Historical Overview

of the

Selwyn District
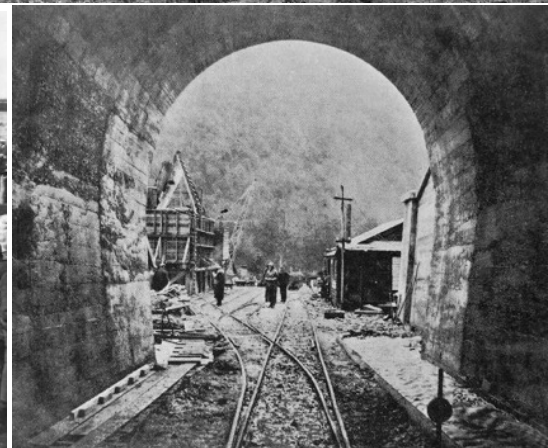
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Former tunneller's cottage, Arthur's Pass.

Introduction

Geography and Geology

The Selwyn District is unusual among the 66 local body areas (districts and cities) into which the mainland of New Zealand is divided for the range of its landscapes and its varied geography. The district extends from the coast across the Canterbury Plains (the largest area of level ground in the country), over downlands between the western edge of the plains and the first of the higher foothill ranges of the Southern Alps, through great inter-montane basins, including the Castle Hill and Lake Coleridge basins, to reach back to the crest of the main divide of the Southern Alps. Only its immediate neighbour to the south, the Ashburton District, also stretches from the coast, across the plains and through foothill ranges to the main divide.

Although Selwyn District has varied landscapes, it is geologically less varied than many other districts. The plains are uniformly underlain by outwash gravels sourced from the ranges of the Southern Alps and the foothills ranges to the east of the main divide. The alps and the higher outlying ranges are made up almost entirely, even monotonously, of greywacke and related older sedimentary rocks. Only the downlands and lower ranges sandwiched between the higher foothills and the plains have a more complex and varied geology. The minerals, especially coal, found in the hill country between the plains and the higher ranges give Selwyn a history of mining which, in Canterbury, it shares only with the Ashburton District. Selwyn stands alone in Canterbury for having a history, however minor, of gold mining, based on the reefs at the head of the Wilberforce River, which were also the source of gold recovered in tiny quantities from the beach sands between the mouth of the Rakaia River and Taumutu.

In the mountains and pastoral high country of the Selwyn District are geomorphological features and formations associated with past eras of glaciation which have given the district an importance in the scientific understanding of both past climates and the extent and effects of so-called 'ice ages' on the South Island's topography and landscapes. One of the district's two main lakes, Lake Coleridge, occupies a depression scooped out by an ancient glacier. The pocket of younger limestone in the Castle Hill basin, surrounded by older, partially altered sedimentary rocks, is also of geological interest and responsible for distinctive landscapes in that basin.

Two great rivers which originate in the snowfields and glaciers of the main divide – the Waimakariri and the Rakaia – form the northern and southern boundaries of the Selwyn District. But the district takes its name from a smaller, rain-fed river, the Selwyn, which rises in the hill country between the plains and the mountains. The Selwyn River flows into the district's other main lake – Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere – which at different times in the past was a lagoon into which both the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers once flowed. This extensive but shallow lake, though it has suffered severe degradation since European settlement of the plains began, is one of the country's most important water-bird habitats and also one of its most important eel fisheries.

Selwyn District. Source: SDC.

History

The district's diverse geography has given it an equally varied history, one into which more different strands are woven than the history of any other South Island district, again with the possible exception of Ashburton. This is evident in the main economic activity of the district – farming. The Ellesmere district and inland plains are, par excellence, regions of the smaller mixed farms that gave Canterbury farming its distinctive character for more than a century and a half, until the large dairy conversions of recent times. It is also evident in the Selwyn District high country where there are some of the largest and best-known of the South Island's extensive pastoral sheep runs. Across the district are a range of farm houses and farm buildings which illustrate the history of farming in New Zealand more completely than the similar farm buildings of any other district, except, again, Ashburton.

The homesteads and farm houses found in the Selwyn District range from historic early homesteads and cottages (such as The Terrace homestead and Coton's Cottage), to substantial later homesteads (such as Racecourse Hill and Gunyah) and a myriad of smaller houses on 'average-sized' farms of a great range of ages and styles. The farm buildings include woolsheds, stables, implement sheds, barns, swaggers' huts and cowsheds, among others. Evanescent and often hard to find, but important in the history of farming practices, are surviving older forms of fencing – 'ditch and bank' hedges and early wire fences. Some of the most romantic and evocative of the surviving relics of past farming practices are found in the high country in the form of remote boundary and musterers' huts.

Selwyn also illustrates the important role of stock water and irrigation schemes in the progress of New Zealand farming. Water and irrigation systems of historic interest are found in some other districts (in Central Otago for example) but few are as notable as the races that brought water from several rivers onto the farms of the relatively dry inland plains of Selwyn in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The races were built initially to provide stock water for farms which did not have river frontages. In 1903 more than 130,000 hectares of the then Selwyn County were watered by 1,770 kilometres of races maintained by the county council. The council met the cost of maintaining the races by levying annual water charges on farmers in the county's six water-race districts. Irrigation came to the Selwyn District in the 20th century in the form of individual farm schemes based on wells which tapped the artesian water beneath the plains and, later, larger schemes which tapped the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers.

The parts of the Selwyn District described in this Overview as the Ellesmere district, the road and railway corridor and the inland plains are also, par excellence, regions of small towns. Until the recent rapid growth of Rolleston, the various settlements in those parts of the district lying mainly on the inland plains have been primarily farm service centres. These towns and villages played both economic and social roles and the range of buildings in them reflects this. The buildings that underpinned the settlements' economic roles include shops and other commercial premises. Among the less obvious structures that demonstrate the roles settlements played as farm service centres are local sale yards. The settlements also acquired buildings which reflected their function as centres of social and community life for the surrounding farms. Among these buildings are schools, churches, halls, libraries and pubs in which locals gathered periodically for a wide range of social and community activities. The people of these service towns and villages lived in a great variety of residences.

Although Selwyn's settlements have common histories as farm service and social centres, their individual histories are often very different. Some, like Lincoln, Leeston and Darfield (to cite but three of many possible examples), flourished economically and slowly expanded; others faltered economically and gradually faded away. Some, like Annat, Charing Cross and Glenroy (again to cite but three examples) disappeared almost entirely, leaving at most an isolated church or hall. Greater ease of travel which allowed farming families to range further to shop or attend social occasions was the main factor condemning some smaller settlements to near-extinction.

The Selwyn District also has a significant place in the history of transportation in New Zealand. Two routes linking Canterbury with the West Coast – the road over Arthur's Pass and the railway line up the Waimakariri gorge and through the Otira tunnel – were epics of construction for their time and important landmarks in the creation of New Zealand's transport infrastructure. Selwyn District also shares with many other predominantly rural districts throughout the country a history of the gradual development of roads from primitive tracks and the building of branch railway lines. These too were important chapters in the broader history of transportation in New Zealand. Older bridges and culverts and early road formations, abandoned when roads were re-aligned, are the most conspicuous evidence of the history of building transportation links in the district. Relics of closed branch lines and of the working of the line to the West Coast in the age of steam are reminders of another important aspect of Selwyn's, and New Zealand's, transport history.

That half of the country's third national park, Arthur's Pass, created in 1929, lies within the Selwyn District also gives the district importance in the history of conservation in New Zealand. Arthur's Pass National Park is more readily accessible from a major city, by both rail and road, than any other national park in New Zealand. The park was the scene of early mountaineering exploits, of the development of tramping as a recreational pursuit and also of some of the earliest skiing in New Zealand. The National Park in particular gives the Selwyn District importance in the history of mountain recreation in

New Zealand. This importance is reinforced by the history of ice-skating and skiing in the Selwyn District high country. The Craigieburn Range looms large in the histories of these two sports.

Finally, the Selwyn District was the scene of one of the most important early chapters in the history of power generation in New Zealand. At Lake Coleridge the government built New Zealand's first major state hydro-electric power station (1911-14). Though the power station has been extended and other features of the scheme have changed over the years, Lake Coleridge remains a key place for telling the history of energy in New Zealand.

Local Government

Today's Selwyn District, with its great geographical and historical variety, only came into existence in 1989. Its existence was, however, anticipated by the original Selwyn County Council which, from 1876 until 1911, had jurisdiction over an area which included roughly all the area of the Selwyn District today, from Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere and the coast to the main divide, between the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers. The original Selwyn County also extended into what later became parts of metropolitan Christchurch. Between 1911 and 1989 the area of today's Selwyn District was divided among several smaller counties – the second Selwyn County (1911-1963), which in 1963 merged with Malvern County (1911-1989), Tawera County (1910-1967), which merged with Malvern in 1967, and Ellesmere County (1911-1989) and Springs County (1911-1963), which merged with Ellesmere in 1963.

When the Selwyn District was formed in 1989 part of Paparua County, which lay to the west of Christchurch, was also included in the new district. The area of Paparua County which was included in the Selwyn District was the area which, in the early years of the Paparua and Malvern Counties, was transferred from Malvern to Paparua so that all the lower Waimakariri water race with its intake at Halkett was in one local body area.

Although it was not until 1989 that the original Selwyn County was, in a sense, reconstituted, partial steps towards this reintegration were taken much earlier. In the early 1920s two electric power boards – Springs-Ellesmere and Malvern – had jurisdiction over most of what eventually became the modern Selwyn District. Then in 1947 the Malvern, Selwyn, Tawera, Paparua and Springs County Councils and the Selwyn Plantation Board formed a Selwyn Group Rural Fire Committee to ensure there was co-operation and mutual assistance in preventing and suppressing rural fires in an area that embraced most of the Selwyn District into which all those independent local authorities were eventually folded.

Although today's Selwyn District was formed out of several older local body areas that had independent histories, there are common threads – farming, transportation, town and village life – between them. Only the pastoral high country and mountains, where neither small farms nor villages became established, followed rather different historical paths from the rest of the district.

Today there are also differences between what can be regarded as the farming 'hinterland' of Selwyn, where farms and relatively small farm service centres still predominate, and those parts of the district (in an arc from Tai Tapu through Lincoln and Prebbleton to Rolleston and West Melton) which have now to be regarded as falling within the ambit of Christchurch City. But this a very recent development and for most of the years since European settlement of Canterbury the towns in that arc were more like the settlements spread across the rest of the district than the commuter suburbs of Christchurch they are apparently becoming.

Selwyn District Council headquarters, Norman Kirk Drive, Rolleston. Source: SDC.

The Overview

For the purposes of this Overview, the Selwyn District has been divided into broad geographical areas. These areas reflect the different histories and present-day realities of the areas. Despite the differences the broad historical themes which emerge from the narrative of particular areas are common to the whole district, with the sole exception that only the Malvern Hills have a significant history of mining. An account of the historical development of particular places was considered the only way by which an accurate, comprehensive and reliable list of themes in the history of the district as a whole could be arrived at.

Only in the case of those parts of the Ellesmere district closest to Christchurch and of the road and rail corridor which separates the Ellesmere district from the inland plains does the geographical division adopted for the Overview no longer reflect the recent histories and likely futures of those parts of the district now influenced significantly by their proximity to Christchurch.

In the early 21st century Selwyn District was the fastest-growing district in the country. It fell to second place, behind Queenstown-Lakes, in 2016, but in the previous ten years Selwyn had grown by 49% while Queenstown-Lakes grew by only 37%. The concentration of growth in those parts of the district adjacent to Christchurch masks the fact that most of the district had, through those years, continued much as it had for most of its history. There were changes in farming, particularly associated with more widespread use of irrigation and the expansion of dairying, and some settlements expanded while others continued to contract, but there was no decisive break in the patterns of development that have been typical of the entire district for more than a century and a half.

