



Omarama Gazette

December 2021



Concerns raised over response to 111 calls

St John denies it has reverted to its old response model with regard to calling out the Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade's first response unit to medical emergencies.

In May 2017, as part of the ambulance service's Memorandum of Understanding with Fire and Emergency New Zealand St John agreed to set up a trial with Fenz and train Omarama volunteers to a higher level - an "enhanced first response".

It was to be a six-month trial which involved extra training and working alongside St John so they could attend more medical emergencies.

The trial into the new way of responding was approved by the parties because there can be a wait of 20 minutes or more for an ambulance to come from Twizel or Kurow.

At the time former chief fire officer Howard Williams told the Otago Daily Times he was concerned a St John-controlled emergency call centre was withholding calls from his brigade's first response unit.

For about 10 years, the brigade battled to get more notifications so it could deliver aid to its community faster than an ambulance based in Twizel, about 20 minutes away, or Kurow, about 30 minutes away, he said.

St John's initial response to Mr Williams' concerns had been that the formal memorandum of understanding between the NZFS and the ambulance service had clear definitions of events first response units could turn up to.

Last week, the Omarama Gazette was informed that recently the St John call centre was once again withholding calls from the brigade.

When those on the ground asked why this was happening they were told it had been called to a halt because the response model had been for a trial period only.

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Concerns raised over response to 111 calls

Today, in an email, St John District operations manager for Canterbury Emergency Ambulance Operations, Curt Ward was adamant that was not the case.

"The MOU between St John and Fenz was formalised in 2013 (and updated in 2018) and applied for all emergency service responses, including for responses in Omarama, he said.

"The agreement sets out clear processes about who should respond and when; procedures for dispatching vehicles; equipment and training levels along with criteria for establishing Fenz First Response units.

"Fenz provides a medical support response with St John ambulance along with non-medical assistance (lifting and extracting patients) while St John provides ambulance standby when Fenz anticipates they may need medical assistance at a call-out.

"As well, Fenz brigades in rural and remote areas are trained as first responders by St John. They are qualified in a higher level of first aid and initiate patient care until an ambulance arrives.

"This remains the case in Omarama where the Fenz first response brigade is still dispatched by St John Ambulance to relevant medical responses such as cardiac arrest."

"St John has not changed how it responds to emergencies in Omarama and will continue provide the appropriate resources to the most urgent life-threatening calls.

"The enhanced Fenz first response, first trialled in 2017 in Omarama, hasn't changed and we continue to respond as per the pilot.

"We're happy to explore any examples where this hasn't been the case," Mr Ward said.

By mid-October this year Fenz Omarama had attended 71 calls for 2021, 49 were motor vehicle accidents or medical emergencies.

Omarama sits as it does on SH8 – one of the busiest in the country – and in the midst of farming country with an airfield at its centre. In holiday periods the population swells to that of a small town.

When contacted on Monday Otago rural fire district deputy principal rural fire officer Mike Harrison told the Omarama Gazette he was aware of the situation, however, was unable to comment and referred the Gazette to St John.

"I can't make a response,

"There is a Memorandum of Understanding with St John. They are the lead provider for medical. It's their responsibility I'm not really in a position to comment.

"People dial 111 and ask for fire or medical emergency or police.

"if it's medical it goes through the St John call centre who triage the call to determine at what level it is, and then make a decision on what resources they will respond. The decision is made by St John," Mr Harrison said.

Senior Constable Nayland Smith told the Gazette he had been concerned to hear St John had reverted to "their old response model" and were not always calling out the first response crew.

"After having dealt with numerous crashes, household accidents and medical events it has always been a vast relief for me to have them at my side should I be the first on scene.

"Their experience and training in these types of situations far out surpasses any first aid skills I have, and no doubt the majority of the public.

"This means that those in need and let's not forget pain, get more adequate medical care within 10 or so minutes, rather than having to wait for up to 40 minutes to an hour for an ambulance to arrive from either Twizel, Oamaru or even Wanaka."

Former chief fire officer Terry Walsh who supervised the start of the trial in 2017 said he would be upset to find the protocols had reverted.

As far as he was aware there had been no formal adoption of the procedures developed, however, all involved were under the impression it would continue. For him, the best thing about the trial had been the way it had encouraged a better working relationship.

Reverting to old practices would put lives at risk, "it always did", he said.

"And it doesn't meet the community's needs and that's what the fire service is all about, working with the community."

The Oamaru Gazette also approached Fenz at a national level.

Fenz Specialist Response manager Aaron Waterreus said St John was the "lead agency" in providing medical response services to the community.

Through the formal MOU Fenz "supports" St John to "deliver medical response" when called on.

"St John communications centres have triage systems in place and they make the decisions whether or not they need to turn out Fire and Emergency crews to cardiac arrests and other medical events.

"The Oamaru Volunteer Fire Brigade is still a medical first response brigade under the MOU, and will be turned out to the appropriate priority calls," Mr Waterreus said.

The Oamaru Gazette approached Fenz Oamaru Volunteer Fire Brigade chief fire officer Greg Harper for comment on this story.

However, he said he was not authorised to speak to media on this issue.

Emergency services work together at an accident just out of Oamaru. File photo: Bruce Dow



Investigation report prompts questions

Inconsistencies permeate the Fire and Emergency New Zealand's reports into last year's Lake Ōhau wildfire and there are almost as many questions left hanging as there have been answers.

Last month, Fenz released three reports into the cause of the fire, and the events that followed: the [Fire and Emergency New Zealand Wildfire Investigation Report](#); [The Lake Ōhau Fire, A Summary of Events](#); and the [Operational Review Lake Ōhau Level 3 Vegetation Incident](#).

Fenz found the fire, which was responsible for a 5000ha blaze that destroyed 48 homes and significantly damaged six, was accidental and caused by an electrical short circuit on a Network Waitaki power pole.

The lines company, however, strongly disputes that finding.

The Ōmārama Gazette understands other parties, too, have concerns about some content in the reports and are meeting with Fenz officials to discuss those, although none were prepared to speak publicly.

In the early hours of October 4, 2020, a fire was reported northwest of the Lake Ōhau village. It was extremely windy with gusts recorded at 127km/hr.

The wind was from the northwest and was driving the fire toward the village.

The rate of spread of the fire was exceptional due to weather and fuel conditions, the reports conclude.

According to the investigation the fire started in the grass fuels along the spur below the 11kV electrical network running above Department of Conservation land.

It became more intense on reaching the heavier fuels to the north and west of the Village and surrounding land parcels.

“Large areas of the forestry have become a sustained crown fire producing extreme head fire intensity, preheating the air and fuels in front of the head fire with an ember storm raining down hundreds of metres ahead of the advancing fire,” the investigation report said.

“With the wind blowing from the north down the lake and west through the gullies above the mountain range, the fire was pushed in an east-southeast direction towards the Village.

“Once it had burnt over Freehold Creek there were two predominate fuel types, grass fuels out to the east southeast and forest fuels to the east northeast. The forest fuels lay in front of the Village.”

