grand ideas of settlement were dreamed up in Otago and despite the persistent beachings (of the first five vessels four got grounded at some stage) Jamestown went ahead. With the sea access problematic the settlements success hinged on whether the provincial authorities were going to spend the money to cut an overland track to Wakatipu via the Hollyford. By 1873 the answer was obviously no.

Hollyford River and Hollyford Track

The Hollyford River itself was an awkward barrier for travellers to get across. When Alice McKenzie returned with her husband for a visit to Martins Bay they found these instructions:

'...we found a note saying that gunpowder was stored there and if a charge was exploded my brothers would come with a boat if they were at home and if they happened to hear the explosion. That seemed to leave a good deal to chance...'

They improvised a canoe and paddled across, probably much in the fashion of most travellers here.

Jamestown collapsed because of the lack of a good inland track, and it was not until the 1880's that a rough trail was cut. In 1886, when Alice McKenzie was 13, it took her and her father ten days to reach Queenstown. The McKenzie brothers took out their cattle via the Hollyford in an arduous exercise that involved re-cutting the trail for cattle every time.

Martins Bay and Hollyford Track Access

The Hollyford Track gives good access to this area and essentially follows the same line as the original routes made by the Maori and European explorers.

The commercial Hollyford track operators can offer plane access into their Martins Bay landing strip and jet boat access to Martins Bay via the Hollyford River and Lake McKerrow.



Hollyford River at the coast, looking back up to Lake McKerrow.



Alice McKenzie



Alice McKenzie was just about three years old when she arrived at Martins Bay. Her father was obviously a 'trier', for he first took his family to Jackson Bay, but when that settlement failed he decided to try his luck at Martins Bay. Things started poorly. The captain of the *Waipara* did not want to land the ship in Martins Bay so blithely landed the family, furniture and cattle at Big Bay informing Mr McKenzie that Martins Bay was only a 'short distance from there'. It was twelve miles, and they had to hire two miners to take the family in a whaleboat to get to Jamestown.

And it took them another three weeks to hack a track through the thick coastal bush to get their cattle around to Jamestown. It was December 1876 and already the settlement was failing.

Their isolation was enormous. Steamers that came were irregular and if the seas were heavy were often not able to land or drop off stores. Once out from Martins Bay it was difficult to get back. Alice was staying at Okuru, only seventy miles north of Martins Bay, but had to go north because a land route was impracticable and all the steamer services went north. She went by the *Waipara* to Hokitika, then another steamer to Wellington, then the *Waipara* again down to Bluff, and finally the steamer *Hinemoa* (which diverted to the Snares and Bounty Islands to look for survivors of a shipwreck!) to get back to Martins Bay.

The McKenzies had to build their own house, be their own doctors, provide their own entertainment. Alice rarely had childhood playmates, and the first time she remembered seeing a horse was at the age of 13 in Queenstown. A 'strange noise' was a band playing. Her parents taught her to read and write so her memoir *Pioneers in Martins Bay* was a remarkable achievement for a seventy year old with no formal schooling. The 'moa' story is justly famous.

By 1879 Jamestown was deserted and the McKenzies were on their own. They shifted to the Hollyford bar, and long after Alice and her parents had left two of her brothers Hugh and Malcolm McKenzie 'wasted their lives' farming cattle till the David Gunn bought them out in 1926, although they continued to work for him for a while.



The McKenzies are amply recalled in the landscape. There's a McKenzie Lagoon by the Hollyford River outlet, McKenzie Creek flowing into Big Bay, the McKenzie Range north of Big Bay, (with Mt McKenzie and another McKenzie Creek) and the Malcolm Range may be a reference to Malcolm McKenzie.



Lake McKerrow looking to the sea.

Alice, and the Moas

Alice McKenzie's famous sighting of the 'moa' is an intriguing story. Though many people believe she had actually seen a takahe (they were presumed extinct at the time of the sighting), she herself, after seeing a takahe in the Dunedin museum, said repeatedly that that was not the bird she saw.

It is interesting in hindsight that more notice was not taken of another 'big bird' description that occurred at the same time. Another family living for a while at Martins Bay were the Campbells, and Jane Campbell published a short 26 page memoir *Memories of Martins Bay* with the following anecdote:

'Captain Alabaster told me they saw the footmarks of a very large bird on the shore of Lake Alabaster. He asked me if I had ever seen them. I had not. He said they were much larger than a swan and not web footed. It appeared to have come out of the bush, had a drink, and gone straight back again. Said he would not be surprised to hear that it was a Moa. Said there appeared to be only one. I don't think he was a man to make that statement without truth'.