A scene from rural Selwyn – sheep sale at the Coalgate sale yards. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Chapter 1

The Ellesmere District

Introduction

The Ellesmere district takes its name from the lake which forms the district's south-eastern boundary. Known to Maori as Te Waihora, the lake was renamed after an aristocratic supporter of the Canterbury Association. The lake was, in times past, the estuary of both the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers. Both rivers eventually created new mouths for themselves to the south and north respectively. A spit eventually fully enclosed the estuary, turning it into a lake that sat a few metres above sea level. Left feeding into the lake were the Selwyn River and creeks and streams which drained its swampy margins.

To the north, the Ellesmere district starts at the southern boundary of Christchurch City. The main southern road and railway line separate the district from the inland plains which stretch west to the foothills of the Southern Alps. The road and railway line follow slightly higher and drier ground which made for easier travelling than the swampy ground around Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. In its natural state much of the Ellesmere district was water-logged, especially before regular opening of the lake to the sea at Taumutu kept its level lower than it was for most of the time prior to European settlement. The district's southern boundary is the Rakaia River, from the main road and rail bridges to the river's mouth at the Rakaia Huts.

'Lake Ellesmere, a view of the lagoon looking north'. *Canterbury Times* 6 January 1901. Source: Selwyn Kete.

The district is divided by the lower reaches of the Selwyn River which flows into the lake at the Selwyn Huts. Other smaller waterways – Harts Creek, the Irwell River and the Liffey I and Liffey II Rivers – also drain much of the district into the lake. (The Liffey I and Liffey II Rivers are commonly known as the 'LI' and 'LII'.) The topography of the district when Europeans arrived in Canterbury was varied. To the west were dry, treeless and featureless plains covered largely in tussock. Closer to the lake (then higher than it has been for most of the district's history since) were swamps and wetlands; shingle ridges and tongues of drier land extended into the swamps. Old sandhills, for example in the Greenpark district, formed pockets of drier ground.[1]

Like the rest of today's Selwyn District (and indeed all of Canterbury beyond the immediate vicinity of Christchurch) the Ellesmere district was first taken up, on European settlement, in large leasehold runs. The land, once drained, was more fertile and better suited to small farming than land elsewhere in the province. The district was also close to markets in Christchurch. For these reasons freehold farms, some large, but most medium-sized or small, became the norm across

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[1] For a description of the original topography and vegetation of the Ellesmere district see Singleton, p. 59.

Ellesmere more quickly than in some other parts of Canterbury. The townships which became established across the district were primarily farm service centres; though in the 19th century there was a surprising amount of small-scale industry scattered across Ellesmere, particularly industries processing farm products, most commonly local flour mills. A few settlements never became larger than villages or even hamlets, with no more than a church or two, a school and perhaps one or two places of business. Others, notably Southbridge, Leeston and Lincoln were, by the end of the 19th century, thriving small towns.

European exploration

For several centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans Maori regularly traversed the Ellesmere district. There were settlements at different places on the margins of Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere, which was one of Canterbury's most important mahinga kai (places at which food was gathered).

To avoid the swamps around Lake Ellesmere early European travellers, like Maori before them, walked down the dry and open Kaitorete Spit to get from Banks Peninsula (which became a centre of European settlement from the late 1830s) to points further south and to the area where Christchurch was established in 1850. These journeys took the travellers through Taumutu. Around 1838 William Gilbert and his Maori wife Heni Te Marino walked along the short stretch of Ellesmere's coast line, from the Rakaia mouth to Taumutu. Gilbert was probably the first European to traverse any part of the Ellesmere district. In 1840 the McKinnon party, which established and then abandoned a farm at Riccarton three years before the Deans brothers, probably walked from Oashore down the spit to Taumutu then on the drier ground west of Lake Ellesmere to reach Riccarton. If they indeed took this route they were the first known Europeans to traverse the inland parts of the Ellesmere district. In 1843 Frederick Tuckett viewed the lake and swamps of the Ellesmere district from the northern end of the Ninety Mile Beach before walking on to Riccarton. In the following year Bishop Selwyn walked down the spit from Oashore through Taumutu and on to the Rakaia River. He described the plains inland from the lake stretching back to the mountains which are today all within the Selwyn District. A short time later Edward Shortland, who met with Selwyn on the South Canterbury coast, repeated Selwyn's journey in reverse from the Rakaia mouth to Taumutu and up the spit. Later missionary visitors to Taumutu included Charles Creed in 1845 and James Watkin in 1851. Walter Mantell visited Taumutu in September 1848 when he was examining lands to be set aside for Ngai Tahu following the Kemp Purchase of much of Canterbury from the iwi.

In 1848 the Canterbury Association's 'advance party' led by Captain Joseph Thomas arrived in Canterbury. In 1849 members of his party walked down the spit and also through the Ellesmere district west of the lake to reach Taumutu. A surveyor who came with Thomas, Cyrus Davie, surveyed Lake Ellesmere in the late 1840s.[2]

Opening the lake

Periodically, at first naturally, then later by Maori as part of their management of the lake as a fishery, the shingle bank at the southern end of the Kaitorete Spit was breached, allowing the accumulated water in the lake to drain to the sea.[3]

In the early years of European settlement, Maori continued to open the lake irregularly, every three or four years, until 1867. Subsequently individual European settlers opened the lake when it reached high levels, until local bodies took over the responsibility.

An 1867 report by Edward Jollie and Hardy Johnstone, on the impact of high lake levels on the flood-prone land around the lake, suggested digging a channel from Taumutu behind the beach to the Rakaia River. In 1868 William Moorhouse and William White came up with an alternative scheme to drain the lake into Lake Forsyth and so by a tunnel to the sea. Neither of these schemes went ahead.

The recurring problem for schemes to drain the lake by way of a channel at Taumutu, either permanently or temporarily, was that the northern drift of currents up the coast carried huge amounts of shingle washed down the Rakaia River. This shingle quickly closed off outlets cut through the shingle bank at Taumutu. In 1875 W. B. Bray considered six options to keep the lake level permanently lower. His preferred option was a permanent outlet, protected by moles extending out to sea, at Taumutu. Again nothing was done.

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[2] For early European visitors to the Ellesmere district see Graham and Chapple, pp. 11-16; Patterson, pp. 21-23.
[3] Patterson, p. 13.

In the 1870s some of the road boards around the lake, responding to pressure from farmers, opened the lake periodically, over the objections of Maori, who favoured a higher level to protect their fishery, and of those operating vessels on the lake (see below) who also favoured a higher level. In 1877 the new Selwyn County Council took over control of opening the lake and let contracts for the work to be done by hand or using horse-drawn scoops. This did not always spare lake-side settlers from floods. The lake was especially high in 1881-82 and in 1895 it was high enough – about three metres above normal – for 'Rabbit Island' at Motukarara to become a true island again. The railway line to Little River, which skirted the north-eastern edge of the lake, was closed by flood waters for a week.

'Opening of the outlet at Lake Ellesmere'. *Weekly Press* 18 May 1904. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Temporary openings were formed periodically until 1904 when a culvert designed by Arthur Dobson was built. The culvert failed within seven months. In 1908-9 a new culvert was constructed by a local settler, Henry Pannett. The culvert was named after him. It proved partly effective until it was destroyed by a storm in 1925. From 1906 until 1947 the Lake Ellesmere Drainage Board controlled the opening of the lake.

In the 1930s periodic temporary opening of the lake became easier with the introduction of mechanised drag-lines and scoops. A further scheme for a permanent outlet devised in 1937 was abandoned when World War II broke out. After the war, in 1947, the Lake Ellesmere Drainage Board was abolished and the North Canterbury Catchment Board took over responsibility for opening the lake. Since 1989 the lake has been opened by the Canterbury Regional Council (ECan).

The regular opening of the lake since 1867 has reduced its area by about one third (from 30,000 hectares to 20,000 hectares) and its greatest depth by about two metres.[4]

Shipping on the lake

For close to three decades, from the early 1860s until the late 1880s, ships plied Lake Ellesmere, carrying timber milled at Little River across the lake to Timberyard Point at the mouth of Harts Creek. The timber was used for building in Leeston and Southbridge, to construct the bridge over the Rakaia, which was completed in 1873, and as sleepers for both the main south and Southbridge railway lines. Timber and other goods shipped across the lake were also sent back into Christchurch from Leeston and Dunsandel because, until the lake level was kept lower, the route from Little River through Kaituna and Motukarara to Tai Tapu was swampy and frequently flooded.

Reserves for wharves and a depot for timber were created at the mouth of Harts Creek, where the Lakeside Domain is now, in 1862. A jetty was built and tramway laid to carry the timber unloaded from the paddlewheel steamers, whaleboats and punts that had brought it across the lake into the timber yard. The same vessels also carried stock and farm produce. One large landowner, Joseph Price, had properties on both sides of the lake and used the vessels plying the lake to connect his landholdings. The opening of the railway to Little River in 1886 ended the shipping of timber and other goods across Te Waihora.[5]

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[4] For the history of opening the lake see Graham and Chapple, pp. 71-75; Patterson, pp. 272-77; Singleton, pp 364, 369-77.
[5] For the history of shipping on the lake see Graham and Chapple, pp. 75-76; Patterson, pp. 30-37; Singleton, pp. 378-80.

Fishing in the lake

Maori took eel, flounder and other fish from Te Waihora for centuries before the arrival of European settlers. In the 1860s an 'international' settlement of fishermen, who 'squatted' on land adjacent to a Maori reserve, became established at Fisherman's Point. Italians, Russians, Germans and French were among the fishing community. Members of some local farming families also engaged in commercial fishing on the lake. Flounder and 'herring' (mullet) were sent into Christchurch. Fishermen also operated from the mouth of the Irwell River and from Timberyard Point, but the largest community was at Fisherman's Point. Here there was sometimes tension between the fishermen and Maori who resented the occupation of their land and the commercial exploitation of their traditional fishery. In 1867 the Provincial Government established a reserve for the informal settlement at Fisherman's Point. This reserve was excluded from the Maori commonage created in 1883. In 1868 Maori interrupted the supply of fish to Christchurch to protest against the infringement of their traditional rights. In 1870 a licensing system was introduced in part to satisfy Maori grievances about European commercial fishing.

This early commercial fishing on Lake Ellesmere was in its heyday in the 1870s and 1880s. At the height of the industry about 250 men, who manned more than 20 boats, were living at Fisherman's Point. Most of the fishermen had left by the end of the 19th century and in 1903 there were just seven men fishing the lake.

Most commercial fishing on Lake Ellesmere was for local markets. The first attempt to export eels caught in Lake Ellesmere in the early 20th century ended with the disappearance of the promoter of the scheme with the capital of local investors. In the early 1940s a war-time shortage of fish oil and then, later in the decade, food shortages in Europe stimulated a revival of the export trade.

A catch of eels on Lake Ellesmere, 1947. Source: Waihora Ellesmere Trust.

Immediately after the war, Nelson Fisheries Ltd established a plant to process fish (mainly flounder) at Timberyard Point. Processing of fish in the plant ceased in the mid-1960s. The subsequent use of the factory to process poultry was short-lived.

It was not until the late 1960s that the export of chilled live eels to Europe and Japan saw the fishery boom. Fisherman's and Timberyard Points became busy again, as they had been a century before. The boom lasted barely a decade, however, and had ended by 1978.

Commercial fishing for eel and flounder continued on the lake on a much-reduced scale. The factory at Timberyard Point came back into use, to process flounders, herring and salmon brought in from salmon farms elsewhere in Canterbury. By 2006 only two boats operating on Lake Ellesmere were supplying the factory at Timberyard Point. A single commercial fisherman was living at Fisherman's Point.