As critics pointed out at the time it was the dry grass and scrub left ungrazed, and the expanses of wilding pines which fed the blaze and contributed to its spread and intensity.

The fire continued for nine days before it was fully extinguished.

In all about 5043ha of farmland, Doc land as well as the private properties within Village was burnt.

The total cost to Fenz of fighting this fire was \$1.365m and the Insurance Council estimates losses to the value of close to \$35 million.

The first three days of the fire were the most intense.

On the first day of the fire besides the fire crews, 13 helicopters and a mix of nine machines (diggers, grader, bulldozer, and tractors) were deployed. On day two, 16 helicopters, three fixed wing aircraft, and five machines were deployed. On day

three, 12 helicopters, two fixed wing aircraft, and three machines were deployed on the fire-ground.

Department of Conservation teams and worked alongside Fenz personnel firefighting.

And the coastguard was deployed on the lake to support the filling of monsoon buckets.

The first fire crews on the scene were Ōmārama, Twizel, Otematata and Tekapo. So, who did get there first?

According to the Fenz incident log (click here to see screenshot) it was the Twizel's tanker 9011 who first arrived at the call at 3.39.25am followed by Ōmārama 567 at 3.53.47am – some 14 minutes later.

The Fenz's Operational Review contradicts the incident log and says the Ōmārama crew was first on the scene.

“On entering the village, the OIC [Officer in Charge] of the Omarama appliance advised the crew that their priority task would be evacuations, not firefighting.

“At this time the fire had not yet reached the houses.

“The OMAR567 OIC realised the enormity of the incident they were facing and immediately transmitted a third alarm.

“The next arriving appliance shortly after OMAR567 was TWIZ9011, a tanker.”

And again; “He [the OIC] elected to continue into the village and had IGC [Incident Ground Control] radio contact with the OIC of the Twizel tanker that was behind them.”

However, the Summary of Events repeats the same information as the incident report and says;

“When the Twizel Volunteer Fire Brigade arrived first at 3.39am, followed a short time later by the Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade, firefighters were confronted with a fast-moving fire through the village and surrounding area.

“Crews and the Omarama Police Officer, along with support from some residents still in the village, completed the final evacuations. All people in the village were safely evacuated.”

Regardless, all were focused on saving lives and protecting property.

The Operational Review says; “First responding crews to this incident were from Ōmārama and Twizel fire stations and they faced an unprecedented event in New Zealand.

“When the fire appliances arrived the fire crews and Police Officer, with support from some residents still in the village, completed the final evacuations. All these actions ensured there were no fatalities from the fire.”

It has been noted in the reports that communications early in the emergency were hampered by the Canterbury/Otago divide.

As Ōmārama is in the Waitaki District and Twizel is in the Mackenzie District, the brigades were in separate Fenz regions. The fire was in the Te Kei fire region which includes the Ōmārama brigade, while the Twizel brigade is in the Te Ihu fire region.

This meant the fire appliances operated on separate land mobile radio channels.

“This proved to be a problem in the very early stages of the fire as some radio communication between the Ōmārama and Twizel appliances was missed,” the report said.

“But once in the village all appliances operated on a single channel and appliance-to-appliance communication was done over the IGC radios or via mobile phones.”

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Fire investigation prompts questions -continued

Each of the reports commends the village safety plan. But it was clear from the outset not everyone knew of the plan, more especially those holidaying in the village. And things don't always go to plan in emergencies and this was an emergency unprecedented in scale.

Regardless, the Operational Review concludes that matters would have been considerably worse had this village plan not been in place.

But it does not say when the plan was last reviewed and updated.

Waitaki District Council's rural fire and civil defence management Steve Couper and Chris Raine developed the plan with the community sometime prior to 2014 when Mr Raine left the role.

"The District has recognized that there is a need to review the plan to consider absent residents using their properties sparingly or as short-term holiday accommodation on popular holiday rental sites. The current plan does not account for these situations," the Operational review says.

And while the fire siren played a key role in raising the alarm not everyone understood what that meant – some thought it was the call out signal for the brigade not realising the closest brigade is in Ōmārama. In some places the siren could not be heard above the wind.

"People were alerted by neighbours, fire and police going door-to-door, phone, car horns, any means possible – a determination to find everyone even if some were alerted later than others."

Fenz also had a tactical fire plan for the village but crews did not have access to it in the early stages of the event.

There is little in the report about the Fenz response and communication with landowners outside of the village which was a concern raised later in the debrief with farmers at the fire station in Ōmārama.

The Operational Review says landowners with machinery worked at an early stage to create their own fire breaks, "but worked well with the Fenz personnel once the full Incident Management Team was established and contractors were brought in".

"Several suggestions and recommendations came from the debrief held at Ōmārama fire station.

"These were internal issues that Fenz as a learning organization will consider ensuring continuous improvement.

"Many of them are already being worked on in the Te Kei Region, and none of them had a material impact on containing and controlling the fire."

The report notes the help Mackenzie District Civil Defence and Emergency Management gave in establishing welfare services in Twizel until Waitaki District CDEM team took over, but does not explain the delay.

Nor does it explain when or why the Ōmārama Police instruction to evacuate people to Ōmārama was countermanded.

"A liaison officer was appointed very early in the incident as it was recognized that with the destruction caused by this fire there would be a lot of concern locally and within the wider community.

"The first formal community meeting was held the very first afternoon in Twizel attended by the Recovery Manager and the Liaison officer.

"At this meeting they took time to try to understand the community concerns and

committed to holding regular community briefings.

“...they were able to arrange buses to take the resident through the village to see their homes before others were allowed in.

“This was very important for the residents who did not want to see photos of their homes through any form of media before they had had a chance to see the destruction for themselves.”

The report does not mention that earlier that day a video of aerial footage from a reconnaissance sweep over the village showed exactly that and was shared on Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher’s Facebook page.

It was later deleted but not before it was picked up and shared by media throughout the country and was seen by some residents before their visit.

What is not in dispute is that the community took action and were joined by fire brigade volunteers and the Ōmārama police, and their courageous choices unquestionably saved lives.

There is nothing but recognition and admiration for the role those who responded first, including the Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade crew and the Ōmārama Police played, and the cool and calm way they went about their duty.

There is considered acknowledgment of the dangers they faced and that they nevertheless put aside the risk to themselves, not in any reckless way, and put the community of Ohau first.

“It was presumed that every house had someone in it, so all possible houses were checked unless already involved in fire and not safe to do so.

“It is clear to the review team that several lives may have been lost without this effort from the residents, the Police Officer, and subsequently the first arriving fire crews.”

“The relationships at a local level between Fenz and other emergency services such as Police, St John and Civil Defence was well-formed and people knew each other so were able to focus very quickly on the community.