Barney Brewster in his book *Te Moa* details a surprisingly large number of European sightings of 'big' birds, and there is fragmentary Maori oral tradition that Fiordland was the last refuge of the moa by 1800. There is the sealers 'Fireman' bird, about '3 feet high', and Harry Cuttance found a moa skeleton in 1904, on top of a slip that judging from the juvenile trees, could not have been more than 50 years old. This skeleton ended up in the Canterbury museum. Richard Henry found several fire places with moa bones in them that he thought looked surprisingly fresh.

There is another interesting story told by Robert Booth from *Five Years in New Zealand*, this was in the South Canterbury high country between the years of 1859 to 1864.

'It was in Mesopotamia that I noticed many remains of that extinct bird, the 'moa', and it appeared to that some of the species had inhabited that locality not many years previously. Indeed, some old Maoris I had met in the Ashburton said they remembered the bird

very well. It was not unknown to come across a quantity of the bones, and near by them a heap of smooth pebbles which the bird had carried in his craw for digestive purposes, and I recollected one day employing a number of the bones in making a footway over a small creek’.

John Turnbull Thomson (see *Early Travellers in New Zealand*, edited Nancy Taylor) came across many moa bones near the Mataura River in Southland in February 1857.

‘It is supposed that these bones are collections thrown away by the Maoris after the bird had been eaten. Many of the bones do not appear above 30 years old; indeed I was informed by an old native at Jacob River that he and his tribe feasted on the moa in his younger years’.

Nancy Taylor remarked that this ‘story could not possibly be true, though it has been told by several old Maoris’. I think she dismisses it too quickly. In fact there is a surprisingly large body of anecdotal evidence from Maori and pakeha that in Fiordland and Southland around the early nineteenth century there was a remnant population of moas. John Turnbull Thomson again.

‘Bates [a settler at Jacob River] informs me that one of his native cousins saw the feathers and track of the moa about six years ago amongst the woods west of Jacob River; but he was afraid to follow the bird’.

Were these moa, or takahe? It seems doubtful that they would have been the tall ostrich-like moa that occupies all our picture books, but could they have been the smaller bush moa? When you start to read the early European literature about New Zealand the number of moa stories thrown up seems remarkable, and the theme is consistent. Older Maori consistently relate stories of remembering and even eating moa, approximately in the period of 1800 to 1840.

It is true that in areas such as the dry Canterbury high country, moa remains could still look ‘fresh’ after a hundred or more years, but it is harder to explain the same remains in Southland or on the West Coast. Unless we accept that all the Maori were telling tales, and embellishing legends for the sake of the romantic Europeans, we might be trying too hard to avoid stating the obvious. That it might be quite possible that small remnant and isolated populations of smaller species of bush moa were still present when Europeans arrived.

As another Alice remarked, at about the same time in history, ‘curiouser and curiouser...’

Hollyford River to Milford Sound

This 30 km stretch of harsh and beautiful coastline is rarely visited today. After crossing the Hollyford it's a long walk down to the south end of the bar where the Mckenzie homestead was situated, then a rock hopping section around to Kaipo Bay and River.

More boulder travel to a line of beaches starting with No Mans Beach, then Madagascar, and Musket Bay.

Madagascar Beach

Gold was worked at Madagascar Beach by Robert Cleave and mates in 1866, and in 1883 an artist Samuel Moreton made a solo journey (after getting dropped off by Donald Sutherland at the head of Milford Sound) to Martins Bay finding gold along the way.

In 1887 more prospectors tried their luck, and then in 1890 Samuel Moreton established the 'Madagascar Gold Mining Syndicate', but the company only had poor results. In the early 1930's another round of prospectors worked the area.

Madagascar Beach to Dale Point

From Madagascar beach it is rock-hopping around Yates Point and a crossing of the very remote John O’Groats River, followed by more rock travel to Dale Point.

Just across from Dale Point is Anita Bay, which played a part in one of the legends on the coast. It was said that reenstone shipped out of Barn Bay went to China, where it was found impossible to cut...

'This yarn like some more of the Legends of Westland is rather mixed, no Captain unless suffering from DTs would ever bring a sailing Vessel large enough to be a Whaler into the rocks of Barn Bay...the stone is not hard to cut, at least not too hard for Chinese ingenuity'.

Like all stories there was some truth to the greenstone tale.