In the 1990s local fishermen and Ngai Tahu joined in a Waihora Eel Management Committee and a management plan for the lake, which also engaged the Department of Conservation, was adopted. The status of the reserve at Fisherman's Point was resolved following the 1998 settlement between Ngai Tahu and the Crown.[6]

Recreation on the lake

The first regattas on Lake Ellesmere were held in the 1870s, based at the 1867 landing reserve at Fisherman's Point. In 1915 the Ellesmere Aquatic Club was formed and between the world wars it staged regular regattas at Fisherman's Point. Swimming and boating events on the lake and races and competitions on land drew large crowds. Motorboats first raced in 1915 and water-skiing soon became popular. In 1926 a pavilion was built at Fisherman's Point. The regattas ended when World War II broke out and the club was formally disbanded in 1945. Subsequently a new Ellesmere Aquatic and Sports Club was formed and began holding regattas at the Lakeside Domain at Timberyard Point. (The former landing reserve there had been vested in the Ellesmere County Council as a recreation reserve in the 1930s.) The original building at Fisherman's Point had been removed to Coopers Lagoon for use by the Defence Department during the war. After the war it was moved again, to Timberyard Point. The regattas continued into the 1980s.[7]

In the 19th century, Lake Ellesmere became renowned for its shooting and fishing. Both activities developed after the introduction of exotic birds and fish. Duck shooting was a regular activity by the 1860s. The lake also became a habitat of introduced black swan (from the early 1870s) and Canada geese (from 1905).

Trout were first released in 1868-69 in the lower Selwyn, Liffey II and Irwell Rivers and Harts Creek. News of excellent catches reached Christchurch in the 1880s. Trout numbers were so high in the lower Selwyn that for a time fish were being sent to market in the city. In 1903 the lake was described as 'swarming with ducks and fish' and Southbridge was a favourite resort with anglers and sportsmen.[8]

'Duck shooting from a maimai on Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury', May 1949.
Source: PAColl-8983-01, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The Selwyn Huts

The upper and lower Selwyn Huts (they are separated by just two or three kilometres) both developed as clusters of baches built initially by recreational fishermen where the Selwyn River flows into Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

Small huts were built on undeveloped reserve land near the mouth of the Selwyn in the late 1880s. In 1890, when there were at least eight huts already built, a request was made for a formal lease of 20 acres of the reserve as a camping ground for anglers. In 1895 a reserve was formally gazetted as the Lake Ellesmere Recreation Ground, with five acres set aside for a fishing settlement and 15 as a domain. The first formal leases were granted in 1896. The following year a reserve board was set up.

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[6] For the history of commercial fishing on the lake see Singleton, pp. 366, 368, 381, 384-92; Graham and Chapple, pp. 82-83; Patterson, pp. 281-83.

[7] For the history of recreation on the lake see Patterson, pp. 314-16; Singleton, pp. 366-67, 385-86; Graham and Chapple, pp. 121-22.

[8] For the history fishing and shooting on Lake Ellesmere and its tributary streams see Graham and Chapple, pp. 76-80; Patterson, pp. 280-81; Singleton, pp. 381, 393-95,404-05; *Cyclopedia*, p. 708.
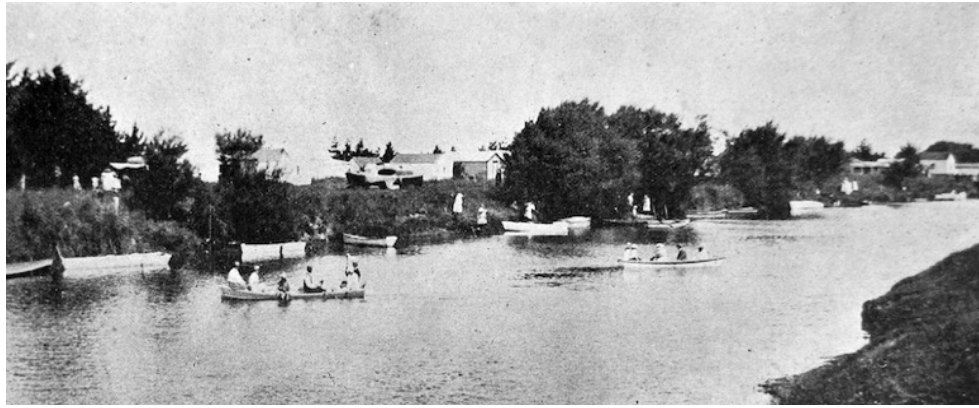
'Picnic at Selwyn Huts'. *Weekly Press* 24 December 1918. Source: Selwyn Kete.

In 1926 the reserve was renamed the Springston South Domain. Although for a period it was a requirement of holding a lease that the lessee also held a fishing license, the settlement soon became a popular holiday destination independent of fishing. The river was suitable for swimming and boating and in October 1911 tennis courts were opened. A sewage system and a piped water supply from a well were built in 1927. In the same year a Hut Owners' Association was formed. High stop banks were built between 1947 and 1951 to protect the huts from floods in the Selwyn River.

The first New Year's Day sports were held on the domain in 1913. They continued for many years and were well attended. Running, swimming and raft races were staged. But as water quality in the river deteriorated in the late 20th century, the trout fishery declined, the New Year's Day sports attracted fewer people, and river-based activities were generally curtailed. By 2017 the deterioration of the water quality in the Selwyn was so bad that the New Year's Day sports were cancelled. By then the restrictions on people living full-time at the huts had been relaxed and there were a number of permanent residents.

The first of the lower Selwyn Huts were built in the 1920s, by recreational fishermen, on public land which is now administered by the Department of Conservation. The upper and lower huts were always considered 'places apart' – with the upper huts regarded as 'Fendalton' and the lower huts as 'Sydenham' (the names being those of upper and working-class suburbs of Christchurch).

There were also clusters of fishing huts at Greenpark and at the mouth of the Irwell River. The Irwell huts, where fishermen began camping and building huts in the late 19th century, no longer exist but there are still huts at Greenpark.[9]

The Selwyn River

The lower Selwyn River, which flows across the Ellesmere district from the state highway bridge to the lake, was once a local boundary. In 1866 the Ellesmere and Springs road boards co-operated to build a bridge over the river on what was then known as the Ellesmere Lincoln Road. A bridge at that point on the river has been a key transport link for the district ever since. After floods caused problems with the bridge a second bridge was built in 1872, at a new site just upstream from the old bridge; considered unsafe by 1890 and damaged by fire in 1897, it was replaced the following year by a third bridge. The third bridge was rebuilt in 1914 and lasted for a further 50 years. A fourth bridge, at a location nearer the site of the first bridge, replaced the third bridge in 1963.

Between this bridge and the lake there was a further crossing at Coes Ford. In 1961 a concrete pad was laid to make fording the river safer and easier. The pad was replaced by a box culvert in 1998. In the 1920s, with private car ownership on the increase and safe swimming for children, Coes Ford became a popular picnic spot among locals and Christchurch people. In 1933 a domain board was formed to administer a large reserve of around 16 hectares. The ford remained popular for picnicking and camping until the same deterioration of the river that affected the Selwyn Huts diminished the appeal of the domain. In the 21st century international visitors have been permitted to 'freedom camp' at both Coes Ford and Chamberlains Ford, which is near the highway bridge.

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[9] For the histories of the fishing hut settlements on Lake Ellesmere see Singleton, pp. 281-94; 381; Graham and Chapple, pp. 80-82; *Press*, 9 January 2017, p. A1;

Though it rises in the foothills rather than the mountains and is not affected by heavy nor'-west rain in the Southern Alps, the Selwyn River floods dramatically when rain comes from certain directions. The first flood protection work on the lower Selwyn was undertaken in the 19th century. A big flood in 1945 prompted discussion of a comprehensive scheme to protect Ellesmere farmland from floods coming down the Selwyn, but the scheme was still under debate 20 years later. In the meantime, the North Canterbury Catchment Board did undertake some work, including the stopbank built between 1947 and 1951 to protect the Selwyn Huts.[10]

From runs to freehold farms

The Ellesmere district was first taken up by European settlers as leasehold runs in the 1850s. Under the terms of the leases, the freehold of any part of the run could be purchased, in effect, by anyone at any time, though improvements gave the leaseholder pre-emptive rights (the right to purchase parts of the property ahead of any other purchaser). The small farmers who bought up good agricultural land out of the runs were known as 'cockatoos'. The run holders could restrict the opportunities of the cockatoos to buy freehold out of the runs by such practices as grid-ironing and spotting (leaving uneconomic strips or pockets of land between areas the runholder himself freeholded or buying up all access to natural waterways). But the use of these practices by a few runholders was not effective in stemming the tide of small farmers that flooded Ellesmere in the 1860s and 1870s.[11]

The most notable of the runs close to Christchurch was The Springs, taken up by Edward Fitzgerald in stages after 1852. By 1858 the run extended from the mouth of the Selwyn to Ladbrooks and across to the main south road. The Springs homestead was just south of where the township of Lincoln developed after Fitzgerald subdivided the area (see below). The original homestead, by then a farm house rather than station homestead, burnt down and was replaced in 1877. Fitzgerald ran beef and dairy cattle, rather than sheep, on the run because the land was wetter than land elsewhere in the district. The station had a short history. By the mid 1860s most of its 11,000 hectares had been freeholded by small farmers. The area of The Springs station was described in the early 20th century as 'a cultivated country, dotted with beautiful clumps of trees, browsed by large herds of fine cattle, and rich in cereal and root crops'.[12]

In the area between The Springs station and the Selwyn River were runs held by Messrs Harman, Davies and Washbourne. These were steadily broken up into smaller freehold farms in the 1860s and early 1870s. When the Washbournes' run was freeholded, the family retained the homestead and freeholded around 360 hectares, giving the name 'The Bungalow' to the property.

South of the Selwyn River down to the Rakaia, between the lake and the south road, were a number of large runs including Heslerton, Oakleigh and Homebrook. The leaseholders of Heslerton themselves freeholded some 800 hectares of the original 8,000-hectare run while the rest fell into the hands of small farmers. When the remnant of Heslerton was subdivided in the early 20th century one of the new properties which came into existence, Northbank, was one of the few properties still described as a station rather than just a farm. Homebrook and Oakleigh also survived as larger freehold properties until further subdivision in the early 20th century. Oakleigh remained a property of nearly 900 hectares until after World War II. The smaller run Waterford, closer to the coast, was quickly freeholded, but the runholder retained a block which became known as Little Rakaia, a name which still survives as that of a locality between Southbridge and the Rakaia River. Other smaller runs, in the area where Leeston and Southbridge became established as rival towns, included Price's and Birdling Brook. These too had short lives as leasehold runs, as they were broken up into smaller farms in the 1860s and 1870s.[13]

A number of notable larger freehold properties were interspersed among the smaller farms which became the norm in the Ellesmere district. In 1861 two notable figures in Canterbury's early history, Edward Lee and Edward Jollie, jointly bought more than 800 hectares out of the Waterford and Homebrook runs. They later divided the land they owned in partnership into two notable properties – Lee's Brooklands (around 400 hectares) and Jollie's Beachcroft (around 480 hectares). Also near Southbridge, the Bealey brothers had a property Rhuddlan, of around 800 hectares.

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[10] For the history of bridges and fords on the lower Selwyn River see Graham and Chapple, pp. 87, 113-16, 183-89; Singleton, pp. 99-108, 194-95.

[11] Popple, pp. 15-16.

[12] Singleton, pp. 40-41; *Cyclopedia*, p. 677.

[13] For the histories of runs and farms in the Ellesmere district see Graham and Chapple pp. 21-22; Singleton, pp. 30-35, 38.

In the Irwell-Brookside district John Boag acquired land in 1865 which, added to later, became Middlerigg, a property of more than 300 hectares with a two-storey dwelling and substantial outbuildings. In 1946 Middlerigg was subdivided for the settlement of returned soldiers. In 1890 G. E. Rhodes purchased more than 400 hectares in Irwell which became Meadowbank. Rhodes built a large mansion on the land, along with a manager's cottage, men's quarters, stables, a cow house and concrete sties for his 'splendid' herd of Berkshire pigs. Two partners, Bruce and Coe, bought more than 650 hectares of heavy land on the south bank of the Selwyn near Coes Ford from the Crown in 1866. The two-storey house, Brucecoe Lodge, built of brick with an iron roof, began its life with 16 rooms. Extensive outbuildings were built using corrugated iron. The land was cropped (wheat, barley, turnips and rape) and used to fatten sheep and run a stud flock of Lincolns.[14]

"MIDDLERIGG," BROOKSIDE.
The home of Mr John Boag, for many years a noted Clydesdale breeder.