Photo: Fire and Emergency New Zealand

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Appendix 4: ICAD Report Cover Sheet ONLY

Full report available on request.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand Incident Report

CADNumber F3088958 Start Date Time 04 October 2020 03:06:59

Incident Details

Type: STRU 1st Caller: [REDACTED]
Method: 111
PFA:
Result: 1100: STRUCTURE FIRE (STRU)
Location: LAKE OHAU RD, LAKE OHAU, WAIKAI DISTRICT NZTM: E 1348789
N 5092886
Common Name:
Zone: 375890 Station: 3590 TWIZEL
Incident Info: PINE TREES ON FIRE BEHIND THE VILLAGE - TX 3RD ALARM

Incident History

		Elapsed Time (hh:mm:ss)
Created:	03:06:59 04 Oct 2020	
Confirmed:	03:07:50 04 Oct 2020	00:00:51
Alerted:	03:08:07 04 Oct 2020	00:01:08
1st Response:	03:15:18 04 Oct 2020	00:08:19
1st Arrival:	03:39:25 04 Oct 2020	00:32:26
2nd Arrival:	03:53:47 04 Oct 2020	00:46:48
3rd Arrival:	03:54:49 04 Oct 2020	00:47:50
Stop:		
Closed:	00:26:51 29 Oct 2020	59:19:52



Responses

Alarm Level	Call Sign	Dispatched		Response Time	Arrival Time	Departed	
		Day	Time			Day	Time
3	TWIZ9011	04	03:08:07	03:16:33	03:39:25	10	18:37:50
3	OMAR567	04	03:08:10	03:15:18	03:53:47	06	08:08:55
3	TWIZ907	04	03:25:06	03:28:51	03:54:49	05	08:52:28
3	TWIZ9026	04	03:34:54	04:11:42	04:11:43	04	17:54:22
3	OTEM571	04	03:25:20	04:12:33	04:12:34	04	14:16:53
3	LAKE837	04	03:33:10	04:33:28	04:33:29	04	12:33:57
3	LAKE8326	04	04:29:13	04:40:35	04:40:36	04	13:14:52

Fire investigation prompts questions - continued

“And importantly, the community knew them so had trust in the advice given, the report said.

“The crews that responded to this fire put themselves at great risk to save what was saveable. These dangers not only came from the fire itself but from flying debris such as roofing iron.”

They were operationally ready because of the Pukaki fire.

“The first arriving crews faced an intensely challenging situation with fire already in the village, many occupants already evacuating, and very limited resources.

“[The Officer in Charge of Omarama 567] was faced with one of his most critical decisions immediately: whether to not enter the village to ensure the safety of his crew or to take a calculated risk to save life.

“He had considered very carefully the risks and decided that the biggest threat was a life risk for residents.

“He elected to continue... The actions of these first arriving crews, the local Police Officer, and many residents ensured no lives were lost.

“There is no doubt the fire crews and the local Police officer took a risk in entering the village.

“But it is the opinion of the review team that it was a calculated risk that ultimately ensured no lives were lost.

“We were informed there were actions that several residents took at some personal risk, to ensure no one in the village was left behind...some stayed to ensure the full evacuation of the village until advised to leave for their own safety.

“The crews completed a fast sweep and assessment of properties and with reasonable confidence that people had evacuated, the OIC re-assessed his options. He could see the fire was getting worse and wanted to relocate the crews and the local Police officer to a defensible location.

“They moved their appliances further through the village and located a defensible place to re-assess their options.”

And again;

“...several residents did an amazing job of making the community aware of the imminent danger and urgent need to evacuate.

“They were supported by the first arriving Ōmārama and Twizel crews, and the Ōmārama based Police Officer once they arrived.

“This combined effort ensured no loss of life from this fire.”

 **Life at Orange**

covid19.govt.nz

"Growing soil" key to the good life

Anyone who has ever walked barefoot across dewy grass just after sunrise understands what Emily means. It's that feeling of connectedness to all that is around us.

Omarama gardener Emily Hunt last month launched her new business, Mercy and Cloud Permaculture, specialising in vegetable garden advice and management. She will visit, and help set up a new garden, or 'recover' an older one - anything to keep her hands in the soil.

"I love doing other people's gardens...I just love it.

"Mum had big gardens ...my sisters and I had our own veggie patch."

Once she went out flatting it became a little trickier and moving flats often meant the heartbreak of leaving a garden.

But now she, partner Shane Leopold, daughter Leona (5) and son Thorin (2) have a home of their own and there's no holding Emily back.

It's 'Mercy and Cloud' for the middle names of their two youngsters.

The family home is on a section tucked close to Ladybird Hill with a view to Black Peak, built on an ancient braid of the Ahuriri River and moulded by the extremes of high country weather – hard and late frosts, high summer temperatures with little rainfall and cold sometimes snowy winters.

Nonetheless in the short time the family has been there the worn-out soils have responded to Emily's touch and the generous contributions from the hens and ducks.

Permaculture focusses on the part we all play in the ecosystem. The practice sees human beings as part of the whole and works on the relationship between people, plants, animals, and the soil.

Emily said she did struggle with trying to explain it.

"It was a "style of life management," she said.

"People care, earth care and fair share" - that is sharing any surplus or resources with others.

For the past year alongside family commitments Emily has taken two online learning courses, one through the Permaculture Education Institute run by Morag Gamble and she has completed a level 3 New Zealand Certificate in Horticulture through the Otago Polytechnic Central Campus in Cromwell.

In permaculture the health of the soil is paramount, and worm farming and compost making are front and centre of that, as is layering up green and brown mulches to protect soils, conserve moisture and safeguard and feed the microorganisms in the soil.

Emily's garden attests to all of that with burgeoning and abundant compost heaps tucked under wool blankets and a generous worm farm created in a recycled salmon chiller bin. The bin, which is insulated, protects against extremes of temperature.

"What you are growing is soil," she said.

Needless to say there are no sprays; all inputs are organic and in keeping with working within the ecosystem of the property, all is re-used or recycled and as little as possible, apart from produce goes off the property.

"Everything is symbiotic".

The key to success was taking the time to look carefully at what you had and to work with that, she said.

Among other things that information could help you understand what plants thrived and how best to lay out the garden.

You learnt which plants grew well together and which would bring beneficial insects into the garden, deter pests, and naturally fertilize your soil.

While some might consider comfrey a bit of a garden thug, it is one of Emily's star plants for what it contributes to soil and plant health and because of the pollinators it brings into the garden.

Where some may have planted flowers along the path under the eaves against the house Emily has put frost tender veggies like beans and tomatoes. They have rewarded her by seeding generously throughout the bed last autumn and sprouting off to a head start early this spring.

Other warm and sheltered spots have sprouted zucchini, potatoes and beans.

Her six Australorp chickens and two ducklings contribute to the process, dealing to scraps, giving eggs and bestowing manure.

The fences are props for climbers like grapes and hops. Artichokes will grow as a hedge.

A Blackboy peach, raspberries, blackberries, currant bushes, a walnut tree – not yet producing – and herbs promise salad bowls of goodness.

The thriving vegetable garden– perhaps a little more conventional in appearance, although straight lines are not mandatory or even effective in a permaculture system - was built up by sheet mulching over lawn – no digging so as not to disturb the soil.

The permaculture philosophy teaches going easy on humans too; working with nature rather than struggling against what you have been handed in your patch.

