



## **Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust Newsletter - June 2020**

Welcome to this June 2020 Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust (OGHT) newsletter where we update members about past events and share our goals for the way ahead.

Membership for the 2020/2021 season is now due. Please follow this link here to update your membership. <http://eventplus.net/OGH20>

### **Presidents Introduction**

What an amazing time this has been for all of us to live through with all its ups and downs of emotion, lockdown, finances and community relations. A highlight for me was standing at my gate in the dark listening to a lone trumpeter on the street corner play the 'Last Post and Rouse' for ANZAC Day dawn parade. A parade of barely-visible small separate people-bubbles at gates and on corners along the street.

For the OGHT the Level 4 Lockdown definitely affected our plans. We had completed most of the post-Cavalcade 2020 paperwork sorting out invoice payments, writing reports and packing away our signs and equipment. We are so thankful that the running of the Cavalcade itself

was completed before the concept of lockdowns was raised. We have been able to keep Terry and Odette gainfully employed from home, though at a reduced level where they put the finishing touches to the Cavalcade Report, complete our Financial Year returns and work towards our Heritage Sites Review project - all topics we discuss below. We also salute OGHT member and Past President Mike Floate who passed away during the lockdown.

Please look after yourselves and your families as we work our way out of this tail-end of Covid-19 and the restrictions it placed on our lives.

Rex Johnson  
OGHT President

### **Mike Floate**

It is with regret that we record the passing of Dr Mike Floate QSM on 13 April 2020 at the Ripponburn Home, Cromwell. In past years Mike was an active member and Past President of the OGHT. In memory of Mike we thank Bruce McMillan and Roberta Laraman for preparing the following article about him.

Mike joined the Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust in the late 1990's, some 10 years after it's inception in 1988, after it was developed from an idea of Fleur Sullivan who could see that the gold history of Otago's early development was in danger of fading into obscurity. She and others created the Goldfields Trail with a brochure for travellers to follow to goldfield sites, along with an annual goldfields week where gold towns celebrated their heritage.

This led to the inception of the first Cavalcade of one trail over the Old Dunstan Trail in 1991 to commemorate the 200 miners per day who followed this route in 1862 to "The Dunstan" (Clyde).

The Cavalcade in Mike's day consisted of Walkers, Riders, Light and Heavy wagons threading their way through the landscape as they followed the Gold Trails of yesteryear. Starting at various locations they spent days traversing the Otago and Southland high country, sometimes in very adverse weather conditions as they made their way to that year's "Host Town". A different town hosted the Cavalcade each year, including places like Clyde, Cromwell, Ophir, Omakau, Waikaia, Waikaka, Wanaka, Hawea and many other Historic Towns.

Cavalcades are fun and Mike enjoyed 10 such events during his time with OGHT, often wearing his special "Outfit" in the "Grand Parade" that concluded each Cavalcade, an outfit he was very proud of. Among the regalia was a Large Silver Star that Mike was awarded when he and others camped overnight in Dunedin's Octagon, allowed to do so by an old by-law that permitted those travelling to the Goldfields to camp for the night.

Mike became Chairman of OGHT in 2000 a position he held for two Terms. Mike was then granted the honor of a Life Membership of OGHT. During Mike's time as Chairman he was involved in the development of the Cavalcades Health and Safety plan which still stands today.

As well as the Cavalcade, OGHT runs field trips, often into out of the way places where people normally don't get access. On those field trips Mike would often closely question those who were presenting stories about the Local Folklore and history. As a Soil Scientist he was often able to add additional information to the local's stories.

OGHT has been responsible for the restoration of numerous Goldfield relics, working in close relationship with the Department of Conservation and Heritage NZ, obtaining their approval and guidance. Mike was a "stickler" about following the rules, his meticulous method of reporting and collating records was exemplary, woe betide anyone who dared make a spelling mistake.

During his time as Chairman of OGHT he initiated the successful restoration of the “Come-in-Time” gold stamping battery on the Thomson Track through Dunstan Mountains. The reconstruction work was carried out on behalf of OGHT by Johnny Simons and his team. Due to Health and Safety reasons the OGHT team was not allowed on site during the working week, but at the weekend many hours were spent clearing the site of over growth and rubbish, as well as hauling heavy timbers into place for Johnny and his team to work their magic on during the following week. Mike did not sit back, he was always in there working hard alongside the OGHT team. It was this task along with other contributions he made to the local area that Mike was awarded the QSM. His efforts have added greatly to the ecology of the area.

Mike made a major contribution to OGHT's work of producing Information Panels throughout the region, spending hours along with others, planning, researching, writing and installing Information Panels at many sites around Central Otago.

Rest in peace Mike - thanks for being there for us. We will think of you often, particularly when sharing memories out on field trips.

### **Cavalcade 2020 and 2021 update**

The Patearoa Cavalcade 2020 was another great success and the turnout of 476 participants was a respectable number for a gathering at a remote town like Patearoa. Positive feedback came in from all trails about the great times they had. Patearoa's host town committee were excellent on all accounts. They were great for OGHT office staff and trail bosses to work with. Their planning for the final day was AWESOME and none of us will forget seeing the 'Patearoa Taxis' shuttling people around between the parade ground and various accommodation paddocks. The weather was perfect, the parade went well and there were interesting activities throughout the day. The evening went well including a good dinner and then an awesome band and hoedown!

Financially the Cavalcade ran at an overall loss for the OGHT. This was due to a mix of reasons (partially due to the great financial success of 2019 setting unrealistic expectations?!)