'Middlerigg' homestead. *Ellesmere Guardian* 28 March 1930, p. 5. Source: PapersPast.

Some of these larger freehold properties established in the 19th century were also, like the freehold properties which inherited their names from the original runs, further subdivided in the early decades of the 20th century. In the same decades the Crown re-purchased some large areas of land and subdivided them into smaller farms (partly from a wish to stem the flow of farmers from Canterbury to areas of the North Island which were only then being opened up for settlement).[15] Ellesmere was by then almost entirely a district of relatively small, single-family farms.

The pattern set in the Ellesmere district, of freehold farms, large and small, replacing extensive leasehold runs was followed later in other parts of the Selwyn District – including the inland plains and the lower foothills. Only in the pastoral high country did large leasehold runs persist right through the 20th century (see Chapter 5). The process, which was common throughout most of the Selwyn District, occurred earlier in the Ellesmere district than elsewhere in Selwyn.

With the shift from leasehold runs to freehold farms, farming in the Ellesmere district changed in nature. Instead of large flocks of sheep or herds of cattle ranging over huge areas with only a few fences, the countryside became closely divided by hedges and fences and the land was used not only for grazing, though that continued for sheep and dairy cows, but also for growing crops, particularly cereals, and winter feed. Ellesmere's early small farmers commonly built cottages of cob and sod before, as they prospered, replacing these original humble dwellings with more substantial wooden houses. They improved their land by 'ditching and banking' – digging drainage ditches and using the sods from the ditches to build low banks on top of which they planted gorse hedges. On good agricultural land they combined cropping with running small flocks of sheep. Edward Lee of Brooklands, near Southbridge, was one of the first New Zealand farmers to replace merinos with cross-breeds which were better suited to smaller holdings. On heavier land, the freehold settlers ran dairy cows and made butter and cheese at home.[16]

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[14] For these larger freehold properties see Graham and Chapple, pp. 37-42; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 689, 693-94.
[15] Popple, p. 115.
[16] For farming practices in Ellesmere see Graham and Chapple, pp. 29-35.

Technological innovations in agriculture – steel ploughs and then double-furrow and three-wheel ploughs, reapers and binders, and threshing machines – coincided with and reinforced the establishment of smaller freehold farms. The demand for food on the West Coast goldfields also helped the new freehold farmers prosper on small holdings.[17]

It became the accepted wisdom that these small farmers who took over most of the Ellesmere district in the 1860s and 1870s were the district's true pioneers, rather than the runholders, many of whom held the runs for only short periods before selling the leases on and simply turned sheep or cattle out onto unimproved, scarcely fenced land. An historian of the Ellesmere district, George Popple, wrote that 'the plains that had hitherto been sheepwalks were for the main part occupied by hard working agriculturalists who were prepared to subdue the wilderness'.[18]

Little more than a decade after he had taken up land near Southbridge in 1861, Edward Lee recalled that when he arrived in the district there were no tracks, no houses and no farms, just two or three stations scattered far apart across 'one unvaried sheet of brown tussocks'. Today, he continued (reminiscing in 1873) there were smiling farms in every direction, comfortable homesteads, superior stock, bridges, roads and reclaimed swamps. 'The wild country far and wide' he added, had been 'converted into a prosperous English-looking landscape. ... Truly we cockatoos have left our mark upon the land.'[19]

With the intensification of farm production in Ellesmere in the 1860s and 1870s, townships – Lincoln, Springston, Leeston and Southbridge – sprang up as economic and social centres for the greater rural population of the district. The need for ways of getting farm products to market also prompted the building of a branch railway into the Ellesmere district.

The Southbridge branch railway

Canterbury's Great Southern Railway was built to the west of the Ellesmere district. After it was completed to Rolleston in 1866, to Selwyn village on the north bank of the Selwyn River in 1867, and to the Rakaia River in 1873, the settlers looked to it as a way of getting their farm products into Christchurch, to be sold on the local market or exported. For a few years, until the opening of the Southbridge branch line in 1875, grain and other products were taken by road from the district to Rolleston to be trans-shipped onto rail. Plans were made in the late 1860s to build a tramway or light railway from Rolleston or the Selwyn village into the Ellesmere district. A light railway from Rolleston to Leeston and Southbridge was approved in the early 1870s, but before it could be built the Provincial Government, partly because of pressure from farmers in the Prebbleton and Lincoln districts, partly because Ellesmere was by then one of the 'richest and best settled districts of Canterbury', sanctioned building a branch railway through Lincoln and on to Southbridge in 1872.

From 1866 there were regular coach services, initially twice a week, between Christchurch and Leeston and Southbridge, which continued until the Southbridge branch railway line was built. The line from Hornby (then called Racecourse Junction) reached Lincoln in 1874 and Ellesmere village, just short of the Selwyn River, in April 1875. Three months later the line was opened to Southbridge where a goods shed, locomotive depot and station were built. Southbridge remained the terminus although there was discussion in the late 1870s and early 1880s of extending the line across the Rakaia River, with a bridge at Dobbins Ford. There were stations along the line at Prebbleton, Lincoln, Springston, Irwell, Ellesmere village, Doyleston and Leeston.

In 1886 Lincoln became a railway junction when the line to Little River, which was authorised in 1878, was opened. The line passed through Greenpark and Motukarara. Both those parts of the Ellesmere district enjoyed rail services from 1882, when the line was opened to Birdlings Flat.

Passenger services on both the Southbridge and Little River lines ceased in 1951 and the lines were closed beyond Lincoln a decade later. Trains continued to run between Hornby and Lincoln until 1967, after which only an industrial spur line between Hornby and Prebbleton remained. Most of the buildings and other structures associated with the two branch lines that served Ellesmere were removed or demolished soon after the lines were closed.

Until the line was closed it carried the products of Ellesmere's farms into Christchurch. It was notorious, among passengers who relied on it in the years before car ownership became widespread, for its slow speed. [20]

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[17] Singleton, pp. 44, 46.
[18] Popple, p. 50.
[19] Singleton, p. 44, quoting from the *Canterbury Times*, 23 August 1873.
[20] For the Southbridge branch line see Graham and Chapple, pp. 134-41; Moar pp. 79-89; Singleton, pp. 89-93; Patterson, pp. 99-101.

Relocated and restored – the Motukarara railway station shelter shed. Source: Te Ara Flickr.

Villages, towns and localities

By the end of the 19th century, with small-scale farming well-established across the Ellesmere district, small settlements had also become established as community facilities like schools, churches and halls were built and as people set up businesses, particularly general stores and blacksmiths' shops, at central locations in each area. Some of these incipient townships grew into towns while others remained small and a few faded right away. Whether it had a role in local administration (as the location of a road board or county council office) or was located at a key point in the district's transportation network (along one of the branch railway lines for example), often determined whether an early village prospered or languished. This pattern of development in the Ellesmere district was also evident on the plains country of the Selwyn District, up to where the foothills of the Southern Alps begin.

Tai Tapu and Motukarara

To the north-east, the Selwyn District includes a small part of the Port Hills. Two settlements at the foot of the hills, Tai Tapu and Motukarara, are on the extreme edge of the Ellesmere district. They are examples of, in one case, a village which grew into a township and, in the other, a village which faded almost completely away.

Most of the Halswell and Lake runs, which included much of the land between the foot of the Port Hills and Lake Ellesmere, had been freeholded by the end of the 1860s. The digging of the Halswell canal in 1889, which gave the lower Halswell River a more direct course to the lake, relieved flooding in the area and effectively drained the Ahuriri lagoon which lay between Tai Tapu and Motukarara. (The canal remains to this day much as it was when first excavated, but in exceptionally wet weather water still accumulates on paddocks where the lagoon was once situated.)

The town of 'Hepworth' (as Tai Tapu was named by the first European settlers, before its Maori name was revived) was laid out in 1875 by the Rhodes brothers, Robert and William, who were large landowners in the area. It was located on the road along which coaches travelled to Little River and Akaroa until 1886, when the railway line to Little River was opened. An accommodation house, Shakespeare's, which opened in the early 1860s, served travellers along the road to Little River and Akaroa before the town was laid out. This very early Tai Tapu building survives, with some additions and alterations, as the Tai Tapu Hotel. The railway line to Little River did not pass through Tai Tapu and thus even after the line opened the road from Halswell to Tai Tapu and Motukarara remained an important thoroughfare. Coaches ran daily between Tai Tapu and Christchurch into the early 20th century.

Former Shakespeare's Accommodation House (Tai Tapu Hotel) in 1902. Source: SDC files.

By 1903, Tai Tapu, set in a district of 'well-kept farms and handsome residences' had a population of around 300. It then boasted two general stores, a bakehouse, a forge, a post and telegraph office, Anglican and Wesleyan churches, a public school, a hotel and a library. Dairying was important in the area and in 1889 a co-operative dairy factory, one of the first in Canterbury, was built just north of the town. The factory moved into Christchurch in 1919 but the original building survived until the earthquakes of 2010-11.

In 1884 Robert Heaton Rhodes, son of Robert who with his brother William had owned land in the area from the early days of European settlement, began purchasing what became an estate of more than 2,000 hectares of Tai Tapu land that included flats and valleys but also some hill country. Rhodes farmed the Otahuna estate, primarily rearing and fattening sheep for the frozen meat export trade. Otahuna became one of the best known of Canterbury's large freehold properties. The house, designed by Frederick Strouts in 1891, is an outstanding example of Queen Anne domestic architecture. The architecturally-designed outbuildings included a stable and a wool shed. An extensive garden and orchard were planted and Otahuna's spring display of daffodils attracted crowds from Christchurch. The house was damaged in the earthquakes but was quickly restored by its owners who use it to offer up-market accommodation.

Tai Tapu's first Anglican church, St Paul's, was built in 1876. It was also designed by Frederick Strouts. After the death of his wife in 1929, Heaton Rhodes had a new church built in her memory. The stone St Paul's, a masterpiece of the architect Cecil Wood and a fine example of Arts and Crafts architecture, was opened in 1932. The same year saw a new public library, also designed by Cecil Wood, built of stone and funded by the sale of Otahuna narcissi. It replaced Tai Tapu's earlier wooden library building which stood on a different site.

Tai Tapu Public Library. Source: A McEwan, 28 November 2015.

Sir Heaton Rhodes also donated the stone entrance gates to the local domain, itself another gift by Rhodes to the township of which he was proud to be called 'the squire'. The gates (1932-33) were dedicated as a war memorial. Tai Tapu, unusually, has two World War I memorials; a cenotaph standing at the main cross roads in Tai Tapu was unveiled on ANZAC Day in 1925.

The early wooden Tai Tapu Methodist church survives, converted into a private residence. The school which opened in the township's early days is now the main school for the Tai Tapu and Motukarara districts. Ladbrooks, roughly equidistant from Tai Tapu, Halswell and Lincoln, also has a surviving school and a hall.

Settlement around Rabbit Island, the name Europeans gave to the low hill which the Maori knew as Motukarara, increased after the Halswell canal had been dug in 1889. In 1893 blocks for a village settlement of around four hectares each were cut out of the Lake run for small settlers. Even after the cutting of the Halswell canal, the lake occasionally rose high enough to turn Rabbit Island into an island again. The Rabbit Island post office was renamed Motukarara in 1900, an indication that the lake level was under better control. A school was opened in 1894 but closed in 1932 when the remaining pupils started attending the Tai Tapu school.