You can follow Emily's story on her social media pages. <https://www.facebook.com/Mercyandcloud> Phone: 027 318 3177 email: mercyandcloud@gmail.com



Gliding on under 'Orange'

Two significant events run by the Omarama Gliding Club are proceeding as planned under the new Covid Protection Framework with good numbers attending, although fewer are travelling from the North Island to attend.

The Omarama Gliding Club's Mountain flying course is underway this week at Omarama Airfield and next week it hosts the South Island Regional competitions. Club president Brian Savage, who is tutor for the course, said it was held for glider pilots who wanted to familiarise themselves with flying in the mountains.

"Omarama is one of the top mountain flying areas in the world."

Ten pilots from around New Zealand were taking part – mostly all from the South Island because of Covid restrictions.

As part of the course tasks were set each day and so other glider pilots were also joining in for those as practice ahead of the regional championships, Brian said.

So far 22 pilots had entered for the regional competition.

"We are missing eight to 10 from the North Island."

From Friday when the South Island moves to the Orange level of the Covid protection framework the club will require vaccine passes together with mask wearing as mandatory, Brian said.

It had advised its members of the new requirements and there had been no "kickback" or cancellations as a result.

"We are expecting high compliance."

Brian also said because of the club's training commitment with schools it was short of winch drivers and he would like encourage anyone interested in training to be a winch driver to make contact.

Brian Savage, Omarama Gliding Club president 021 619 539

Brian.savage@fossicking.co.nz

Chief Flying Instructor Gavin Wrigley gavinwr@hotmail.com or

(+61) 418 844 014 (yes an Oz #).



Growing together in our own backyard

For those of us who can't tell their tomatoes from their tomatillos, or who grab the pitchfork when we see the sign: "Beware the Agapanthus", or for those of us who just want to lean on a shovel and dispense 'valuable' advice, help is on the way.

The time has (almost) come to turn the first sod on a small piece of land into the Omarama Community's veggie patch.

The Omarama Residents' Association planned to begin a community garden project in Spring – the start of the growing season. However, various setbacks have meant it is not yet underway.

Creating a community garden was one project identified as having widespread support in the Omarama Masterplan process.

So far, two sites have been identified as suitable possibilities.

Omarama gardener Heather Smith has volunteered to lead the project.

Heather has worked to set up a community garden in her former home, Denman, New South Wales.

The project will work similarly here, she said.

"Everyone getting together, everyone can have a say and it grows from there.

"Some people can't have a garden and enjoying coming along to watch, join in and learn, Heather said.

The Omarama Shed Group has offered to help with any structural or hard landscaping construction.

All who are interested in helping with the garden project are invited to meet 10.30am, Saturday, December 11, at the picnic tables behind the Community Centre.

As well, the Omarama Residents' Association is inviting all those interested to its meeting at 7.30pm Thursday, December 16, at the Omarama Community Centre where there will be an opportunity to look at both sites and contribute to the discussion

Contacts:

Community Garden Project: Heather Smith 027 330 0249

Omarama Residents' Association: Lindsay Purvis 027 438 9630



Discussions generate new project ideas

Although few people attended roadshow meetings throughout the district about the new Waitaki Whitestone Geopark strategy, discussions have highlighted two major projects for the trust, its manager says.

Last month Roadshow sessions were held in Kurow, Palmerston, Oamaru and Omarama with a virtual session via zoom scheduled for next week.

Geopark manager Lisa Heinz said, while attendance at the meetings had been disappointing, discussion was good.

Four people attended the Omarama meeting, four went to the Oamaru meeting, six attended the Kurow meeting and eight went to the meeting in Palmerston.

In September, the geopark trust announced a change of direction with a new strategic plan, and with it the appointment of Lisa Heinz as manager replacing Gerard Quinn.

The roadshow was to explain the new focus and how it would affect communities, Ms Heinz said.

Because of the discussion she would be putting “two bigger” and some smaller project ideas to the trust at its next meeting.

Although, she would not say what these were until they had been presented to the trust she said work on new ideas would “hopefully start in the New Year”.

As well, discussions had highlighted how important it was to establish links and connect with the various residents’ associations throughout the district, she said.

In Omarama, discussion centred on the Clay Cliffs, the upper Ahuriri Valley and outdoor activities, and the Upper Waitaki Hydro scheme’s dams.

Ms Heinz said the focus on visitors had not “disappeared” from the strategy but a focus on geo-conservation and education had now become the main drivers.

“We want to attract those visitors we want to see, have them stay a bit longer - those who want to connect with locals and hear their stories.”

The first project detailed in the new strategy is to improve signage at various sites.

The strategy document sets out the trust’s goals for the next four years which include seeking the most suitable level of protection for Waitaki’s geological treasures, supporting Te Rūnanga o Moeraki to protect their cultural landscapes, educating locals and visitors, and providing ways for people to “engage meaningfully with our land and each other”.



Sincere condolences to friends and family

The Waitaki District Council has announced the death of Councillor Ross McRobie from cancer on Monday.

Cr McRobie was diagnosed with cancer just a couple of months ago, and almost three weeks ago, he started treatment, the statement said.

"Although Ross stayed optimistic, the extensive nature of the cancers in his body meant that the treatment was too little, too late."

"He passed away last night, having spent much of the past week with his partner Petrea at his side along with many members of his extended family including his two children, Emma and James.

"Ross was a very outgoing person and an awesome Councillor for the Ahuriri Ward and the Waitaki district. His extensive network of friends and acquaintances means that he is well-known to many people throughout New Zealand. I know that my fellow elected members and the many staff who knew Ross will truly miss his analytical decision-making, his energetic personality and the great banter he brought with him.

Our thoughts are with Petrea, James, Emma and their extended families," Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher said.

The flag at the council building in Oamaru was flown at half mast on Tuesday.



The Noticeboard

To have your community notice included here email: omaramagazette@gmail.com



The Kurow Medical Centre

Omarama Clinic at the Omarama Community Centre, is open Thursdays mornings from 8.30am. To make appointments for all clinics, order repeat scripts or make enquiries please contact Kurow Medical Centre 03 436 0760 (Monday to Thursdays).
www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz

St Thomas' Omarama Church

Community: chairperson: Ven Dr Michael Godfrey, phone 022 342 9977 or email Dylanfreak@gmail.com; committee secretary (Presbyterian) : Lee Kearon,

phone: 021 250 1060 or email: lee.kearon@gmail.com

The Omarama Community Library is open 9.30am to 11am Wednesdays and Saturdays, Library hours can change. Contact Yvonne: 027 476 7473.

The Omarama Golf Club Saturdays, cards in 12.30pm, tee-off 1pm. Club captain James Moynihan phone: 027 215 8266; email jwmoynihn@yahoo.co.nz
www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz

Omarama Playgroup meets at 9.30am each Wednesday during the primary school term at the Omarama Community Centre. For more information phone president Tarryn Benton 027 201 7065 or secretary Aimee Snelgrove 022 350 5536 aimeesnelgrove@hotmail.com

The Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month at the 'Top Pub' - the Blue and Gold pub, in Kurow. All welcome. Join the Facebook group.

