not a very successful venture, and claim just south of Bailey’s Hill. It was built by the Pactolus Company in the late 1850s and then by the Sarginson workings in the mid-1990s. Recent restoration work comes from open excavation mining by L&M in the early 1990s and by Sarginson workings in the mid-1990s. Recent restoration work comes from open excavation mining by L&M in the early 1990s and by Sarginson workings in the mid-1990s.

16 THE LAST BIG DREDGING VENTURE

In 1925 the electricity powered “Earnscleugh No 3” ceased dredging on the Earnscleugh Flats when the Company went into liquidation. The Upper Nevis Dredge Co was formed in 1926 and purchased this very large dredge, had it dismantled, transported over the Carrick Range and on the Earnscleugh Flats when the Company went into liquidation. The Southland Ski Club had the hut built in three stages. Construction started in 1934, the kitchen was added in 1939 and the bigger bunk rooms were added in 1946. The old hut was sold and became a tramping hut and is used by cross-country skiers in winter. The Department of Conservation now looks after the hut and provides contacts (DOC can provide contacts).

21 HISTORIC SKI HUT

The Southland Ski Club had the hut built in three stages. Construction started in 1934, the kitchen was added in 1939 and the bigger bunk rooms were added in 1946. The old hut was sold and became a tramping hut and is used by cross-country skiers in winter. The Department of Conservation now looks after the hut and provides contacts (DOC can provide contacts).

Natural features

In the Nevis the road through the gorge follows much the same route as the first wagon track and still suffers from problems of slips and snow. The road is often blocked by snow. The Southland District Council now closes the road over winter.

The climb to 1100m takes you into sub-alpine territory. The view back down into the Nevis Valley is spectacular.

The Nevis road to Garston is a very full day. Duffers Saddle. The views are spectacular looking down over Lake Dunstan and the Upper Clutha Valley on the way back.

The Nevis road to Garston

The Southland Ski Club had the hut built in three stages. Construction started in 1934, the kitchen was added in 1939 and the bigger bunk rooms were added in 1946. The old hut was sold and became a tramping hut and is used by cross-country skiers in winter. The Department of Conservation now looks after the hut and provides contacts (DOC can provide contacts).

RURAL RESPONSIBILITY CODE

Visitors are warned, that when following this guide, you do so at your own risk.

•  Ask permission before going on to private property. (DOC can provide contacts)
•  Leave all gates as you find them …. open or closed
•  Try not to disturb any stock
•  Keep to the track and do not wander
•  Do not throw litter
•  Do not light fires
•  Do not take any animal or plant material

Historic places

The Soper brothers worked the top valley floor in Cumberland Gully by the paddle-docking method from the early 1890s to 1934. They alternately worked on their farm at Garston for 2 to 3 weeks, and then spent the next 2 to 3 weeks mining, from spring until the early winter frosts each year. Recent restoration work comes from open excavation mining by L&M in the early 1990s and by Sarginson workings in the mid-1990s.

20 THE CLIMB OVER THE HECTOR MOUNTAINS

The climb to 1100m takes you into sub-alpine territory. The view back up the Upper Nevis Valley is quite stunning. Nokomia Creek lies off to the left with Roaring Lion Creek joining the Nevis. The Roaring Lion Creek water race was built and maintained by the Chinese. It can still be seen and was the main water source for the Nokomia workings from the 1930s to the 1940s.

As you descend, the Upper Mataura valley comes into view with the Eyre Mountains to the west. In the distance to the south, lies the Slate Range.

21 HISTORIC SKI HUT

The Southland Ski Club had the hut built in three stages. Construction started in 1934, the kitchen was added in 1939 and the bigger bunk rooms were added in 1946. The old hut was sold and became a tramping hut and is used by cross-country skiers in winter. The Department of Conservation now looks after the maintenance and repairs.