There was a railway station at Rabbit Island from 1882, when the Little River branch line was opened to Birdlings Flat. A general store and a blacksmith's shop were also established. Farmers brought their milk to a creamery which supplied a dairy factory in Christchurch. The creamery closed during World War I. The settlement was large enough for a hall to be opened in 1903 but remained scattered and never became a true township. The last store, on the main highway, closed in the late 20th century. The hall, which was used for movies through the middle of the 20th century, fell into disuse, but was resuscitated by locals in the 1990s for use by a play group and for table tennis.

A domain at the foot of Rabbit Hill was gazetted in 1885. The first secretary of the domain's board. Tom Quealy, served until 1925. When he retired his friends raised a small monument in the domain to his memory. Tennis and rugby clubs started using the domain. The rugby club shifted to Tai Tapu in 1934, but tennis courts remain in use. Part of the domain was given the name Waihora Park. With the railway line along its eastern boundary and the Motukarara station nearby, Waihora Park became a favourite resort for sports and picnics and ornamental gardens were created.

'Waihora Domain, Park Road, Motukarara' in 1906. Source: Christchurch City Libraries.

The railway station was removed when the Little River line was closed but after the development of a cycle trail along the old railway formation from Motukarara to Little River the station was rescued from neglect on a farm and returned to Motukarara, though not to its original site. It has been handsomely restored as part of the cycle trail project (see above).

In January 1954 Waihora Park hosted a Canterbury Boy Scouts Jamboree which saw 2,300 scouts from New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Australia arrive at Motukarara by train and camp on the park. A small monument at the park records the event.

The first horse races were run on a course on the western side of Rabbit Hill in 1884 by the Banks Peninsula Jockey Club. In 1889 the club leased part of the domain and gradually built such facilities as loose boxes, grandstands and totalisator buildings. Races have continued at the course without interruption since 1912.[21]

Motukarara Racecourse grandstand. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Greenpark

The Greenpark district lies between Tai Tapu and Lincoln. It was originally part of the Lakes run. Freeholding in the area began in 1859, but extensive swamps impeded closer settlement. Flax was cut in the Greenpark district and sent to mostly short-lived flax mills at various points along the Halswell River, including at Tai Tapu.

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[21] For Tai Tapu and Motukarara see *Cyclopedia*, pp. 669-70, 673; Singleton, pp. 331-34; Moar, pp. 115-16.

Though drainage improvements continued until well after the end of World War II, the main Greenpark drain was cut in 1883. Work on the Liffey II River also benefitted the Greenpark district. Farming in the district received a boost when the canal was cut to give the Halswell River a more direct outlet into Lake Ellesmere. Despite these drainage improvements severe floods in 1893 and 1895 saw most of Greenpark become virtually part of the lake. Immediately after the end of World War II an LI and LII drainage district was established and the North Canterbury Catchment Board did major work, notably on the Liffey II River. Similar work continued into the 1960s.

As at nearby Rabbit Island (Motukarara), the 1890s saw the creation in the Greenpark district of village allotments and other subdivisions of large properties into smaller holdings. By the early 20th century, dairy farming and sheep raising were well established on the numerous farms occupying the district's reclaimed swamplands. Wheat, oats, barley and root crops were also being grown on the district's farms.

As at Motukarara, Greenpark's dairy farmers brought their milk for separation to a local creamery which operated from 1893 until 1919. A full dairy factory may have operated in Greenpark around the turn of the century, but before and after then cream was sent from the creameries in the Greenpark district to factories at Tai Tapu or in Christchurch.

Greenpark Creamery. Source: Courtesy of Mr E Stalker and Lincoln & Districts Historical Society Collection, LHS439, Selwyn Kete.

Greenpark had a railway station from 1882 and a small number of railway houses were built in the district. Coaches which ran between Tai Tapu and Lincoln also served Greenpark, which was always a district with a hamlet at its centre rather than a township or even a village. A school opened in 1871, followed by a post office (1872), a Methodist church (1874) and an Anglican church (1881). Greenpark also had a blacksmith's shop and a butcher's shop.

A memorial hall was opened in Greenpark in August 1922 and after World War II a memorial park of 2.4 hectares was established. A pavilion built at the park in the 1950s was replaced in the 1970s and the hall was demolished after it sustained damage in the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-11.

In 1930 the North Canterbury Acclimatisation Society established a game park and fish hatchery at Greenpark when it vacated its original grounds in Hagley Park in Christchurch. The facility closed in 1942, then re-opened in 1957 as a game park only.[22]

Greenpark Memorial Hall (demolished) and World War I memorial. Source: Kete Christchurch.

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[22] For Greenpark see Singleton, pp. 319-30; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 674, 676.

Lincoln

The owner of The Springs station, Edward Fitzgerald, laid out Lincoln in 1862 to serve as a rural service town for the small farms that were already becoming established on the swamp and tussock land of the station. Fitzgerald mapped around 180 sections for sale with reserves for churches, schools and a court house. Esplanade reserves were created on each side of the stream that ran through the centre of the subdivision. The plan for the town was ambitious but, unlike many abortive 19th century subdivisions up and down the country, Fitzgerald's was the basis for what had become a thriving village by the end of the century. Much later, in the last decades of the 20th century and first of the 21st, Lincoln greatly outgrew the boundaries of the original subdivision.

The farm settlers in the district provided work for the blacksmiths, storekeepers, bakers, butchers, brewers, wheelwrights, shoemakers and others who set up in business in the nascent town. The accommodation house which opened in 1863 secured a licence in 1868 and as the Perthshire Arms became a venue for public meetings and social gatherings as well as a pub. A brick hotel built in 1884 survived until the earthquakes of 2010-11. The earlier hotel building became Lincoln's first town hall but burned down in 1889. The Druids Lodge built a new hall a few years later which then became Lincoln's de facto town hall. It was upgraded in the 1930s and the town's community centre occupied the site after a new hall adjoining the old was opened in 1961.

Restall's Wheelwright, Lincoln. Source: Lincoln & Districts Historical Society Collection, LHS22, Kete Selwyn.

A post office opened in a local store in 1871, but four years later was transferred to the railway station after the line to Southbridge had been opened. The post office remained at the station until 1953, when a new post office was built in the township. After this post office was closed in 1989 it became for a period a library and service centre of the Selwyn District Council before it was replaced by a large new library. The town's police station was first established on Boundary Road in 1876 but three years later it moved into the village. A new station was built on Gerald Street in the early 20th century. This building was replaced in 1980.[23]

The opening of the branch lines to Southbridge in 1875 and Little River in 1886 stimulated the growth of Lincoln as the town where the two lines joined. The station and its yard, which included a goods shed, windmill and pedestrian overbridge, became a busy place. A new station built in 1911 was replaced by a shelter in 1964, two years after the lines to Little River and Southbridge were closed, leaving only the Lincoln industrial branch line in place. The station was closed in 1966, a year before the line from Prebbleton to Lincoln was finally closed. The former rail bridge over the Liffey Stream (the Ll River) is now used by pedestrians.[24]

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[23] For the several topics covered under Lincoln's early development see Moar, pp. 5-6, 11, 13, 21-32, 89-91, 174; Singleton, pp. 295-309.
[24] Information on the station is found in Singleton, pp. 295-309.

Lincoln Railway Station, 1908. Source: Lincoln & Districts Historical Society collection, LHS428a, Kete Selwyn.

Several churches were established in Lincoln in the 19th century. Anglican services were held in The Springs homestead even before the town was subdivided, but the Anglican church, St Stephen's, designed by Benjamin Mountfort, was a relative latecomer. St Stephen's was opened a year after a vicarage was built in Lincoln in 1876, and the vicar was transferred from All Saints' Burnham. Transepts, also designed by Mountfort, were added in 1886. A new Sunday school was built by the church in 1965. The church was extended and modified in the late 1990s, after being at risk of demolition. The vicarage was sold by the church in 1937 but survives as a private residence known as 'The Gables'.[25]

St Stephen's Anglican Church, Lincoln. Source: A McEwan, February 2018.

The Catholics did not have a church in Lincoln until 1957. The reason was that as early as 1871 a Catholic settler had erected a small church on Shands Track. In 1871 Father Chervier, who had arrived in Canterbury in 1861, was appointed priest of a huge country parish that stretched from the Conway River in the north to the Rangitata River in the south. Soon after his appointment Chervier made his headquarters at the church on Shands Track. A new church (designed by Benjamin Mountfort) and a presbytery were erected and the tiny settlement was named New Headford. The 1871 church was replaced in 1880 by the larger Church of the Reparation, with the old church retained as a school and parish hall.

In 1903 the Catholic parish centred on New Headford extended in different directions as far as Burnham, West Melton, Tai Tapu and Hornby. But at about that time the school closed and a few years later deterioration of the presbytery built by Chervier in the early 1870s prompted the building of a new presbytery in Lincoln in 1908. The Church of the Reparation on Shands Track remained the Catholic church for the district until St Patrick's was built in Lincoln in 1957. The Church of the Reparation was then sold and demolished. The now bare site of New Headford is marked by a memorial stone raised in 1987. The Lincoln presbytery of 1908 was replaced in 1998 and St Patrick's given a new frontage in 2001, at the time a new parish centre was built, but the church did not survive the earthquakes.[26]

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[25] Moar, pp. 109-12; *Cyclopedia*, p. 660. The Cyclopedia reference also has information on other churches in Lincoln.
[26] Moar, pp. 116-19; Hanrahan, pp. 134, 153-56; *Selwyn Times*, 14 March 2018, p. 15.

The Baptists opened a chapel on Lincoln's main street in 1877. It survived until 1998. The Baptists remain active in Lincoln, with a church on a different site. There was never a Methodist church in Lincoln, possibly because there were thriving Methodist churches in Greenpark, Springston, Tai Tapu and Broadfield. The Presbyterians built a church on the 'Scotch reserve' donated by Fitzgerald in 1866, to serve a parish which stretched from Prebbleton to Southbridge. A new church on the same site in James Street, designed by Christchurch architect T. S. Lambert, was opened in 1882. The old church survived until 1964 when it was sold for removal to make way for a new manse. The manse which had been built by the new church in 1889 then became the parish headquarters.[27] The church amalgamated with the local Methodist congregation, becoming Lincoln Union Parish, in 1972. The church survives as Lincoln's most notable ecclesiastical building after St Stephen's.

Lincoln Union Church. Source: A McEwan, 13 July 2017.

An Education Board school was opened in Lincoln in 1866, taking the place of several private and denominational schools, some of which predated Fitzgerald's 1862 survey. The school of 1866 was built on the edge of the subdivision on part of a rural section which had been freeholded by Fitzgerald. In 1912 the Education Board bought more land adjoining the original site. The larger area subsequently became the site of both primary and secondary schools. A district high school established in 1903 closed soon after the end of World War II when it was superseded by Lincoln High School, which opened in 1945 in the original 1866 school building. The old building was demolished in 1964.[28]

The Lincoln library was founded in 1873. It was housed, from 1874, on a site near the Presbyterian church and school. The same building was also used for band practices and lodge meetings. In 1900 the library building was moved to a site on the Liffey reserve next to the bridge in the centre of Lincoln. In 1911 a new Coronation library was built on the opposite side of the Liffey Stream (LI River), also on domain land. This new library was opened in April 1912. The original library was used as a meeting room but in 1967 it was taken over by the Lincoln Pioneer and Early Settlers' Association and became the town's Pioneer Hall. Both the hall and the Coronation Library survive on their streamside sites, though the town's library is now located in the District Council's service centre on a different site.

In 1991 the Pioneer and Early Settlers' Association merged with a committee set up to save a threatened cottage in the centre of the village. The cottage, built probably around 1875, had also been used for commercial purposes and represented Lincoln's early development as a service centre. The cottage, renamed Liffey Cottage, was moved onto the original site of the 1874 library building. The Lincoln and Districts Historical Society, as the new organisation was named, then made the cottage its headquarters.[29]

Liffey cottage, Lincoln. Source: A McEwan, July 2017.