Bridge Club - The Omarama Bridge Club meets on a regular basis and would welcome new members. If you are interested please phone Sylvia Anderson 438 9784 or Ann Patterson 438 9493.

The Omarama Model Aircraft Club meets on Saturdays from 9.00 am to 12.00 noon at its flying ground at the Omarama airfield. All welcome - Contact Don Selbie on 027 435 5516.

FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade meets 7pm each Wednesday and has its meeting at 7:30pm on the third Wednesday of the month. New members welcome.

Plunket Line: 0800 933 922

Omarama Plunket Committee: Aimee Snelgrove 022 350 5536

Car Seat Rentals: Christine, phone: 03 435 0557 or 027 208 0362

In case of emergency: to prevent any confusion about the location of Lake Ohau Alpine Village in an emergency, the following points should be noted:
When phoning 111, advise that Lake Ohau is in South Island and the nearest cross road is State Highway 8 and Lake Ohau Road. Also mention that Lake Ohau Alpine Village is on the shore of Lake Ohau, and is 20 mins (40 km) from both Twizel and Omarama. This will assist the operator to find the required information to enter location in the system and allowing the call to progress to the next screen in the system.

To read more, enjoy more photos and watch our place 'come to life' check out our Facebook page and website. www.facebook.com/omaramagazette/omaramagazette.nz

To receive email alerts between monthly editions of the Omarama Gazette sign up to our 'Local List'. Email omaramagazette@gmail.com and put 'Local List' in the subject line.

Thank you to all who share your stories and contribute in other way to the Gazette. We all really appreciate what you do.

**The Christmas issue of the
Omarama Gazette
is Wednesday, December 15, 2021.**

**Please submit copy
by Friday, December 10, 2021**

**Advertising pays for
production and distribution.**

To find out about publication and close-off dates, and how much it costs to place your advertisement, please phone 021 294 8002, 03 438 9766 or email omaramagazette@gmail.com

The Community Reports

Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade



Hello everybody,

Well, another month or should I say year is most ready to put bed. Unbelievable considering more lock downs and other restrictions due to Covid.

As we move into the traffic light system depending on levels if you require our services you may find a little more caution in our approach mainly around PPE and questioning around Covid.

We need to do this to protect our firefighters and first responders and their families. As the border is opened and people start moving around it makes sense that we will see Covid in the South Island.

None of this meant to scare anybody. We all need to do our bit, masks, sanitize and scan will help.

On a brighter note Christmas holidays are on the way so let's enjoy the break, with more traffic on the roads let's be patient on the roads, be careful if camping if things dry out our fire risk will change very quickly. If possible mowing around your campsite is a good way to keep the fire risk down.

I hope you all have a great break.

Stay Safe

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you all.

Greg Harper and the team at the Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade

Chief Fire Officer

021 293 1171

greg.harper@fireandemergency.nz

St Thomas's Church Community

The St Thomas's Management Committee regretfully advise they will not be organizing a pre- Christmas carol service this year.

In these uncertain times we did not feel it was responsible to hold an event which encouraged bubbles to mix and mingle at a time when families were travelling across the country to be together for Christmas.

We wish you all a blessed and happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in the new year.

The St Thomas's Management Committee

chairperson: Ven Dr Michael Godfrey, phone 022 342 9977

or email Dylanfreak@gmail.com

committee secretary (Presbyterian) : Lee Kearon, phone: 021 250 1060 or

email: lee.kearon@gmail.com



NOTICE OF OMARAMA GOLF CLUB 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the Omarama Golf Club will be held as follows:

- DATE:** Saturday 11th December 2021
TIME: 11.00 a.m.
VENUE: Omarama Golf Clubrooms

All members and interested individuals are welcome to attend.

Items of Business for AGM:

Confirmation of AGM Minutes 2020

President report

Financial Balance Sheet

Election of Office Bearers – President, Vice President,

Secretary, Treasurer, Club Captain, Course

Convenor and committee members

Approval of auditor for 2021/2022

General Business



OMARAMA GOLF CLUB

NEW YEARS TOURNAMENT

ALL WELCOME

Saturday, 8th January 2022

Entries will be limited and dependant on covid restrictions

Morning Session: Report 8.00 a.m. for 8.30 a.m. tee off

(Lunchtime meal supplied)

Afternoon Session: Report 12.30 p.m. for 1.00 p.m. tee off

(Evening meal supplied)

One Prize Giving will be held at the conclusion of afternoon session

Stableford prizes

Entry fee: \$40.00

On-course BBQ - Great Prizes - Raffles - Great company

Entries (including morning/afternoon session, club/player ID) to:

Christine Bowman (Secretary) email secretary@omaramagolfclub.co.nz or txt
0272092320.

Entries to be received by Wednesday 5th January 2022

PLEASE NOTE: CASH ONLY

The Ōmārama Shed

Progress report, December

The roof is on the replacement announcer's box - The Bird Box - being built for the Ōmārama Rodeo Club grounds.

The group has built a work bench and places to store tools - some of which have been donated, some bought by The Shed at low cost. The Shed group would appreciate any offers or donations of any second-hand tools or machinery for its workshop.

The Ōmārama Shed group meets at 10am each Saturday
and at other times, too.

For further information contact: Murray Stuart 027 432 7537

Time for the roof shout!!: The roof is on the Omarama Rodeo Club's 'Bird box' announcer's box.



Christmas Housie



Xmas Buffet \$20 per person

Plus a merry little housie session

(NB usual cost for game cards)

12 noon Wednesday, December 8, 2021

at the Wrinkly Rams, Omarama

All are welcome



RSVP Monday, December 6, 2021

PHONE: 027 201 2312



Ōmārama Collie Dog Club

ANNUAL MEETING

The Omarama Collie Dog Club will hold its annual meeting
7pm, Wednesday, November 17,
at the Omarama Golf Club.

Contact: Carla Hunter smithyc66@gmail.com

Ōmārama Playgroup

ANNUAL MEETING

The Ōmārama Playgroup will hold its annual meeting at
7.15pm on Thursday, November 25, 2021
at the Pink Glider café.
All welcome.

President Tarryn Benton 027 201 7065
Secretary: Aimee Snelgrove 022 350 5536
aimeesnelgrove@hotmail.com

The Waitaki Newcomers Network

The Waitaki Multicultural Council has established the Waitaki Newcomers Network and Migrant Support Service which are both very successful initiatives. Within the Oamaru area there are many events where people can meet up and establish new friendships which helps them to settle happily into a new community. It can be difficult adjusting to a new place, especially if English is your second language, the culture is new and you have no family in the area. Making friends and learning about the area and what it offers is key to developing a sense of belonging and well being. In rural areas these challenges of isolation can be even greater.

For more information about this group and to subscribe to regular updates
Contact: Christine Dorsey
027 242 8643.
waitaki@newcomers.co.nz
Abacus House,
102 Thames Street,
Oamaru
03 434 7544. www.newcomers.co.nz

Ōmārama Collie Dog Club

The Ōmārama Collie Dog Club has new officers following its annual meeting last month.