'A Company was lately formed, by a mercantile house at Manilla, to procure this stone for the Chinese market. One small vessel has been freighted at Piopiotahi, and several tons now lie ready to export, but no tidings of the success of the scheme have arrived.'

William Anglem and Captain Dacre got the greenstone from Anita Bay, Milford Sound about 1862, but whether the cargo ever got to China or the Phillipines seems doubtful. Anglem apparently lost an eye in the blasting operations and 'three of the crew were said to be more or less blind'.

At Dale Point, any traveller would have needed a boat to get into, or across Milford Sound, which the Maori knew as Piopiotahi. Beyond is Fiordland, and no regular shoreline routes were ever established.

Milford Sound and Dale Point Access

It is relatively easy to see Dale Point and Anita Bay, since daily tour boats from Milford Sound reach the sea and turn around at St Anne Point.

No doubt there are fishing boats at Milford Sound that might be able to drop you off at Dale Point, if you fancy a look trek north.



Looking across at Anita Bay from the sea end of Milford Sound.

Charlie Douglas

Douglas is one of the great men of Westland: explorer, would be hermit, acute observer, humorist, sardonic, cynical, and thoughtful. He strikes an extraordinary modern chord in his observations and philosophical musings, and it is this relevance that has made him far better known now than in his own time.

There is scarcely any valley in South Westland that he did not explore – Fox, Franz, Paringa, Clarke, Waiatoto, Arawhata, Turnbull, Okuru, Cascade – usually to the headwaters, and usually on his own. ‘There is a fascination in living in such places, away from all communication with the outer world which attracts many people – especially the failures’.

Born in Scotland, Douglas arrived on the West Coast from the Otago diggings about 1866 and he tried his hand at a number of different jobs. Packing supplies to out of the way camps, which at two shillings a pound was ‘more profitable than the average claim’, and Charlie’s dog carried a load in panniers to supplement the hundred pounds the master carried. He also had a stint of cattle farming and probably had the occasional go at gold mining – it would have been hard for anyone in those days to have resisted the fever.

First, on a casual basis, Douglas worked for G. J. Roberts of the Survey Department and slowly acquired a reputation and semi-official position as an ‘explorer’. With this financial assistance at his back he was able to do what he most preferred – wandering in the wilderness valleys of Westland, far away from people, thinking his own thoughts.

‘The impulse drove me out into the World, but the desire to then settle must have been omitted in my moral character, as here I am after thirty years wandering, crouched under a few yards of Calico, with the rain pouring & the Wind & Thunder roaring among the mountains a homeless, friendless, Vagabond, with a past that looks dreary & a future still more so, still I can’t regret having followed such a life and I know that even if I & thousands besides me perish miserably the impulse which impels them to search the Wild places of the Earth is good, one or two are bound to add something to the Worlds stock of Knowledge while so doing, & even a small grain of Knowledge is cheaply purchased at the expense of a thousand ordinary lives. Fools think that Knowledge can only be got from books & men, & call me a Fool for wasting my life in mountain Solitudes, but if in so doing I have found nothing new in Thought or worth giving to the World,



Milford Sound.

bibliography

Aotea – a history of the South Westland Maori (1992) Paul Madgwick. Excellent account of the lives, wars and tribal complexities of the South Westland Maori. The lists of Maori place names are especially useful (108 pages).

Arahura: Mackay's Purchase and the repercussions for Kai Tahu 1860-1890 (1991 Diploma thesis Otago) Emma Stevens. Detailed study of the land negotiations and it's consequences.

Arawata Bill (1953 Pegasus Press) Dennis Glover. Superb sequence of poems based on the real life of the old prospector. Quite accurate to history as well. (38 pages).

Archaeology of the South Westland Maori (1986 New Zealand Forest Service) R. H. Hooker. Indicates all the known Maori sites in South Westland and argues that Maori usage of this stretch of coastline was far greater than previously thought. Interesting and useful (78 pages).

Banking Under Difficulties (1888 Edwards, Dunlop & Co, Capper Press reprint 1971) G. O. Preshaw. The anxieties of hauling large amounts of cash around the goldfields. Good anecdotes and robust descriptions of the diggings (179 pages).

Bright Fine Gold (1974 Reed) W. F. Heinz. A compilation of writings about gold rushes throughout New Zealand. Good intro to the general gold mania (200 pages).

Buller Walks (1987 Nikau Press) Terry Sumner. Short, handy guide to walking tracks from the Heaphy River to the Paparoas (49 pages).

