



The Lindis Pass

965 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Travelling over the Lindis Pass with Gold Prospector Robert Booth in 1861
(Edited excerpts from Robert Booth's book - 'Five Years in New Zealand')

The First Day Beyond Longship Station

In the company of another day we started for the pass, not without grave misgivings of what might be before us. The first day we made five miles. We were fortunate in being accompanied by the fresh day, indeed without it, and the assistance given by a number of the diggers who kept with us, and with whom we shared our food, I do not think we would have succeeded in getting over the Lindis Pass, at any rate not nearly so expeditiously as we did.

The Second Day Beyond Longship

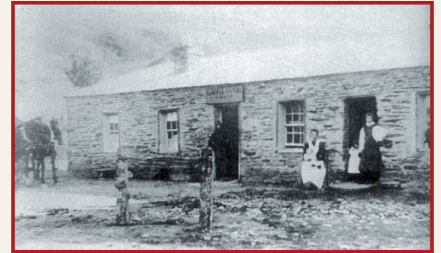
On the morning of the second day we were still four miles from the foot of the pass, and it took very severe work from men and horses to reach it by late afternoon. The cold that night was intense, and we had difficulty in procuring before dark set in enough brushwood to keep up a small fire for more than a few hours. Now that we were half-frozen and without means of bettering our condition for the night, it was proposed to open the first bottle of whisky. Our chagrin and disappointment may be imagined when we found the twelve bottles to contain only water.

The Third Day Beyond Longship

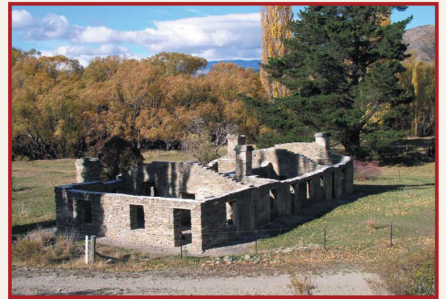
For the horses we had collected a little grass and carried it on the drays, but they had a bad time of it, and the icicles hung from their manes and tails in the morning as they stood shivering with their backs turned to the keen mountain blast. However, we all survived, and were none the worse, and as soon as it was light we gathered enough brushwood to make a rousing fire, by which we melted the frozen snow and ice from our blankets, and from the harness before we could put it on the horses.

The Final Struggle to the Top of the Pass

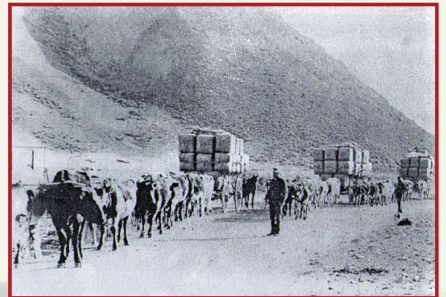
It was two miles to the top, but such a two miles to take a horse dray over. The gradient was not only very steep and rough, but it was covered with six to eighteen inches of snow. We decided to take the drays over separately, yoking all four horses to each in turn, tandem fashion, by means of ropes. We found that the utmost efforts of the four horses, assisted by half a dozen men, were only sufficient to drag the dray from twenty to fifty yards at a spurt. Before nightfall both drays were safely over the pass and we had proceeded down the opposite side as far as an out-station of McLean's (now Morven Hills). Here we learned to our joy that we were within twenty-five miles of the reported diggings, with a fairly passable track all the way.



By 1901 things had obviously improved for Lindis Pass travellers with the Lindis Pass Hotel offering food, refreshment and lodgings.
Credit: Otago Daily Times



The Lindis Hotel today. Not such a welcoming sight, but well worth visiting. Drive south of where you are now and just after crossing Elliotts Bridge turn right onto Old Faithful Road for the 6km drive to the ruins. Credit: M. Floate



The last load. "The last load of Morven Hills wool to be taken by bullock wagon train over Lindis Pass to the Kurow railhead, 1894"
Credit: G.P. Duff

Alluvial and Hard Rock Gold

Alluvial Gold occurs as loose particles in the soil or sediments deposited by rivers and streams. The most common mining methods were panning, cradling and sluicing where gold-bearing material was run through a large trough-like apparatus called a Long Tom, using coconut matting and riffles, to catch the gold. But dredging ultimately proved the most profitable method.

Hard Rock Gold is when particles of gold are locked in quartz rock which occurs as veins or reefs often deep in the ground. Mined quartz is pounded by stamper batteries into a fine slurry with gold extracted from this using mercury or cyanide.

OTAGO GOLDFIELDS HERITAGE TRUST

A not-for-profit organisation of volunteers, the Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust is dedicated to preserving what can now only be glimpses into the lives of pioneer gold miners – how they and their families lived, where they worked, the equipment they used, the hardships they faced and for Chinese miners, the prejudice they endured.

The Trust also promotes the Goldfields Heritage Trail and the Otago Goldfields Park.