They are: president, Todd Burke; vice-president, Michael Benton; secretary, Carla Hunter; and treasurer, Andrea Aubrey.

The Ōmārama Collie Dog Club trials are held in March each year at its grounds on Dalrachney station.

Secretary : Carla Hunter smithyc66@gmail.com

Ōmārama Rodeo Club

Dear Gazette readers

By now most of you will have heard the news that the Ōmārama Rodeo will be taking a year off due to Covid-19. This decision was not made lightly by the club members and involved a significant amount of discussion back at the beginning of November.

Ultimately the decision was based around the significant cost of running the rodeo and the unknown of Covid restrictions.

Our rodeo costs close to \$40,000 to run for the day (hence why we rely so heavily on fundraising) and brings in an untold amount for the community.

Without our crowd, we have no income from the event. And there's only so many times you can run an event without earning from it.

The club hopes you understand our decision and we wish you all a safe and happy holiday. See you next year.

Marcia Green
Secretary, Ōmārama Rodeo Club

Ōmārama church services

Church services in Omarama
7pm to 8pm each Sunday
at the Omarama Community Centre.
Closed December 26 and January 2.



Boots and Jandals Hotel social club

The Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama Social Club Christmas party was held last week and enjoyed by all.



**'The Community Reports' is
dedicated to news
from clubs, groups and sports teams.
Contributions are welcome.
omaramagazette@gmail.com**

Ōmārama Community Library

This year you can cruise into an Omarama Summer of school holidays with a goodie bag of books and other bits and bobs from Waitaki District Libraries.

Children who register at the Omarama Library or at Omarama School by Saturday, December 4, will get a bag of library books to read over the holidays, plus a new book to keep, but wait there's more ... plus some giveaways such as activity sheets and colouring pencils. The Omarama Library has received six boxes of books (see photo below) to support this promotion so there's lots of new reading material!

In other news

From December 7, the library will open from 6pm to 7pm on Tuesday evenings. This is for a trial period only - so will be December 7, 14 and 21. If there is enough support these hours will continue next year. The only days we will be closed over the holidays are Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

**The Ōmārama Community Library is open
9.30am to 11am,
Wednesdays and Saturdays,
And 6pm to 7pm Tuesdays, until December 21
at the Ōmārama Community Centre.
omaramalibrary@gmail.com**



Ōmārama Residents' Association

The next meeting of the
Ōmārama Residents' Association is
7.30 pm Thursday, December 15, 2021

at the Ōmārama Community Centre

An invitation is extended to all

Contacts:

Lindsay Purvis, chairperson, 027 438 9630

Yvonne Jones, secretary, 027 476 7473

THE ASSOCIATION HAS ITS OWN POST OFFICE BOX

Could all those who want to contact the association by mail,
send accounts to be paid,
or have correspondence considered at the monthly meetings
ensure it is addressed to:

The Secretary, P O Box 93, Ōmārama 9448.

The association's email address is omarama.committee@gmail.com

ŌMĀRAMA COMMUNITY CENTRE HALL HIRE

To make a booking for an upcoming event or for more
information about hall hire and availability
please contact Michelle Kitchen 027 280 5446
or email hallhire.omarama@xtra.co.nz



Lake Ōhau Alpine Village

Don't lose what you have because of what you have lost...

A LÖL women's wellness event was recently held - "LÖL" = Lake Ōhau Ladies, or laugh out loud or lots of love - all fitting for the event we held.

Wise words to twenty eight women from the Lake Ōhau community who came together on Saturday 13 November, for a wellness day.

With so many houses lost in the October 2020 wildfire, women who would usually be at Lake Ōhau haven't been able to, making friendships and connections difficult.

The wildfire and its aftermath continues to impact on the wellbeing of the community. The focus was on women for this day, as women often find coming together to talk and share is a way to help one another and then take these learnings home.

Kat Wolinski, Clinical Psychologist from Timaru led discussion about the impacts you can experience after a traumatic event and the things you can do for your wellbeing. Pip Walter provided information about support available. Being together for the day at the lovely Matuka Lodge was an opportunity to reflect, share and learn about our experiences.

The take-aways from Kat's presentation, are relevant to everyone's lives:

We are in charge of our lives and how we live

Manage the stress in your life

Live your values

Make time to nurture your mind and body

Hold tight to the sisterhood

Food, laughter and new experiences were a large part of the day. Matuka Lodge owners, Jo and Pete Johnston and Brad Alty provided scrumptious food. Brad finished the day with a demonstration of how to fillet a salmon for sashimi and ceviche – greatly appreciated by the willing tasters of the finished dishes.

Everyone received a sweet cloth bag (sewn by Marley Mueller from the Village) of gifts, including a turned larch wooden bowl made from trees in the Village removed after the fire. A shakti mat, an acupuncture mat, was also given to each woman.

The LÖL event was able to be held through very generous sponsorship and support from a number of people and organisations.

This feedback sums up the day"

"Everyone left touched by the strong sense of community and shared love of Ōhau.

"...It was such a lovely day and the food was awesome!"

"...I'm sure we all benefited in some way from being part of it..."

"it was very, very, very, very enjoyable – it was great, there were lots of laughs – you have to have laughs...the food was great".

Michelle Paterson, Viv Smith-Campbell and Pip Walter, LÖL organisers

Our gratitude and thanks for funding from:

Lake Ōhau Fire Mayoral Fund – Waitaki District Council; Rural Women New Zealand Ngā Wāhine Taiwhenua o Aotearoa; Mackenzie Lodge no 93, Freemasons; and High Country Medical Trust, Twizel.

LŌL was been supported by these generous people and organisations, Matuka Lodge, the venue – Jo and Pete Johnston; Kat Wolinski – Clinical Psychologist, Timaru; Sue Dykes – Clinical Psychologist, Auckland; Brad Alty – Chef, Twizel; Aoraki Solutions – Dani Mello, Graphic Design, Twizel; Printing.com @ Copyfast – Nathan Kippenberger, Timaru; and Waitaki District Council – Helen Algar and other staff.

Gifts and treats were generously supported and supplied by: NZ Alpine Lavender; Ian McCully – wood turner extraordinaire; Head Kandy; High Country Salmon; CS Cosmetics, organised by Rural Women NZ; and Shakti Mat NZ - www.shaktimat.co.nz



Justices of the Peace

JPs are available by appointment to:

- * Witness documents such as applications for citizenship
- * Certify copies
- * Take declarations, affidavits and affirmations

The service is free of charge

To make your visit quick and easy:

- * Do not sign anything beforehand
- * Do take photo identification
- * Remember to take the original as well as the copy to be certified
- * Check that a New Zealand Justice of the Peace can complete your documentation



Georgie Robertson
Omarama

03 438 9554 027 4861525



Vicky Munro
Otematata

03 438 7855 021 438745



Alona Shaw
Omarama

027 773 4214



Notary Public Services Affidavits and Declarations

David Stone, Lake Ohau

03 438 9653, 027 490 9118, david@stone.org.nz



When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural business crisis be it financial, climatic or personal the Rural Support Trust is ready to assist. Services are free and confidential.