Planning for Cavalcade 2021 into Twizel continues as if all will be back to normal by the end of February 2021 (Surely??!!) Cavalcading into Twizel follows 2 years in Central (Hawea and Patearoa) since a Cavalcade outside of Central (Owaka). After Twizel we will be back in Central for a couple of years before exploring beyond the Central Otago border again.

We are obviously keeping a close eye on the national 'distancing' policies and any effect that government decisions will have on our planning for this event. Best thing we can all do to ensure the Cavalcade goes ahead next year is to follow the Govt guidelines and ensure none of us inadvertently spread the virus!

## **Heritage Sites Review**

As a part of funding discussions, the Central Lakes Trust identified an item in our five-year plan that excited them. This was a proposal to create a database of heritage sites in Central Otago. Most other Provinces in the South Island have previously made such an inventory, but for some reason a Central Otago database has slipped through the cracks. A key issue for CLT is that such a database would help them immensely in determining the relative merits of funding applications for heritage site work. Consequently, CLT has given us a big nudge to progress this activity.

We are working with a wide range of interested parties and were right at the stage of doing a pilot study of the Ophir township area when lockdown occurred. That study was finally done 20th, 21st May and we had a great result - good buy-in from the locals and some wonderful,

previously unlisted sites surveyed. Click here for a video of what we got up to <https://youtu.be/W-sJbbORcYc>.

Of the things achieved to date, we have a Central Otago Heritage Sites Review (COHSR) planning document, support from CODC, DOC, Heritage NZ, NZ Archaeological Association and local Iwi. We have contracted an IT 'gem' to create the framework of a heritage site database and have a Dunedin Archaeologist filling in details about known heritage sites, principally around Ophir. Archaeological students from the University of Otago are poised ready to come into Central Otago to assess more sites.

The work is intended to be an information gathering project, not one of digging up areas and studying underground features. This means that providing input to the database would be well within the capability of local historians and knowledgeable OGHT members. This is an exciting opportunity for members, if anyone has some spare hours available and would enjoy online-researching heritage sites around Central Otago or the Southern Lakes regions please contact [Terry@cavalcade.co.nz](mailto:Terry@cavalcade.co.nz) . Terry will be able to explain the role of online research and data gatherer and set you up to start as soon as you like.

### **Couple of working bee's...**

Once the weather warms up a bit in September we will have a working bee around the Old Church to tidy a few things up and put in a new entrance way (Old one got taken away by the cinema!).

And we have a vandilised sign to replace out in Thompson's Gorge with some weeds to pull and general tidy-up around the Come-In-Time stamper. We will let you know closer to the time when and how you can be involved once we confirm a date.

## **Heritage Fun Fact:**

During one of those random, but always interesting, conversations that arise around the table in the OGHT office, Roberta mentioned an event that had occurred when she and husband Ken had first moved to Cromwell.

She told us that as part of a Rotary fund-raising project it had been decided to create a 'dive trail' for future Cromwellians to dive on and view once the new Lake Dunstan was in place. Consequently, one cold and blustery morning she and Ken joined others down at the river edge at what would become the Alpha Street reserve swimming bay. They handed over their donation fee, then joined others as they marked up squares of wet concrete with names, dates, impressed them with hand prints, coloured stones and marbles, etc. Despite the cold the concept proved popular and an additional line of framing was built beside the first one so more spaces could be sold. The end result was two lines of concrete paths, suitably decorated and ready for the lake to arrive.

Fast forward thirty-something years and what have we got? Crickets! Or more likely, minnows! Somewhere in the swimming bay is a forgotten amazing heritage project, with Roberta as the only one we knew who remembered about it. Based on further hints from Roberta about its location, Rex took up the challenge of locating the paths - or the 'dive trail' as they were supposed to be. He took his mask, snorkel and an aluminium rod fashioned from an old TV aerial down to the lake and started prodding around. Eventually in amongst that nasty lake weed and 30 years of silt his 'path detector' started making clunking noises instead of dull thuds. By ear he identified a long shape which was about the right width for a path. Taking a large gulp of air he shot down to the bottom and jammed his hand into the mud - and felt a rough, flat concrete surface! Woo Hoo, a find!

Over the next few days of summer in the lake and with low lake levels, Rex managed to clear weed off the site, then started removing the thick

cover of silt. He was down to about 50mm of silt on the path when two other events occurred. One was that over the next days the lake level went up about 200-300mm - enough that Rex's snorkel kept getting water down it. The other event was that NIWA came to town and talked to Cromwell College students about nasty lakeweed. They were after some free marketing, so bribed the students with offers of money or a GoPro camera for the student or group of students who created the best 3 minute movie about the perils of lakeweed.

Well, Odette's daughter Mckenzie was one of those students who got enthused by the idea, so Odette offered Rex's help to assist her. And so it was that on one Saturday morning Mckenzie had gathered Odette, Rex and Roberta at the edge of Lake Dunstan to do some filming. The results of that day's activity was a very respectable 3 minute movie which received a 'special mention' for how nasty lakeweed was hiding heritage under the lake.

Well, with the lake being high, national Lockdown restricting activities, and cooler temperatures arriving, these all mean the Cromwell Dive Trail is still under mud and weed - though other people have since also recalled the paths being laid. The good news is Mackenzies movie - 'Under the Weed' is available for viewing on YouTube. Have a look and see if you think Mckenzie should have won a GoPro camera! The URL link is: <https://youtu.be/hg2v5mySUS8>

Here ends our June 2020 newsletter. Cheers for reading! See you out in the hills somewhere!

Rex, Terry, Odette and the committee of the Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust.

<https://goldfieldstrust.org.nz/>