Charleston: Its Rise and Decline (1941 A H & A W Reed, Capper Press reprint 1980) Irwin Faris. Some useful information, but patchy. Maps and photos are good (231 pages)

Collingwood (1971 Caxton Press) J N W Newport. Quite a bit of material on gold-getting in the Anatori River area (294 pages).

Colours, The (1997) Mark Pickering. The search for payable gold and gold exploration between 1857 and 1865 on the West Coast. Only 140 copies produced so now out of print (sob).

Courage and Camp Ovens: five generations at Golden Bay (1970) Enga Washbourn,

Day with a Bush Gang, A (1988 Puriri Press) A. W. Denny. Good description of bush logging before the Second World War (17 pages).

Diary of the West Coast Goldrushes (unpublished manuscript, Canterbury University) William Smart. Very good descriptions of gold-getting in the early crucial years of the 1860's. Deals with Charles Money, Tarapuhi, Albert Hunt and others. Hopefully this will get published some day (about 160 pages) although in 2001 the university rang me and said they had 'misplaced' it. Good effort guys.

Diggers Story, The (edited C J Pfaff) 1914. An odd mish-mash of anecdotal stories from the West Coast gold fields, put together to commemorate the goldfields jubilee. Some interesting connections (156 pages).

Douglas, C. E., collection of papers, Alexander Turnbull Library (part of the National Library). Covering the period from about the late 1870's to early this century the Douglas papers are one of the largest personal sources of written material available from this time. They include notebooks, typewritten transcripts, letters, etc. Of particular use for this

book were Douglas's accounts of the coastline routes from Big Bay up to Hokitika, however all the collection contains much acerbic, useful, and humorous reflections about South Westland.

Early Travellers in New Zealand (1959 Clarendon Press) edited Nancy Taylor. First class introduction to some of the early European explorers through their own words. From a West Coast perspective Heaphy's, Brunner's and Barrington's explorations are fascinating (594 pages).

European Settlement and Discovery in South Westland (1987 Westland National Park). A slim book of historic photos from about 1890's to 1940's (50 pages).

Five Mile Beach Okarito (1983 New Zealand Forest Service) R. H. Hooker. Describes the mining activities there and records the historic sites. Useful (108 pages).

Flashing Paddles or Exploring by Canoe (19??) P. J. Lucas. This is an unpublished manuscript by the late Peter Lucas on George Park and his notable canoeing exploits. Private copies were available from Dorothy Fletcher, Hokitika, and Mrs Lucas, Hari Hari.

Friends in Chains (1961 Reed) Bob Henderson. Personal account of the life of a West Coast teamster, from the late nineteenth century onwards (190 pages).

Further Reminiscences of Early Days (1939) H. P. Washbourn. Gold digger, amateur geologist, traveller, bird watcher and several interesting anecdotes of the Nelson region in the 1860's onwards (68 pages).

Geology of the Provinces of Canterbury and Westland (1879) Julius von Haast. A mixture of exploration accounts with geological notes, good maps and many interesting observations (486 pages).

Goa Way Back (1986, revised edition 1987) Vic Berry. Some good stuff in this disorganised Hari Hari history, and the photos are particularly interesting. The chronologies at the back are handy but it's a pain in the bum that the sources are not listed (232 pages).

Gold, Coins, Greenstone and Bottles (1985) Peter Neame. A short 'bottlers' history of the coast. Only for the converted (52 pages).

Gold Town (Pegasus 1970) Phillip Ross May. An excellent overview of the detail of Ross' dramatic rise and fall (104 pages).

Gold Trails of the West Coast (1975 A H & A W Reed, revised 1981) Tony Nolan. Good short introduction to the gold history and places on the coast. Well illustrated, with some tips for how to get gold yourself (96 pages).

Great New Zealand Songbook, The (1991 Godwit Press) Les Cleveland. Some interesting material (130 pages).

Great Journey, The (1952 Pegasus Press) Thomas Brunner, edited John Pascoe. Brunner rarely showed the spirit and fancies of Heaphy, but his journal is still the crucial record of this epic struggle down the Buller and along the coast to Paringa (111 pages).

Greenstone Trails, the Maori search for Pounamu (1984 A H & A W Reed) Barry Brailsford. Excellent book on early Maori journeys and how they prepared for them (192 pages).

Gunn, Murray, collection of papers. A large private collection of papers on many aspects of the old West Coast and Hollyford. Contact Murray Gunn, Hollyford Motor Camp, Hollyford Valley.