For more information visit www.goldfieldstrust.org.nz



Gold Rush in the Lindis Pass

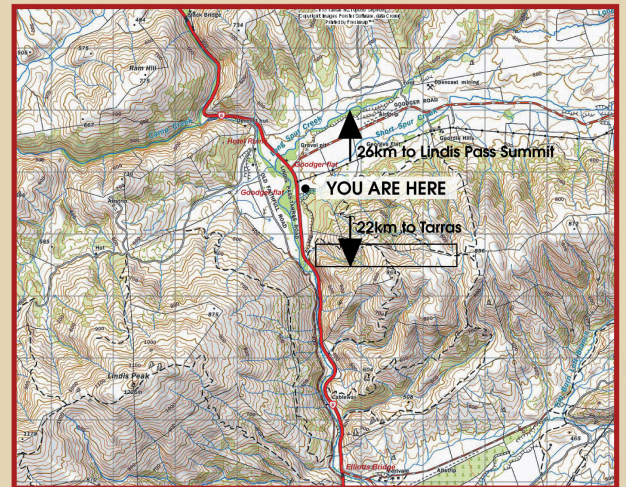
The highway you have just pulled off is for the most part paved over footprints of the Maori who for centuries trekked through the Lindis Pass to reach pounamu (jade or greenstone) on the West Coast. For European settlers and gold rush prospectors, 'The Lindis' became a well-used route to Central Otago. The water you hear is the Lindis River which played a major part in the story of gold in the Lindis Pass.

1857 Gold found in the Lindis River. New Zealand's first Surveyor General, John Turnbull Thomson, found traces of gold in the upper reaches of the Lindis River. His find failed to generate any excitement, but the name he gave the pass has stuck. Lindis was borrowed from Lindisfarne on the coast of Northeast England.

April 1861 Gold fever strikes. A road working gang's discovery of gold nuggets in the banks of the Lindis River where it flows through Goodger Flat (24 km south of Lindis Pass Summit and 2km north, on the left, from where you are now) fuelled wild rumour of a goldfield covering over forty square miles. Within just a few weeks some 300 prospectors had staked their claims.

July 1861 Gold in short supply. Lindis prospectors suffered acutely from food and other shortages, but the biggest shortage of all was gold. By July 1861, with most miners gone to the rich pickings at Gabriel's Gully near Lawrence, the Otago Witness newspaper labelled the Lindis Goldfield a complete failure. However those miners who stayed on did manage to get modest returns.

1890s to 1930s Where there's the hope of gold, there's optimism. The Lindis Goldfield's poor reputation failed to deter Chinese miners in the 1890s from re-working the original diggings. In the 1900s a small gold dredging operation lasted a couple of years. During the 1930s, the government subsidised miners to work the Lindis Diggings. Each time Goodger Flat delivered little success.



The man who struck gold in 'The Lindis'

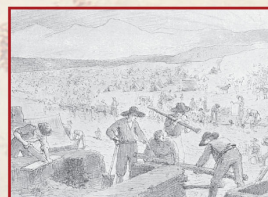
Road worker Samuel McIntyre, a former California 'forty-niner' gold prospector, used his experience to find a pocket of gold in the river bank near Goodger Flat. Looking further, he found more gold in the soils and sands of the flat near the river. This was Samuel McIntyre's 15 minutes of fame. His claim for 'the handsome reward' offered by the Otago Provincial Council to the first person to find a 'remunerative goldfield' was quietly shelved when in May 1861 Gabriel Read discovered gold in a gully (Gabriel's Gully) near Lawrence in South Otago to begin what would be the first real Otago Gold Rush.

Prospector Robert Booth's description of the Lindis Diggings

Excerpts about the Lindis Diggings at Goodger Flat from Robert Booth's book "Five Years in New Zealand".

The extent of the open was from one to two miles square. The banks of the river were crowded with men at work, some in the water, some out, others pitching tents or tending horses, some constructing rough furniture, cradles and Long Toms for washing gold, hundreds of horses tethered among the tents or upon the open, and above all the suppressed hum of a busy multitude.

We at length fixed upon a claim and set up our gear. From daylight to dark we worked day after day. The final washing of the stuff was done twice daily, at noon and again at evening, and what an exciting and anxious operation this was! How earnestly the decreasing sediment was peered at to discover signs of the precious metal! How our hearts would jump with delight when a bright yellow grain was discovered. Then the sinking feeling and disappointment to find that the day's hard work of four men did not bring us five shillings worth of gold! But hope, with the young and sanguine, is hard to beat, and the following morning would see us at work as cheerily as ever.



Goodger Flat "The first 'Rush' in Otago was to Goodger Flat where Robert Booth reported 300 prospectors at work in 1861"
Credit: Robert Booth, 1912



Miners' Camp "A miners' camp on the Lindis near Camp Creek in 1934"
Credit: G P Duff

A lone rider "A lone rider on the road in Lindis Pass from the Canterbury side. Painting by Nicholas Chevalier, 1866"
Credit: National Gallery.