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[27] Moar, pp. 112-16.
[28] Moar, pp. 97-106. See also Singleton, pp. 295-309.
[29] Moar, pp. 161-68.

Small industry came to Lincoln early in its life. A brewery opened in 1872 but lasted only a few years. A water-powered flour mill, with a dam and millpond on the Liffey Stream (LI River) opened in 1867. It became, for a time, one of the three largest flour mills in Canterbury. Although it ran into financial difficulties, the mill was not finally demolished until 1920.[30] After fairs had been held in 1867 and 1868 at the Wheatsheaf Hotel on Shands Track, the Lincoln Fair Company built an office and yards on land adjacent to the school in 1869. Running the fairs was taken over, after a few years, by a farmers' club but the holding of shows in Lincoln had ended by the turn of the century. Ploughing matches were held intermittently in the Lincoln district in the 19th century. A monument on the corner of Springs and Robinsons Roads commemorates the holding of international ploughing matches in the district in the later 20th century.[31]

Although one of the road boards set up after 1863 was called Lincoln, its headquarters were at Prebbleton and Lincoln never enjoyed the early stimulus to growth that being a centre of local administration conferred on other Selwyn District towns, such as Leeston, Darfield and, most recently, Rolleston. One notable work of the Lincoln Road Board was the replacement in 1874 of the original bridge over the Liffey Stream (LI River) in Lincoln township by a bridge with iron girders resting on stone abutments and iron railings. The bridge, though largely modified, still stands.[32]

The Liffey Reserve on the Liffey Stream (LI River) was set aside in the original subdivision and conveyed to the Crown in 1882. In the following year it came under the control of a local domain board. Residents worked with the board to improve the reserve. In 1879 part of a gravel reserve on the outskirts of Lincoln was set aside as a public cemetery, to relieve the pressure on the Springston cemetery.[33]

The 19th century also saw many sporting and social organisations formed in Lincoln. The sporting clubs or associations active before the end of the 19th century, included cricket, athletics, tennis, shooting and swimming. By 1900 Lincoln had a cricket ground, tennis courts and a swimming pool (at the school).[34]

Lodge buildings came to Lincoln in the 1880s. The Freemasons, formed in 1879, built a hall in 1882, which remained in use until 1956 when a new hall was erected. The Druids set up a lodge in Lincoln in 1880. They sold the hall they built in 1893 to a local committee in 1931. Much altered, the hall remained the town's community centre until the earthquakes of 2010-11. The Hibernian St Patrick's Lodge formed in 1882 was based initially at New Headford but by the time the lodge closed in 1971 it had become a Lincoln group.[35]

By the end of the 19th century Lincoln, with its three churches, a public school, a hotel, several stores, a post and telegraph office and around 30 dwellings, was still a village rather than a town, but a village with a thriving commercial centre and numerous public buildings. Even after the agricultural college opened just west of the township in 1880 Lincoln remained a small country town.

Some of the changes to the town in the 20th century have been mentioned above. Others included the opening of a maternity hospital in 1927 and the construction of a sewerage system in the 1960s. But Lincoln remained a small town until the last three decades of the 20th century, when a period of residential and commercial growth, which continued into the first years of the 21st century, began. The growth occurred in part because roading improvements and more widespread ownership of private cars put Lincoln within commuting distance of Christchurch and in part also because of growth of the college. By the early 21st century new residential subdivisions were springing up on the outskirts of Lincoln and businesses had spread well beyond the town's original centre at Market Square.[36]

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[30] Moar, pp. 34-36; Singleton, pp. 70-74.
[31] Moar, pp. 45-61.
[32] Moar, pp. 68-73.
[33] Moar, pp. 73-76.
[34] Moar, pp. 133-47.
[35] Moar, pp. 125-31.
[36] Moar, pp. 1, 5, 186; *Cyclopedia*, p. 659.

Lincoln Maternity Hospital. *Ellesmere Guardian* 24 June 1927. Source: PapersPast.

Lincoln College

The Provincial Government set aside lands as an endowment for an agricultural college in 1873, but it was not until 1877 that land was purchased near Lincoln as a site for the college. The college was formally established the following year. For the college Frederick Strouts designed a notable building in an English Jacobean or Elizabethan style which housed lecture theatres, smaller classrooms, laboratories, a library, a dining hall and offices. When the college opened in July 1880, with 45 students, it was only the third agricultural college in what was then the British Empire. The college initially offered instruction in 'practical farming' and on much of the land purchased in the Lincoln district model farms were established. In the early 20th century more 'academic' courses were offered and the first Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree was conferred in 1912. The college became independent of Canterbury College in 1896, when the first board of governors was appointed.

'Ivey Hall, Lincoln College', before 1920. Source: 1/1-005089-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

A west wing was added to Strouts' original building in 1881. Later additions to the main building included an east wing (designed by John Guthrie) in 1918 and a memorial hall (designed by Cecil Wood) in 1924. A separate laboratory building (designed by the England Brothers) was also built in the early decades of the 20th century. Further buildings, some providing student accommodation, were also built on the main part of the college's campus. In 1989 the college's roll topped 2,000 for the first time and in the following year it became an autonomous university.

The College first attracted divisions of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) to Lincoln in 1936. The Wheat Research Institute and Wool Research Organisation followed. In 1960 the Botany division of the DSIR brought more scientists to Lincoln.

Sewing seed at the Wheat Research Institute at Canterbury Agricultural College, 1948.
Source: Blackmore Collection, Lincoln University Museum.

For some years relations between the college and the nearby town were somewhat strained, but in recent years the relationship has become closer and more cordial. Historically, some of the university staff lived in Lincoln and contributed to village life but commuting from Christchurch remains typical for many students and staff.[37]

Prebbleton

Prebbleton lies on the northern edge of the Selwyn District, between Lincoln and the district's boundary with Christchurch City. It is closer to Halswell and Hornby than it is to Lincoln and by the early 21st century had effectively become part of the urban fringe of Christchurch City, despite lying within Selwyn District. Earlier, however, Prebbleton was more like other towns and townships of the Ellesmere district – a self-contained, rural service centre.

The town took its name from two brothers who bought land and settled in the area in 1854-55. One of the Prebble brothers, Edward, subdivided around 20 hectares as a township and started a general store. It benefitted from becoming the headquarters of the Lincoln Road Board in the 1860s, but it ceased to be a centre of local administration when the road board went out of existence.

In the 1870s Prebbleton's commercial growth was checked by the building of the railway from Hornby to Lincoln, and on to Southbridge and Little River, because trains provided a quick and convenient way of getting in to Christchurch to do business. Nevertheless by 1903 the township had three churches (Anglican, Presbyterian and Wesleyan), a public school, a library, an Oddfellows hall, four large general stores (one with a bakery), a hotel and a post and telegraph office.

The original All Saints' Anglican church, which was built in 1859 and doubled as a schoolroom, was moved to Longbeach after a handsome new church, designed by B. W. Mountfort, was built in 1871-72. This church burned down in 1906. Mountfort's son, Cyril, designed an almost exact replica of his father's building as its replacement. This 1907 church, with a surrounding graveyard, is Prebbleton's most significant historic building. The town's surviving store continues to operate out of an old building. The local hall and the war memorial (1921) in front of it are also local landmarks.

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[37] For the general history Lincoln University see Singleton, pp. 310-18; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 659-60; Moar, pp. 61-64.

All Saints' Anglican Church, Prebbleton. Source: A McEwan, February 2018.

Industry only entered into Prebbleton's life in a significant way in the second half of the 20th century when Meadow Mushrooms built a large facility in the town. Tension between the mushroom-growing operation and residents, mostly over odour, was eventually resolved. Starting in the late 20th century, Prebbleton saw almost explosive residential growth (largely because of its proximity to Christchurch). A 2017 proposal to redevelop the site of the township's tavern for a motel, cinema, offices, healthcare facility and food and beverage outlets included retention of the old hotel building, which had survived intact behind extensive additions and alterations in the second half of the 20th century. The development was based on the expectation that Prebbleton would continue to grow, with 1,295 additional households projected by 2041, as essentially a commuter suburb of Christchurch. [38]

Broadfield

Broadfield, south-west of Prebbleton, developed in the 19th century as a small village serving the area of mixed farms around it. Growing wheat and fattening sheep were the main farm activities. By 1903 Broadfield had a school, a post office, a Wesleyan church and a company-owned shearing shed for machine shearing of sheep, which was convenient for the farmers of the district and profitable for the shareholders of the company. The Methodist church built in 1873 remained until the late 20th century when the church was deconsecrated and the building demolished. The original Broadfield school opened in July 1870. When a new school was opened across the road in 1964, the old building was retained by local people as a community centre. The two school buildings are now all that remains of the village of Broadfield, which once also boasted a church, post office and the communal shearing shed; nevertheless when the school celebrated its 150th anniversary in March 2018 a very large number of former pupils and current and past residents of the district attended the celebrations.[39]

A short distance south down Shands Road, a hotel, the Wheatsheaf, was built in 1865 at the junction of roads that headed south-east towards Lincoln and south-west towards the Ellesmere district proper. Early athletics meetings were held at the Wheatsheaf in the late 1860s.[40] After the license was cancelled in 1897, the building became a private residence. It survives in that new use up today.

Former Wheatsheaf Hotel, c.1970. Source: Christchurch City Libraries.

[38] For Prebbleton see *Cyclopedia*, pp. 654, 657; *Selwyn Time*s, 18 July 2017, p. 3..
[39] For Broadfield see Moar, pp. 115-16; *Cyclopedia*, p. 658; *Star*, 14 March 2018, p. 22.
[40] Moar, pp. 138-39.

Springston

Most of the Springston district was originally within Fitzgerald's Springs run. It sat at the point where the dry plains to the north and west gave way to the swampy country that stretched to the south and east down to Lake Ellesmere. Freeholding of land in the area began in the late 1850s; by the end of the following decade the district was one of small farms. When road districts were set up after 1863, the Springs Road Board built its first office at the centre of the district at the point on Ellesmere Junction Road where the village of Springston soon developed. The Springs road district extended west as far as the Main South Road, south to the Selwyn River and east to the Halswell River.

Being a centre of local government helped Springston flourish for many decades. After the establishment of counties following the 1876 abolition of the provinces, the new Springs County Council also built its headquarters in Springston. Its 1878 office burned down in 1888, probably the victim of an arson attack. The replacement office of that year remained in the township, used for storage after the Springs and Ellesmere Counties merged, until 1971 when it was moved to become a pavilion on the grounds of the Springston Pony Club. The Springston domain was gazetted in 1879 and used by a number of different sports. The local croquet club built a pavilion on the domain in the mid-1960s.

Methodist services were first held in the district in 1864. Two years later a Methodist church opened in Springston. The building was replaced in 1872-73. The replacement building was demolished in the 1970s. The parsonage built in 1874, was sold by the church in 1959 and a new one built in the following year. The original parsonage, designed by S. C. Farr, survives as a private house. Also in Springston is the surviving home of a prominent Methodist Walter Lawry (1817-1905), known originally as 'Harmony Villa'.

In 1868 a blacksmith's shop opened in Springston. The town's first general store opened at about the same time. In 1875 St Mary's Anglican Church, designed by Frederick Strouts, opened. The building survived until 1987 when it was replaced by a new church designed by Don Donnithorne. In addition to the Anglican churchyard, a public cemetery called Springston was opened in Provincial Government times but it was actually as close to Lincoln as Springston.

The Springston school opened in 1868; as the population of the district grew the school was extended at least twice in the 1870s and 1880s. The old school was replaced by a new one, on a different site, in 1956-57. Though the old school has not survived, Springston still has an early schoolteacher's house. A local mutual improvement society opened a small library in Springston in the 1870s. After the library closed, the building was removed, probably in the 1940s.