Haast is in South Westland, The (1966 A H & A W Reed, reprint 1968) John Pascoe. A silly title but thoroughly researched and

entertaining. More useful on Jackson Bay than Roxburgh's book (116 pages).

Historic Ferry Reserves in South Westland (Lands and Survey 1985) Trish McCormack. Useful survey of this forgotten, but rather vital facet of the West Coast (163 pages).

Historical Geography of Westland before 1914 (Phd thesis 1960 Canterbury) M. McCaskill. Good overview.

History of Addison's Flat Gold Fields, The (1923) Dan Moloney. Some details of early gold claims and workings at Addisons, and some doubtful anecdotal stories (14 pages).

Jackson Bay: a Centennial History (1976 A H & A W Reed) Irvine Roxburgh. Useful material on Jackson Bay, but rather poorly organised and some disconcerting errors (198 pages).

Journal of an Expedition to the Gold Field of the Taramakau (1863 Christchurch Press 21-25 March) Richard A. Sherrin. He was on Drake's party that surveyed the Taramakau River. Rather a dry account, but useful.

Journeys Across the Southern Island of New Zealand (typewritten manuscript, University of Canterbury library, Mackay Collection) Mrs Nicholas Chevalier. Horse journey across Harpers Pass and back over Arthurs Pass. Phillip Ross May described her as a 'snob', and the account only has limited interest unfortunately (53 pages).

Knocking About in New Zealand (1871 Samuel Mullen, Capper Press reprint 1972) Charles Money. A lively account of early New Zealand. Money and his mate were the second European party over Harper Pass, and early travellers along the Paparoa coastline. He also spent a rousing time on the West Coast goldfields as a digger, prospector, road maker,

sometime guide to Haast, chimney maker, packer, and was one of the first Europeans over Brownings Pass (151 pages).

Letters from New Zealand (1914 Hugh Rees Ltd) Henry Harper. Henry Harper was appointed Anglican archdeacon for the coast in the 1860's and in his book he entertainingly describes the difficulties and humour of his pastoral activities, with several arduous crossings of Arthurs Pass. He was a popular figure and this is a good read (357 pages).

Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast, The (1948) H. F. Haast. A vast, fawning and insipid account of Haast's life by his son, who is determined to see no smear upon the great man. The son seems unable to distinguish between the trivial and the significant, so there is a great deal of extraneous material. He even devotes three pages to what Haast sang. Haast's original accounts are much more useful (1142 pages).

Longest Beat, The (1990 New Zealand Police/P. M. Deazley) K. Carson/Y. Davison. A somewhat disappointing social and pictorial history of the West Coast police force, as it mostly covers the twentieth century and there is very little on the 'juicy' period from 1860's to 1890's (204 pages).

Maori in Westland, The (Westland National Park 1982) Trish McCormack. Useful insights into Maori history (115 pages).

Maoris and Fiordland, The (1949 Otago Daily Times) Herries Beattie. Some very useful information tucked in this slim volume, particularly in regard to Maori place names (104 pages).

Maori Nomenclature in the Buller County, Dan Moloney. An unpublished manuscript held in the Alexander Turnbull, with some interesting ideas and translations (26 pages).

Maori Place Names in the Buller County (19??) G. G. M. Mitchell. A thorough and interesting investigation of nomenclature of that area (?? pages)

Martins Bay (1987 Craig Printing Company) John Hall-Jones. Excellent history, clearing away some of the muddles. Lots of good illustrations (187 pages).

Memories of Martins Bay (19??) Jane Campbell. A short, anecdotal account of her family's sojourn in Martins Bay at the same time as the McKenzies, when they were the last two families living there. The two families did not get on, and Miss Campbell scores some retrospective points.

Mountaineering and Surveying in South Westland (1988 Department of Conservation) Trish McCormack. Useful background to the unexpected skills demanded of surveyors on the coast. Gives a good account of G J Roberts work (76 pages).

Mr Explorer Douglas (1957 A H & A W Reed, reprint 1957) edited John Pascoe. A brilliant look into one of the sharpest minds on the West Coast. Pascoe's editing fills in most of the gaps, and Douglas's words provide the resonances (331 pages).

Murihiku (1907 William Smith printer, facsimile edition) Robert McNab. Scarcely relevant to the West Coast apart from the Open Bay sealers, but an interesting book (377 pages).