0800 RURAL HELP (0800 787 254)

Kurow Medical Centre

8 Wynyard St, Kurow
P: 03 4360760 F: 03 4360780

E: info@kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz
W: www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz
www.facebook.com/kurowmedicalcentre

**Providing 24/7 health care and support to
the people of the Upper Waitaki and Mackenzie**

**Kurow Medical Centre and its satellite clinic
in Twizel Mackenzie Health Centre and
Outreach Clinic at Omarama Community Hall
are proud to offer our registered and casual patients the following services:**

- * Ultrasound performed by a qualified clinician (great for minor fractures, gall stones, kidney stones, heart and lung problems, foreign bodies, blood clots, detecting early pregnancy and much more!)
- * Minor surgery * Vasectomies
- * Mole checks and removal * Steroid injections * Venesection
- * Aviation, workplace and driving medicals * Botox for Wrinkle reduction
- * Workplace health screening * Counselling
- * Spirometry to diagnose asthma and COPD
- * Hearing and sight tests for adults and children * Ear syringing
- * Liquid nitrogen for warts, verruca's, and skin lesions
- * Cardiovascular risk assessment and diabetic checks (funded for eligible patients) * Travel advice and vaccination
- * Cervical smears (funded for eligible patients)
- * Seasonal flu shots and shingles vaccine (funded for eligible patients)
- * Childhood Immunisation * Before school checks
- * Postnatal and six-week baby health check

And much more!

**GP consult fees: Under 14yrs Free; Adult \$41.00
Care Plus – Free to eligible patients only**

We also offer the following services from external Health Care Providers:

- * Podiatry and Ear Health (Kurow only)
- * Physiotherapy, Acupuncture and Massage (Kurow and Twizel)

Open

Kurow: Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm. Omarama: Thursday 8.30am to 12.30pm.
Twizel: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8.30am to 5pm and Saturday
9am to 12pm

Please note: We provide 24/7 on call after hours cover by our doctors and PRIME nurses for all our registered and casual patients!

**If you require further information or an appointment, please contact us on:
For Kurow 03 436 0760 or for Twizel 03 976 0503 - Dr Tim and Juliet Gardner**

Look us up on our website or Facebook page for more information.



TWIZEL MEDICAL CENTRE

Community Owned, Community Focussed,
Community Operated

Twizel Medical Centre is your local Ministry of Health funded, enrolling practice. Contracted by SCDHB for General Practice, District Nursing and 24/7 Urgent Care, contracted by St John for PRIME (Primary Emergency Response) Services across the greater MacKenzie area.

Hours: Monday to Friday 08:30 - 5:00 pm with extended hours over the summer months
Urgent and emergency care 24/7

Our Team: NP Gemma, GPs Drs Peter and George, Admin/Receptionists Donna, Jacqui, Annie and Sue, Nurses Paula, Ann, Zoe, Holly and District Nurses Libby and Jess are passionate about our community accessing a high quality service.

Twizel Medical Centre has charitable status so any surpluses are reinvested to ensure our community has access to sustainable general and urgent care services.

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Back in the day - Tony Gloag

We're running a series to share a little of the whakapapa of our place.

Various snippets by different contributors will recount stories of 'back in my day'.

This month: from the memoirs of Tony Gloag, Buscot Station and with his permission - from 'Rollercoaster' and 'Omarama, 80 years ago'.

On 28 April 1938 James Walter Gloag married Edith Pearl Dickinson Munro at Hill Vue, now Inverness House, on Buscot.

The couple bought a farm on the Taieri south of Dunedin, but this was during the latter stage of the Depression when farming was far from prosperous, and like many other small farmers at that time, they were unable to continue.

During the early 1940s Jim managed the Ireland property at Awakino (between Lake Waitaki and Kurow and now part of Otematata Station), and after a period in the army worked in the Omarama area. I was born in Oamaru on April 3, 1944.

From 1945 - 1948 my father was in partnership with his brother Davey and Henry Robinson, in a butchery business at Roxburgh. During this time, we lived on a small farm my father rented at Millers Flat.

The Depression or as it was widely known, "The Slump" conditioned my parent's attitude to expenditure, as it did countless others who lived through it. The Depression was followed by the sacrifices of war. Many fought overseas, many underwent military training to fight in New Zealand, if it became necessary. Family life was disrupted, rationing of fuel and other staples made life difficult, and all were required to make a greater effort to keep New Zealand functioning.

As a consequence, my generation were conditioned by the deprivations of a Depression and the horror of war.

In the late 1940s my parents returned to Omarama to assist my maternal grandfather Eddie Munro manage Buscot Station. My grandfather was 76 and unable to undertake the considerable work involved in managing alone an extensive property.

I can still remember the journey from Millers Flat to Buscot in my father's 1936 Chevrolet car with the farm dogs riding behind the back seat.

Two aspects of the journey remain vivid - the coasting down-hill to save petrol (rationing instituted during the war years must have still applied), and deer running across the road in the Lindis Pass.

We lived in the farmhouse at Buscot with my grandparents until they bought a retirement house in Kurow in 1952. (The house was later the home of my grandfather's great-nephew Mike Collins)

In the more expansive years of the late 50s Dad was able to return to his interest in rugby. My father took his rugby very seriously. On at least one occasion he played when a regular team member was injured, and also had the distinction of being one of the few spectators to be ordered off the field by a referee who had 'made the wrong decision'. He was president of the Omarama Rugby Club in 1952, the year it won the North Otago Competition.

He also served as a trustee of the Benmore Rabbit Board which achieved the highest level of rabbit control in the rabbit prone zone of the South Island high country and was an inaugural director of the Omarama Saleyards Company at the time the yards were built.

He was instrumental, with others, in rebuilding the Omarama Memorial Hall after the original building was destroyed by fire in 1957.

However, during the 1960s my father's health deteriorated. He would be out on the farm working his dogs while he was on crutches and even climbed a mountain to help extinguish a fire, a burn-off that got out of control.

He was a very independent person, determined to cope whatever the odds - an attitude no doubt engendered by the loss of his father and sister in the great influenza pandemic of 1918 when he was only thirteen. He died suddenly on November 9, 1977, and is buried in the Omarama cemetery on Buscot. Moving to Buscot and living in the same house as my parents and grandparents as an only child was to live in an adult world. My grandparents were constant companions and I became very close to them, greatly influenced by their calmness, wisdom and compassion.

Only after beginning primary school at Omarama late in my fifth year was regular daily contact made with contemporaries of age. It was like a new chicken entering a henhouse where the dynamics of ascendancy had already been established and firmly promulgated. Holidays at Buscot were always periods of eager anticipation as cousins and aunts and uncles arrived to stay. My Gloag cousins were a revelation to what being a "normal kid" was all about.

It was a simple life, within the stark extremes of scorching hot summers and extremely frigid winters.