In the 19th century Springston also gained several stores and a post and telegraph office, besides the county council office, churches and school that were the heart of the township. A hall opened in Springston in 1907 and in 1922 a war memorial was raised at the T-intersection in the centre of Springston.

Unlike some other Ellesmere townships Springston did not have an early flour mill or any other industry. From 1959 a redundant Brethren hall operated as a clothing factory for a number of years. Essentially Springston remained a small township until the late 20th century when, like nearby Lincoln, it experienced new residential development which continued into the early 21st century.

There was already a small settlement on the Leeston Road when the railway line was built across the Springs district a short distance south of the village. The station opened in 1875 and four years later the Springston Hotel was built across the road from the station. Much later the hotel became known colloquially as the Rabbiter's Rest after a television programme was filmed there in the 1980s. After the railway line to Southbridge was closed in 1962 the station disappeared but the goods shed found a new life as the premises of an agricultural engineering firm.

A short distance further south again another blacksmith's shop, a store and a bakery were built at the junction of roads (Leeston, Collins and Powells) that led on to Leeston, back to Lincoln and to Springston South (see below). Once known as Blandville, this small hamlet was later known locally as Springston Railway and the store which survived into the later 20th century became the Springston railway store. A creamery opened at the Blandville corner in 1892. That Springston proper was some distance from the railway station and hotel and even further from its satellite settlement, Blandville, is probably why Springston was described in 1903 as 'rather scattered', a description which still holds good today. [41]

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[41] For Springston see Moar, pp. 93, 115-16; Singleton, pp. 53, 259-68; *Cyclopedia*, p. 677.

Springston South

Springston South is sometimes considered to be a district separate from Springston. It lies five kilometres to the south-east of Springston and is as close to Lincoln as Springston. Most who pass through Springston South approach it not from Springston but along the road from Lincoln to the Selwyn Huts and Coes Ford. The heavier land of Springston South required more effort to drain than the land of Springston itself and it was taken up as freehold (from both the Springs and the Waihora runs) a little later than the land along the main road from Lincoln to Leeston. Deep drainage ditches are a feature of the Springston South district, which benefitted from the work done by the Catchment Board in 1946-47 to clear the lower Liffey II (LII) River.

A side school was opened at Springston South in 1897. Within six years the roll had more than doubled from 24 to 58. The school was closed in 1945 and the building removed to the Lincoln golf course to become a pavilion. The Soldiers' Memorial Hall in Springston South, which was opened in 1921 and upgraded in 2017, is now the only significant reminder of the small settlement that once stood around it. The shop at Springston South, near the hall, remained open until the 1970s but is now a residence.[42]

Springston South Soldiers' Memorial Hall. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Ellesmere Township

The township called Ellesmere was, confusingly, in the Springs and not the Ellesmere road district. It stood on the north side of the Selwyn River and came into existence after a station was opened there in April 1875, as the railway progressed towards Southbridge. Earlier, probably in the late 1860s, an accommodation house had been built at the river crossing. In the late 1870s a township was laid out by the railway station, but it failed. The large Bethel's Swamp was not drained until later in the 19th century and Ellesmere developed later than the townships – Irwell, Brookside and Killinchy – which lay over the Selwyn River, between the river and Leeston.

Only two public buildings were ever erected in Ellesmere township. A school was opened at the very end of 1898. It closed in 1946. The building was bought by a private owner in 1970. A Methodist church was opened in July 1911. The last services were held in it in 1962 and ten years later the building was moved to the Ferrymead Historic Park in Christchurch. Unlike other townships that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had various places of business – Springston and Irwell to the north and south, for example – Ellesmere township never had places of business or small-scale industries. It existed only by virtue of its school, Methodist church and railway station and all had ceased to function by the mid-1960s.[43]

Irwell

By the 1860s large numbers of Ellesmere farmers were growing wheat, creating a need for local flour mills. Such mills were scattered across Ellesmere – in Lincoln, Irwell, Brookside, and near Southbridge. The mill at Irwell was producing flour by late 1866. A race led to a large waterwheel, which was rebuilt not long before the mill closed down, probably in the 1930s. The mill itself was demolished in 1947 but the office and grain store buildings remained standing.

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[42] For Springston South see Singleton, pp. 275-79; *Cyclopedia*, p. 677.
[43] For Ellesmere township see Singleton, pp. 269-74.

In Irwell there was also, from the mid-1860s, a flax mill adjoining the flour mill. It burned down in 1898. By that time the flax industry in Ellesmere was declining as most of the major swamps had by then been drained, but there was still sufficient demand for flax fibre for binder twine (especially when supplies of Manila hemp were cut off during the Spanish American War) to keep the industry going. Another flax mill on the Irwell River, Washbourne's, continued to operate until the 1930s, changing from water to steam, and then gas engine power.

The Irwell mills were representative of the many small flax mills round the perimeter of Lake Ellesmere, from Greenpark to Sedgemere. There were also flax mills on the northern and western sides of the lake at Springston, Doyleston, and Brookside. Most flax mills were simple structures, with a roof supported by four corner posts protecting machinery that could be easily moved. The histories of most of the mills are not known and there seem to be no significant remnants of any flax mills in the Ellesmere district.

Despite its flour and flax mills, Irwell developed primarily as a farm service township. In 1903 the farms around Irwell were described in the Canterbury volume of the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* as being 'in the highest state of cultivation and everywhere the visitor sees handsome homesteads surrounded by well grown groups of shelter trees'. The larger farms in the Irwell district included Brucecoe Lodge (the property of two farming partners named Bruce and Coe), Sudeley (Thomas Fisher), Meadowbank (Thomas Overton, later George Rhodes), Woodlands (William Young) and Waipuna (Richard Wright). Waipuna, an example of a mid-sized farm, was a little more than 250 hectares of 'highly improved' land. It was a classic 'mixed' farm producing wool and grain (for the storage of both there were sheds on the farm) and also sheep and lambs for the meat export trade.

Mr. R. Wright's Residence.
'Waipuna Estate'. Source: *Cyclopedia of NZ* 1903, p. 695. Source: NZETC.

The Irwell school opened in 1879. It had a peak roll of around 70 in 1890 and survived until 1938, when the remaining pupils started attending the Leeston school. After the school closed the building became a public hall.

The first church in Irwell was a Methodist chapel, opened in July 1867, which was built on land given by Thomas Fisher of Sudeley. The church closed in 1955. St Mary's Anglican Church, consecrated in November 1895, was built on land given by George Rhodes of Meadowbank.

St Mary's Anglican Church, Irwell. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

When the line to Southbridge was built in the 1870s, two stations, close together, called Irwell and Lake Road served the district. Through the later 19th century Irwell also acquired two stores, two bakehouses, a smithy and a hotel. The hotel and post office were open by 1868 and the first general store and bakehouse by 1875. The hotel closed sometime before 1924-25 when it was shifted from its original site. The post office closed about the same time the hotel was shifted when rural delivery began in the district. A creamery had been established at Irwell in 1900 but like other Ellesmere district creameries closed when farmers began separating milk on their own farms.

By the early 1900s too there was a large grain shed on Selwyn Lake Road, near the Lake Road railway station. It was bought by the Farmers' Co-operative Association in 1911 and used to hold grain destined for the flour mills of Christchurch. When the building's use as a grain store ended in the 1970s it became a general storage shed and a workshop in which harrows were manufactured.

Irwell did not have a public park until relatively late in its life. At a meeting of residents in the Irwell Hall in 1959 the purchase of around 2.8 hectares of land, offered at below its market valuation, was discussed. A Sudeley Park Association was formed, the land purchased and by 1962 a pavilion had been built and other improvements made. Cricket, football, basketball and tennis were all played on the park. The development of the park was described in a local history as 'another good example of what can be done by local enthusiasm under good leadership'. By that time, however, the Irwell village was already a shadow of its former self and on its way to becoming the small cluster of houses it is today.[44]

Brookside

Land was first freeholded in the Brookside district, initially known as 'South Selwyn', in 1860. Freeholding continued through the decade. Swamps were drained and tussock burned to create farmland. The first fences were formed by the 'ditch and bank' method, with gorse planted on top of low walls of sods. The earliest dwellings were cottages built of sod or cob with thatched roofs. Poplars, willows and gums were planted by the first settlers for shelter and amenity. The most notable farm in the Brookside area was Middlerigg, established in 1865 by John Boag. A new homestead was built by Boag on Middlerigg in 1884 (see above). It was observed in 1903 that through the 'courage and perseverance' of the small freeholders, the district had become 'one of the richest and most fertile spots in New Zealand'.

Like other Ellesmere townships, the village of Brookside developed primarily to service the surrounding farms. A South Selwyn school opened as early as 1861. In the late 1860s a school was run in Brookside by the Presbyterian church. A new Provincial Government South Selwyn school was built in 1869. It was renamed Brookside school in the early 1870s. Additions were made in 1872 and 1875, when the original single room became the infants' room. The roll peaked in the mid-1870s at more than 160, then slowly fell. In 1937, when the roll was down to around 60, 'consolidation' was on the horizon. A few years later, in the mid-1940s, the school was closed and Brookside children began attending the Leeston school. The Brookside school building was used as a hall until the late 1960s, then for storage. It is the oldest school building still standing in Ellesmere.

Former Brookside School. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

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[44] For Irwell see Singleton, pp. 70-77, 189-96; Graham and Chapple, pp. 48, 122, 152-54, 162-63, 167; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 693, 695.

A Presbyterian church was the first built in Brookside, in 1867. It was extended in 1873. The last service was held in the church in 1966 and the building was demolished ten years later. As in Irwell, an early settler, in this case Thomas Brook, who took up more than 100 hectares of land in 1865, gave land for a Methodist church which was opened in February 1870. After the last service in the building in 1972 it became a dwelling. The Anglicans were relative latecomers to Brookside; St Luke's Anglican Church (designed by Benjamin Mountfort) was built in 1880 but not consecrated until September 1890. By the end of the 19th century, Brookside also had a post office (opened in 1869) and a library (opened 1874). The vigour of a Good Templars lodge – it had 65 members by 1880 – was evidence of the strength of the temperance movement in Brookside.

Like other Ellesmere townships in the 19th century, Brookside also gained places of business – a store and post office, a smithy (1870), a coachbuilder, a flour mill (1872), and a creamery (1893). The flour mill was built by John Cole who sold it in 1894 to George Trapnell. The mill produced 'Rising Gem' flour from locally grown wheat. In 1903 it was producing 12 tons of flour a week and employed three men. The flour was delivered to the Lake Road railway station to be transported into Christchurch. Like other mills in the Ellesmere district it was converted to new sources of power before being closed down in 1945 and demolished in 1951.

Like the nearby villages of Irwell and Killinchy, after a bold beginning in the 19th century Brookside slowly slipped back in the 20th. By 1937 many of the places of business had closed but the three churches, the school and the library remained. By the end of the 20th century the school and library buildings, a few houses, St Luke's church and the cemetery were the only reminders of the once thriving township.[45]

Killinchy

The Killinchy swamp was one of the largest in the Ellesmere district and, although the Killinchy district also extended onto the drier, treeless and tussock-covered plains nearer the Rakaia River, the swampy nature of most of the district determined its early development. Its drainage, the key to the district's progress, began in earnest in 1864-65 when the Ellesmere Road Board cut an outlet to Boggy Creek, both to enable the land to be farmed and to ensure there was a 'dry' road to Leeston and Southbridge. (It was an indication of the importance of drainage throughout the Ellesmere district, not just in Killinchy, that by 1894 there were 20 main drains and 21 minor drains in the Ellesmere road district, not to mention a large number of private drains dug by individual farmers.) The first land was freeholded in the Killinchy area at about the same time the road board began digging drains. Many of the area's settlers came from County Down in Ireland, in which the original village of Killinchy is located.

Killinchy House. *Canterbury Times* 6 November 1901. Source: Selwyn Kete.