My Dear Bannie (1958 Pegasus Press) Gerhard Mueller. Mueller arrived on the coast in the thick of it in 1865 and wrote these letters to his wife 'Bannie'. Gives the atmosphere of the times and the daily hassles and frights that were part of a surveyors lot (238 pages).

Narrative of the Discovery of the West Coast Gold Field, A (1869 Hounsell) Reuben Waite. An interesting account from the storekeeper on the spot. Lively and mostly true (30 pages).

New Zealand Explorers (1985 Whitcoulls) Phillip Temple. Excellent book, with many good photos. Brunner, Barrington and Douglas are the relevant West Coast chapters (192 pages).

Nolan Family, The, Pioneers of South Westland 1871-1993 (1993) W. D. 'Bill' Nolan. Essentially a family history, continuing from the first Nolan book (see *Saga of the South*). Useful insights into living on the coast at time, but some of the general history is a bit suspect (100 pages).

Old Westland (Whitcombe and Tombs, Capper reprint 1976) E. I. Lord. Not as promising as it's title. Most of the stuff re-hashed from earlier accounts (258 pages).

Oparara Guidebook, The (1983 Friends of the Earth). Still the only booklet on Oparara and a useful guide (19 pages).

Over the Whitcombe Pass (1960 Whitcombe and Tombs, editor John Pascoe) Jakob Lauper. A stark and moving account of an expedition that went badly wrong. Pascoe's notes useful (70 pages).

Pack Track to Highway (1963 Pauls Book Arcade) W. Hill Chinn. Interesting childhood in Kumara (at fourteen he was firing dynamite!) and young adult years in the North Island (he saw a huia at Otaki in 1889). Later flax-milling on the West Coast. Plenty of ups and downs in an adventurous life. Good reading (136 pages).

Pages from the Memory Log of G. M. Hassing (19??) G. M. Hassing. Intriguing accounts of gold prospecting days on the West Coast and

Otago. The memory has obviously faded in some places and one longs for more detail, but still a worthwhile read (74 pages).

Pencilings in Land and Sea (Reid and Co. 1887) H. Richardson Rae. A curious book, with flowery descriptions of Australia (mostly) and a satirical piece on a town called 'Wairarara' (ie Hokitika). Hardly worth the reading (202 pages, A6 size).

Peter Graham, mountain guide (1965 A H & A W Reed/George Allen & Unwin) Peter Graham. Mostly about Graham's early life on Three Mile Lagoon, gold prospecting and first guiding trips. Very readable with some interesting personalities on both sides of the divide. Graham died in the middle of writing this autobiography and an extensive epilogue by John Pascoe details his later climbing exploits (245 pages).

Pioneer Work in the Southern Alps (1896 T Fisher Unwin) and *Memories of Mountains and Men* (1946 Simpson & Williams) A. P. Harper. Excellent books, with insights into the hardships of exploration in those times and some of the wry humour needed to carry out the work (336 pages, 208 pages).

Pioneers of Martins Bay (1947 Whitcombe and Tombs, reprint 1974) Alice McKenzie. Story of a childhood at the remote Martins Bay with plenty of splendid anecdotes. A classic pioneer autobiography (129 pages).

Popeye Lucas Queenstown (1968 A H & A W Reed) F. J. Lucas. Autobiography of an interesting and adventurous life in aviation, although the written stories are rather 'dry' compared to what must have happened. Plenty of mishaps and adventures getting whitebait out of Big Bay and Martins Bay (187 pages).

Rakiura (1940 A H & A W Reed, reprint 1974) Basil Howard. Although not strictly relevant to the West Coast, there is some crossover history. The notes on pages 39-41 on how the author supposed the sealers lived are intriguing, as it gives a rare glimpse into their mostly unrecorded lives (415 pages).

Rambles on the Golden Coast of the South Island (1886 The Colonial Printing and Publishing Company) R. C. Reid. Rambling indeed, with flossy prose, but some good bits (176 pages).

Reminiscences (1930 Whitcombe and Tombs, Capper Press reprint 1984) A. D. Dobson. Arthur Dobson had a famous time. He was the Arthur of 'Arthurs' Pass, his brother was killed by the Kelly gang, and his sister married Haast. He was a notable surveyor and explorer in his own right, and very much where the 'action' was. A good read. The story of the card sharpeners is a gem (225 pages).

Report of a Topographical and Geological Exploration of the Western Districts of the Nelson Province of New Zealand (1861) Julius Haast. Some sort of prize for the longest title, but lots of good and essential stuff (150 pages).