Willow wood and coal fuelled the kitchen range which was used for cooking and heating the household's water and on the open fires providing limited warmth in houses built without insulation. Even with these roaring in the background, it was possible for ice to form in the far corners of the living room.

PHOTO: Wedding day at Hill Vue , April 28, 1938 from left to right Harold Faithful, Margaret Cunningham Gloag Faithful (bridegroom's stepfather and mother), James Walter Gloag (bridegroom) Edith Pearl Dickinson Gloag (bride) Elizabeth Munro and Edrich Adophus Munro (bride's parents)



Refrigeration during the winter was by courtesy of nature. We had a running water supply but its use was restricted to the warmer part of the year. In winter, water would only flow through the pipes during the warmest part of the day. Every pipe carrying water into the house had to be drained before the frost returned in the late afternoons, any water remaining in a pipe would freeze - and the pipe would burst. Meaning no water, hot or cold. And a miserable mess to be cleaned up, sometimes dug up. It was many years before water pipes were sufficiently reliable to enable them to be buried in the ground below frost level. During one particularly cold winter the only source of water we had for weeks on end was from the creek, and even then, it only was achieved by using a fencing rammer to break a hole in the ice covering the creek and hand-filling a bucket.

The 50's was also an era when annual activities such as the Omarama Gymkhana were major entertainment events. At a gymkhana every aspiring horse person competed in various riding competitions, while children who were not horse people had an opportunity to catch the greasy pig, or a rooster.

In Omarama, dances, farewells, socials, and school concerts at the original Memorial Hall (then located between the Omarama hotel and the current Merino Country Cafe) were major social events. The Hall was used by all denominations for church services and the ANZAC service was always a very special event which underpinned the sanctity of the memorial itself. During 1956 the Hall became the temporary school while the new Omarama School was built. Unfortunately, in 1957 the old hall was destroyed by fire and a new memorial hall was built further to the east'.

Travel outside our district was often considered a major event for those undertaking it. The road from Omarama to Lake Waitaki was narrow, winding, unsealed and the return journey to Oamaru, the nearest major commercial centre, took two to three hours with limited time available for business before the homeward journey, whereas today - with modern vehicles and improved highways - it is a minor event, sometimes made before or after the day's work.

As for communications, within one generation we have left the era of the telephone bureau (Buscot was a telephone bureau. We would ring the exchange or post office and ask to be 'connected' to another phone number) and now it's an age of individual telephones and a world wide web with computers and cell phones providing instant connections to seemingly everyone everywhere. However, the infrastructure to operate modern communications is still deficient in many of our rural areas.

In the 40's and 50's when farming was more labour intensive, neighbours were closer, both in terms of helping each other and socially. It was common for neighbouring families to visit one another, and as a child there were neighbours I always looked forward to visiting as their hospitality (wonderful home baking!) was superb.

Until the Rabbit Boards were established in the early 1950s to control the pest, the land was almost desert-like in its depleted vegetative state. Life and farming were reduced to subsistence levels. It is best portrayed in John Steinbeck's novel "The Grapes of Wrath", as the struggle was both universal and international. Not only did the people suffer, but also the land. Retrenchment caused by paucity of finance to employ manpower required a reduction in land based activities including haymaking for winter feed, the application of fertiliser, and the maintenance of water supply for limited irrigation, and once again - the rabbit was ruling the land.

Lambs born in the Spring were scarcely sufficient to replace the sheep who had perished during the winter, and on some properties men worked for little more than their rations.

Everything was saved, mended or when possible 'made from scratch' as the saying goes. I remember my grandmother making bars of soap and gathering the tufts of sheep wool caught in fence barbs; they were saved, spun into yarn and knitted into sturdy garments, draught bolsters, and 'hooked' into washed sacks to make floor rugs.

Virtually all food for human sustenance was grown on our farm.

Milk was produced by the family cow, brought in daily to the byre by an old border collie dog. (The collie was named Dick and sometimes he would dream that it was time to bring in the cow, suddenly wake from a deep sleep, leap to his feet and run off to do his daily chore!)

I have clear memories of the Alpha Laval separator humming as it separated the cream from the milk, the butter churn used to make the butter, and the patterned butter pats used to shape the butter into blocks.

Eggs were produced by our hens and ducks, who later, in many instances, made the ultimate sacrifice when the new season's fluffy ducklings and chickens matured.

Vegetables were from the garden, and fruit from the trees (in the years they escaped the ravages of unseasonal frosts), while the pig unwittingly converted food scraps into bacon. Eggs, vegetables and fruit were all preserved.

Mutton, and rabbit were important features of our staple diet.

New fences were constructed from wire and standards salvaged from old fences, with willow posts of limited durability being used. If the willow posts sprouted and grew, then durability was greatly extended.

Lighting was provided by kerosene lamps and entertainment was provided by battery powered radio, or on infrequent occasions by the family piano.

Newspapers, mail and bread were delivered twice weekly by mail bus from Kurow.

For some households, the mailman was the only regular contact with the outside world and he was held in high esteem.

The relative prosperity generated by the 50's wool boom resulting from demand for woollen uniforms necessary for soldiers fighting the war in Korea in 1950 -52 significantly improved life in the district.

Rising prosperity resulted in investment in the land in the form of rabbit control, fertiliser and seed, fencing and the re-establishment of hay paddocks, and the purchase of machinery.

It was the age when the horse was progressively replaced by machine.

Progress in the district was accompanied by progress on the farms. On Buscot my father extended the old woolshed (using his carpentry skills) to cope with the increased productivity.

A sheep dip was built and this had a positive spin off for my cousin Buck and me as we were given the task of shifting the excavated spoil at one penny per wheel-barrow - provided the wheelbarrow was full! There was no time for a child to be idle on a farm.

As the fifties moved into the sixties there were years of rapid progress. The rabbit scourge was brought under control by rabbit boards. Wool production soared, and Buscot produced its first export lambs. Aircraft were used for the first time to spread seed and fertiliser; the land benefited and ecological equilibrium was greatly enhanced.

The hydro development (for electricity generation) in the Upper Waitaki Valley had begun, eventually resulting in sealed highways, electricity reticulation, improved communications and new schools and towns.

The Directory

For advertising rates
and guidelines

phone
021 294 8002
or email
omaramagazette@gmail.com



Big Sky
Bed & Breakfast

Kay & Hank Verheul
10 Ahuriri Drive, Omarama, New Zealand

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Email kay@bigskybnb.co.nz
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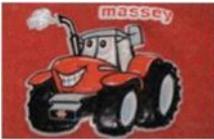
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Merry Christmas everyone, & we look forward to seeing you soon!

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a window on the Haka

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10 WEEKS 10 PICTURES

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From December 1st until February 6th 2022
Visible from Bledisloe Street



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The weather that was @ 44°29'30.1"S 169°58'20.3"E

November 2021

Highest temperature: November 29, 28.3 C

Lowest temperature: November 4, 0.1C

Most rainfall: November 27, 25.4 mm

Total rainfall for November: 88.4 mm

The Last Page is Classifieds

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