For those travelling along the road, the hut makes a good stopover and offers a breathtaking view of the Upper Mataura Valley with a chance of seeing the “Kingston Flyer” on its excursion run.

www.goldfieldsinc@xtra.co.nz
Phone. 03 445 0111

New Zealand’s Heart of Gold

OTAGO GOLDFIELDS

Catch the gold fever
3 CARRICK WATER RACE - 1872-1884

The Carrick Water Race starts high up in the Old Woman Range near the head of Coal Creek. The race first supplied water in 1875 to the Young Australian battery and to parts of the Bannockburn sluicing claims early 1877. The race was finally completed in 1884. The ownership of the race early in the 1900s was transferred to the Bannockburn settlers who then, and still today, use it for irrigation purposes.

4 SUMMIT STOP AT THE SADDLE — 1300m

Your journey continues through "The Cutting", which regularly closes in winter due to snow and then on to the highest maintained mountain road pass in NZ. To the southeast stretches the Old Woman Range and the Garvie Mountains, to the west, the Carrick Range. Behind the two big rocks, "The Two Sisters" are The Remarkables. Double Cone (2181m) dominates the skyline with the Hectors Mountains to the south.

5 DOWN HILL STOP

Here is a panoramic view of the Lower Nevis Valley and of the Nevis River resting within a spectacularly dotted tussock landscape.

The valley consists of two sections - each about 6km long separated by a 4km gorge, the Lower Nevis at about 700m and the Upper Nevis at about 900m above sea level.

The small cluster of buildings close to the Nevis River is Ben Nevis Station. Above Ben Nevis and at 2224m is the highest peak on the Hector Mountains. Clumps of trees mark signs of settlements.

Further down is the Steep Finch which like Dead Horse Finch today is a reminder of what it was like in the early 1900s.

6 THE CROSSING SETTLEMENT 1863-1900s

It was John Potter who first discovered gold in the Nevis. In October 1862 after leaving the Dunstan diggings he tried panning wherever he stopped on his way south to the Okaroma diggings.

His first find, now named after him, was at Potters No 1 Creek. Here the creek drops from the range crest down to the Nevis River below the crossing. A small settlement soon grew here but as the 1863 winter approached, prospectors found signs of gold in the Nevis River and its creeks close to where the present Nevis Bridge is today.

The settlement which grew up here became known as Nevis Crossing—the name by which it is still known today.

A small cluster of buildings, including three hotels, soon spread from the river a short distance along the valley floor road. All that is left of any of the early commercial buildings is the wall of the old "Nevis Crossing Hotel", which is close to the cattle yards. An interesting cluster of little stone walls is from huts from a later period (about 1920s). The site of the first meeting of the "Nevis Crossing" dredge was between the Nevis and its tributaries.

7 MINING OF THE LOWER NEVIS

The 1866 flood destroyed all evidence from the first mining period of the lower Nevis. Most of these were in the Lower Nevis with the Chinese out - numbering the white men up to 1000.

At its peak in 1866 there was a population of some 600. Most of these were in the Lower Nevis with the Chinese out - numbering the European population by the late 1860s. In the 1870s there were an estimated 300 Chinese working the Nevis area with their own shop which was reportedly somewhere south of the Nevis Settlement.

8 SCHOOLHOUSE FLAT

Beside Stewarts Creek or Schoolhouse Creek, there was first a Maori camp and then later in the early 1900s, a camp for those that worked on the "Nevis Crossing" dredge.

The Nevis School and the teacher's house were originally at a mid way spot between The Crossing and the Nevis settlement between 1874-1913. This School building was later shifted on to Carrick Station and can now be seen on the opposite (East) side of the Nevis River.

Bald Hill (Cemetery Hill) which lies close by the river, on Schoolhouse Flat, acted as the Grandstand for the irregular horse race meetings. The first meeting held was in 1866, and the last meeting was in 1912.