Saga of the South: a short history of a West Coast family (1984) The first Nolans arrived at the Jackson's Bay settlement of 1875, and stayed. The book is a family history of some of the early hardships and a few unlikely tales thrown in for good measure. Short accounts written by various members of the Nolan family, not as informative as you might expect (110 pages).

South Island: Mobil New Zealand Travel Guide (5th edition Heineman Reed) Diana and Jeremy Pope. Excellent and useful guidebook to the history and places to go in the South Island. Is updated regularly (420 pages).

South Westland Cattle Track, The (1991?) A. R. Dawber. The author worked on the survey team that reconnoitred the best road route between Paringa and Haast. A bit disorganised but some handy stuff. Also contains Harold Coles 1954 report on Paringa-Haast road options (130 pages).

Special Settlements of Jacksons' Bay and Karamea, The (Thesis 1973 University of Canterbury) J. M. Curtis. Very thorough investigation of the subject (supervisor P. R. May!) and essential reading (261 pages).

Spenser: the Gold Seeker (1979) E. W. Crumpton. Well-written personalised account of a gold-digger in the 1860's period. 'The Beach Claim' chapter is a particularly lively account of a gold-rush from a miners point of view (193 pages).

Survey of Saltwater Historic Features (1987 New Zealand Forest Service). Excellent history of the area with a survey of the remaining historic sites. Woodham's house is gone, unfortunately. Very useful (129 pages).

Tales of the Coast (1984 Heinemann) Jim Henderson. A collection of true stories that have been 'novelised', written in a style that becomes irritating after a while. The stories about Dan Greaney, a roadman at Jackson Bay, and the bulldozer driven from Paringa to Jackson Bay in 1953 are especially interesting (129 pages).

Tales of the Golden West (1906 Whitcombe and Tombs) 'Waratah' (W. Hindmarsh). Some early stuff around Greymouth, laboured, prosy, and dated (217 pages).

Te Puoho's Last Raid (1986 Otago Heritage Books) Atholl Anderson. The most thorough account of the famous raid by Te Puoho from Golden Bay down the length of the West Coast and over the Haast Pass into Southland in

1836-37. Anderson describes the most likely version as well as listing other possible versions of the story (100 pages).

Through South Westland (1906 seems likely but no date given) A. Maud Moreland. Account of a horse ride through South Westland and later into the Matukituki Valley and Aspiring. Romantic tush for the most part and the lack of dates and full names is a nuisance (219 pages).

Waitangi Tribunal. Papers relating to the 'Ngai Tahu Claim to the Waitangi Tribunal', and the 'Crown Evidence' reply, are an enormous and essential resource. Almost 50 volumes! No index when this author looked through it but you may have better luck.

Westport: struggle for survival (1973 Westport Borough Council) B. F. McDonald. Despite the melodramatic title this is actually a rather good short account (with pictures) of Westport's history (80 pages).

West Coast Expedition 1863-64 (Canterbury Museum) R. P. Bain. A lucid, handwritten document, that calmly unfolds the category of disasters that dogged this survey (34 pages).

West Coast Gold Rushes, The (1962 Pegasus Press) Philip Ross May. The definitive account of this period, well researched, well written. A virtual 'goldmine' in itself, and the outstanding history so far produced about any aspect of the West Coast (588 pages).

West Coast Times (incorporating the Hokitika Reporter) University of Canterbury Library, McKay Collection. Mostly complete between August 1865 to December 1867. Hokitika Museum, complete collection on microfilm from 1865. This Hokitika based newspaper is essential reading, conveying better than a dozen books the tastes and preoccupations of the time. For researchers it is useful to

note that in the period studied the newspaper usually printed a detailed Monthly Summary, which reprinted most of the significant items from the previous month.

West Coast Yesterdays (1960 Reed) Mona Tracey. Rather an unsatisfactory mish-mash of gold rush history and later autobiographical notes of the twenties and thirties (208 pages).

Westland County: a centennial album (1977 Westland County Council). Some excellent photos and text in this lively book. Gives a good 'feel' of the coast (168 pages).

Whaling and Sealing in Westland (1985 New Zealand Forest Service) Kevin Molloy. Very useful lead-in to this area of poorly recorded history (25 pages).

Wild West Coast, The (1889 Thoburn & Co) Robert Paulin. A curious little book of an account of an unsuccessful gold prospecting trip on the boat 'Rosa' in the Fiordland Sounds. Some unreliable but interesting anecdotal stuff (121 pages).