9 NEVIS CEMETERY

It is believed that there were two cemetery sites in the Lower Nevis. The site of the first cemetery site may have been at Round Hill (Cemetery Hill), opposite the Cemetery Road. The present cemetery dates from the 1890s and is believed to have had some 40 graves, including Chinese. Today there are only a few marked tombstones, including those of Stewart, Graham and McLean.

10 LOWER NEVIS SETTLEMENT — 1863-1953

This was the main town in the valley, though today less than half of the town area remains. The southern area was destroyed in the early 1900s as a result of dredging operations.

Like most hotels, the first hotel was burnt down, and was rebuilt in 1885 and later became Elliotts Nevis Hotel. This was also destroyed by fire in 1917.

Master's old home, about a kilometre north from the old site, was bought and converted into a public-house by Johnny Williams in 1919. Additions included the former bakery and the shop. The small manual telephone exchange was there in 1954. The town also had its own hall, and a school from 1914 to 1920 which was burned down. An old home became the school until it closed in 1930, but was reopened again in 1951. There was also a library dating from 1870, and many miners cottages and homesteads.

11 COMMISSIONERS CREEK — THE FIRST FORD

Commissioners Creek was the source of many water races. Coming out of the gorge on the lower hillside are five races. The lower races provide low pressure for ground sluicing while the higher races were either for hydraulic sluicing or hydraulic elevation sluicing. This last method was used from the late 1880s to 1890s. The higher the race is the more lift it provides to remove the sludge from the hole as it gets deeper.

12 THE GORGE

The stacked stone at the entrance to the gorge was a major Chinese working claim. All through the gorge are more signs of both Chinese and European workings and the occasional stone remains of huts.

13 UPPER NEVIS MINING

Again, like the Lower Nevis, evidence of all the various mining techniques have survived - various sluicing methods, dredging - the tailings mainly from "Crew No 2", and the "Upper Nevis Dredge" (former "Carrick Nevis No 3"), tunneling and as well modern trip and excavating mining. The river flats have either been worked by dredge or by hydraulic elevation, while the lower hill slopes on the true left have been sculpted by the sluicing gut.

14 WHITTENS

Whittens Creek is the first creek to cross above the gorge. In 1848, it was the scene of the battle between the Upper Nevis miners and the Chinese miners. The Chinese had been forced off their Lower Nevis claims by the dredging companies and were looking for new territory to work, but they were driven back.

The sluicing scars and the pond from hydraulic elevation nearby, are those of the "Jones' claim worked between 1906 and 1939, while the tailings are from the "Crew No 2", which dredged right down to near Bailey's Hill. In the 1990s there were two open excavation mining operations using a floating recovery plant working the creek valley. L&M Mining worked in the early 1990s and then Terry Holland was a one-person operation, working at the lower end in the mid 1990s.

15 BAILEY'S OR BALAVERY'S HILL

The hill was named after one of the first miners, John Bailey. Evidence of early sluicing, characterized by its distinctive red wash, shows quite dramatically along the river facing slopes.

At the northern foot of Bailey's Hill, beside Whittens Creek lies the stone ruins and stables of the former 1880s 'Loch Linnhe' homestead. The run holder abandoned the homestead after a new homestead was built near Kingston. However, miners and dredge workers regularly used the building when working the 'Upper Nevis', and John Bailey first used the building in the late 1940s when they were sluicing claim on the southern hill terrace steps further up Whittens Gully.

Just a short distance up from the homestead and in good repair, is an excellent example of an old stone hut. This is the former O'Connell home, which was later used as a mustering hut. Recorded on the ceiling are the names of the yeomanary mustering gang.

On the south side of Bailey's Hill was the McLean's claim of the 1860s. Here they selected some 27 metres down the hill to get down to the old riveted. In the early 1870s the work was abandoned due to the constant seepage and freezing conditions. Power for the electric machinery came from a small stream and the power lines they had installed themselves from their own hydro-electric generating plant some distance away.