Wilderness Days in Bruce Bay (1990) A. A. Pullar. A self-published book on the early days of Bruce Bay. Interesting illustrations and anecdotes, with some useful if unreliable history (151 pages).

Women of Westland, volume II (1977 Westland Branch of the National Council of Women). Some good stuff here, but as with all compilations some weak material as well (112 pages).

Women of Westland volume III (1990 Westland Branch of the National Council of Women) Too fragmented to be useful (119 pages), and *Women of Westland* (1960 Greymouth Branch of the National Council of Women) Unrevealing (96 pages).

World of John Boulton, The (1979 Whitcoulls) A. C. & N. C. Begg. Journal of a sealer who writes with remarkable vigour and accuracy in the early 1800's. Well researched but somewhat spoiled by the authors adding their own fulsome notes of visits to the area. Chapter 9 about Jackson Bay and Open Bay Islands is the most relevant (329 pages).

Yesterdays in Maoriland (1930 Jonathan Cape) Andreas Reischek. An interesting autobiography from a man who travelled and collected specimens the length and breadth of New Zealand in the 1880's (312 pages).

Yesterdays in Golden Buller (1957) Ella Matthews. A history of Westport and region. Some useful material (216 pages).

Author's notes

Information, access and discovery

The Department of Conservation has good information centres at Punakaiki, Fox Glacier, Franz Josef Glacier and Haast. All the towns have their own locally run information offices – Greymouth, Westport, Hokitika, etc. Backpacker places and local tourist operators in the smaller localities may also be helpful.

Many of the areas talked about are relatively easy of access, with good roads and well marked tracks. If you are planning a coastal walk check the tides first. A low tide in the middle of the day makes trip planning more convenient, and make sure you have allowed enough time to get back before the tide changes. As you walk along note the places you can escape from high tides, such as creeks, slips, etc. Keep an eye on the size of the surf: even at low tide a good swell can make headlands dangerous.

If you are daywalking, a parka, some nibbles, warmish clothes, and good firm footwear like lightweight boots are generally suitable. If there's a pamphlet on the walk take it. If you are walking in an untracked area, take a map. If you are overnight tramping along the coast, always take a good map, an insect proof tent (this is essential) and leave intentions behind with someone.

Canoe access, safety and hire

There are some places on the West Coast where access is only really possible by boat, and many other places where it is very pleasant to go by boat. A section on 'Canoe Access' is given where appropriate and gives useful

ideas of the possibilities and places that you might be interested in visiting. This is only for flat-water canoeing – ie lakes, estuaries, and slow swamp rivers. For sea-kayaking and white-water you should consult other books.

With estuaries and lagoons it is important to take a note of the tides, not only for safety (you don't want to get swept out) but also because it saves a lot of hard work. A high tide coming in is an asset, and you may well find that you need high tides to reach the top ends of many of the shallow lagoons. Take life jackets, map, food, and warm clothes. A rope can be very handy for pulling the canoe through shallows or against a current.

Several places down the coast now hire canoes. Punakaiki, Okarito, Fox Glacier, Moe-raki Wilderness Lodge and Okuru motor camp. Some of these places provide for guided canoe trips as well.

Spelling and Punctuation

Place names can be a curse to get right particularly with the use or non-use of 's' and apostrophes. Generally I have followed the mob – for example it is 'Jackson Bay' according to the Department of Survey and Land Information, 'Jackson's Bay' according to Shortland's map of 1836, and 'Jacksons Bay' according to locals. Someone is going to be annoyed whatever I choose – in this case 'Jackson Bay'. But DOSLI is itself inconsistent – Knights Point for example. In reference to the Charles Douglas papers I have straightened spelling and punctuation where appropriate but have kept his random use of capitals.

Because Maori had no written language at first, the European spelt it phonetically with sometimes accurate, sometimes curious

results. Although a lot of this muddle is now being straightened I still find widely different versions of some Maori personal names and place names. In general I have gone for the most recent version.

Paul Madgwick's book *Aotea* was particular valuable for South Westland names and I have used his suggestions frequently. I have a bias against many of the ugly and inappropriate European personal names on the landscape, which often mention a person who has never seen the feature blessed with their name ie Franz Josef. Descriptive names are more evocative, and it struck me that many Maori and European names gave distinct navigation clues for the early traveller.

Students and researchers

To any person wishing to use material from this book no written permission is required, as long as a full acknowledgment is given.