The Killinchy school opened in 1871 and reached its peak roll of around 160 in 1890. A library was built on the school grounds in the mid-1870s. When a hall was built in the late 1880s a room for the library was attached to it. After being added to in 1927 the hall was demolished in 1983. A new school was built in 1925 and a school house erected in 1927. After the school closed in 1959, when local children started attending the schools at Leeston and Southbridge, it became, in 1964, a community centre.

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[45] For Brookside see Graham and Chapple, pp. 51, 152, 154, 161, 163, 167; Singleton, pp. 81-82, 197-206; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 685-86; *Ellesmere Guardian*, 1 October 1937, p. 5.

All Saints' Anglican Church was opened in November 1873, but not consecrated until November 1883. The church was closed in 1969 and dismantled around 1980 but the adjoining cemetery remains.

By the end of the century Killinchy had the usual range of public buildings and places of business – the two churches, a hall and library, the school, a post office, a store, a smithy and a wheelwright's. A creamery was opened in 1902 but continued in operation only until 1916. In the first half of the 20th century, Killinchy gained a Presbyterian church, which was closed in 1972 and sold for removal in 1976. A tennis club formed in 1927 and was still active in 1977 when new courts were built on a different site, with the hall serving as club rooms until it was demolished in 1983. But the township never became fully developed, even by Ellesmere standards.

Belatedly, in the 1990s, Killinchy gained an industry that made its name known nationwide. In 1991 a local family began making Killinchy Gold ice-cream which was marketed throughout New Zealand. The family sold the company in 1996, but ten years later set up a speciality dairy factory on their farm.[46]

Doyleston

Doyleston took its name from a settler who was the first proprietor of the township's hotel and store. From 1875, when the railway reached Doyleston, Joseph Doyle also ran coaches from the Doyleston railway station to Lakeside, Sedgemere and Taumutu and to Burnham.

Sod whare, Doyleston, 1904. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Doyle had leased then bought land at 'Boggy Creek' in the mid-1860s. Around 1867 he built a house and opened a store (which was not demolished until 1979), then created the subdivision which became the township of Doyleston. The township was slow to develop and always lagged behind nearby Leeston. In 1903 Doyleston had only around 160 inhabitants but by as early as July 1871 the township was at least large enough for the Doyleston hall to be opened. A new public hall which opened in 1897 was demolished in 2001. The township also gained a hotel, a second store, a school and a library. The hotel, which opened when the railway arrived in 1875, closed in 1968 and was subsequently demolished.

Saleyards were built near the hotel and railway station, which were some distance from the rest of the village. The 1872 building which housed the library was replaced by a brick building in 1930, which later became the premises of the Ellesmere Historical Society. It was demolished following the Canterbury earthquakes and a memorial garden established in its place. The school opened as a side school of Leeston at about the time the railway went through. It became an independent school in 1891 and had a peak roll, in 1894, of 185, but in 1938 was consolidated with Leeston school. Somewhat unusually Doyleston had no churches, apart from a small Methodist Sunday school hall, probably because Leeston's churches were within easy reach.

Doyleston was primarily a farm service town but had a small industrial base. Adam Werner founded his Ellesmere Engineering Works in Doyleston in the mid-1880s. By 1903 Werner was employing eight workers and manufacturing agricultural machinery under several patents. The firm was later wound down, but had a successor, the Doyleston Engineering Works. There was also a bacon factory for a time in the township. Another substantial business based in Doyleston was Boag and Cook, grain and produce merchants. The firm owned threshing machines and threshed Ellesmere farmers' grain crops on contract. A creamery was opened in Doyleston around the turn of the century.

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[46] For Killinchy see Graham and Chapple, pp. 50-51, 86, 91, 152, 162-63, 167; *Cyclopedia*, p. 704; Singleton, pp. 59-63, 145 ff.

The most notable farm in the Doyleston area was Job Osborne's Winfield Farm of 860 hectares.[47] Osborne had a colony-wide reputation as a sinker of artesian wells.[48] In 1910-11 Osborne donated land for a public sports ground, which opened in March 1912 as Osborne Park. The park was later administered by a local committee under the Ellesmere Domain Board. The park's present pavilion was moved from the Crown Crystal glass works in Hornby in 1979.

Osborne Park Memorial Gates. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Leeston

For a few years Southbridge was larger than Leeston, but by 1903 Leeston's position as 'the principal town in the Ellesmere district' (as the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* described it) was not disputed.

Leeston had the advantage, over both Doyleston and Southbridge, of being a centre of local government for many years. The Ellesmere (originally South Rakaia) Road Board built its first office in the town around 1864 when R. J. S. Harman, who had created a subdivision for a township in 1863 on land owned by F. J. Smith, gave land for the office. Immediately they had secured the road board office for the proposed township, Harman and Smith started advertising sections for sale. The original office building was replaced in 1874. When the Ellesmere county was formed in 1910-11, after the original large Selwyn county had been subdivided, the county council offices remained in Leeston. A new county chambers was built in 1927. These chambers were replaced in turn by a building on Memorial Square which remains the town's library and district council service centre.

In 1963 a 'new' Ellesmere county was formed by the amalgamation of the original Ellesmere county with Springs county and the Rakaia riding of the smaller Selwyn county, formed in the early 20th century when the original county of that name was split up. Leeston remained the district's administrative centre when this new Ellesmere county was formed, but after the sweeping local government changes of 1989 the new Selwyn District established its headquarters in Darfield. The district council later moved its headquarters to Rolleston.

Ellesmere County / Leeston War Memorial. Source: A McEwan, 13 July 2017

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[47] https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2o11/osborne-job
[48] For Doyleston see Graham and Chapple, pp. 49-50, 117, 162-63, 167; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 696-97; Singleton, pp. 178-88; Patterson 99-101.

Reinforcing Leeston's primacy as the administrative centre for the Ellesmere district south of the Selwyn, was the holding of courts of law in the town. A court of petty sessions first sat in Leeston in 1869. In 1898 a court house, the only one in the Ellesmere district, was built in Leeston. It was designed in the government architect's office. In 1903 court sessions were being held monthly in this court house. Once these sessions ceased, soon after the end of World War II, the building became, in 1954, the rooms of the Ellesmere sub-branch of the Returned Servicemen's Association, which had been set up in Southbridge in 1934. The town's first police station was established in the late 1860s and a new station opened in 1925. Through the later 20th century the local police occupied a succession of premises, being located today in a modern residential style building in Cunningham Street.

Former Leeston Courthouse / Ellesmere RSA Clubrooms. Source: A McEwan, July 2017.

Leeston also became the headquarters of the Springs-Ellesmere Electric Power Board, which was established in 1920 and began reticulating the two counties in 1922. After fire destroyed their offices in December 1923, the board eventually built a new office building in 1929 on High Street. In 1954 the head office of the board was moved to Hornby, but the board maintained an office in Leeston for some years. In 1962 the new Central Canterbury Electric Power Board, responsible for electricity distribution in a much wider area, absorbed the old Springs-Ellesmere board. At one time housing a hardware store and a bank, the building is currently occupied by a real estate agency and a café, the latter operating in various hands since 1994.

In many Ellesmere towns the local post office was located in a store or at the railway station. Only larger towns gained separate, purpose-built post office buildings; Leeston's was erected in 1911. It finally closed in 1995 and is now professional rooms.

In 1922 Leeston gained a measure of administrative independence when a town board was formed. The board's offices on High Street, built next to the post office, were opened in 1926. The building, which included a fire station, was in poor condition by the late 1940s. It was replaced by a community centre which was also a war memorial in August 1953, a short time after the old town board office of 1922 had been demolished. The library next door to the town board office and fire station was demolished around 1974, the latter being replaced by a new building at the corner of Station and Gallipoli Streets. The town's library eventually found a home in the Ellesmere county council offices when these became redundant after the local government reforms of 1989. In 1959 Leeston lost its administrative independence and became a county town riding of the Ellesmere county.

Leeston also became the Ellesmere district's principal commercial centre. The first Bank of New Zealand branch in Ellesmere opened in Southbridge in 1873. A second branch was opened in Leeston three years later. The closing of the Southbridge branch in 1892, while the Leeston branch remained open, was a sign that Leeston was by then eclipsing Southbridge as the main centre of the Ellesmere district.

Leeston's commercial life had begun when an early settler, J. J. Lee, built a hotel in 1865. The hotel was described in 1903 as 'one of the finest country hotels in New Zealand'. (Whether Leeston was named after Lee or an English hamlet of the same name has never been satisfactorily determined.) Lee also set up a general store in the township in which the first post office was opened. By 1873 the first store had been joined by a butchery, a bakery, a saddler, a smithy and a drapery. A brick hotel built on the corner site of Lee's original hotel was a Leeston landmark until it was damaged in the earthquakes of 2010-11. Its replacement, on a neighbouring site, opened in 2017.

By the early 20th century Leeston had won the competition with Southbridge to be the centre of newspaper publishing in Ellesmere. The *Ellesmere Guardian* had an up-and-down career until 1908, being published at different times in Southbridge and Leeston. After 1908 the paper had a stable, long-term owner who, in 1916, transferred all his operations to Leeston. Here new premises were built for the *Guardian* in 1924. When local newspaper production moved out of the district with the establishment of the *Central Canterbury News* in the 1980s, the *Guardian* building became a cafe.

The commercial centre of Leeston was originally along Leeston Lake Road, but by the early 20th century had moved to High Street, between the council office to the north and the hotel to the south. Like all Ellesmere townships and towns, Leeston prospered mainly as a farm service centre. Many of its commercial and light industrial businesses reflected this. So did other buildings and activities in the town

The first agricultural and pastoral show in the Ellesmere district, organised by an association formed in 1870, was held in Southbridge in 1871, but the following year it was held on a paddock at Leeston. In 1873 the Provincial Government gave eight hectares on the edge of Leeston for a showground. Memorial gates at the show grounds were unveiled in October 1930. A saleyard was opened in Leeston and from 1882 sales were held every fortnight at the yards. The yards were cleared away in 1985. Leeston also acquired large grain stores adjoining the railway line. The station and station yard, on the eastern side of the town, were busy places in the years when many agricultural products were taken in to Christchurch by rail.

Like other Ellesmere towns, Leeston supported a number of small industries. They included a flour mill, which opened in 1867, and a soft-drink factory. A linen flax factory operated between 1940 and 1944. After the war it became a boot factory and when that factory closed it was used for storage. The Airborne honey factory, which was established in 1911, relocated to Leeston in the mid-1920s. It is a later-day example of the small industries that helped sustain Leeston economically.

A great number of social and community organisations became established in Leeston in the 19th century. By 1903 Leeston had four churches and two schools. Presbyterian services and a Sunday school began in Leeston as early as 1866. They were held first in a sod whare, then in the road board office until the first church was built in 1870. This first church was replaced in 1878 by a new church, St David's, designed by Samuel Farr. In 1981, three years after the Ellesmere co-operating parish had been formed, the church was demolished.

Leeston's first Catholic church opened in 1869 on High Street. The town was within Father Chervier's huge parish which was based at New Headford on Shands Track near Lincoln (see above). In 1893-94 a new plastered brick church (designed by Maurice Duval) was built on a site on the southern edge of the town where there had been a presbytery since 1890, around the time Ellesmere became an independent parish. The old church was relocated to become the parish hall. The presbytery was demolished in 1959 and the hall in 1981. The spire of the 1894 church was a notable landmark until the earthquakes of 2010-11. Though the spire and tower had to be taken down, the rest of the church survived the earthquakes and is due to be repaired. Services are held in the meantime in the St John Ambulance rooms in Gallipoli Street.

Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist, Leeston. Source: A McEwan, July 2017.

A Wesleyan church, which opened in 1875, was replaced by a new church in 1889. Setting the example which the Catholics followed five years later, the old church became the parish hall which was still in use as a Sunday school in the 1960s. Today the church is the home of the St David's Union Church. The 1877 Methodist parsonage built near the church was replaced in 1941.

St David's Union Church, Leeston. Source: A McEwan, July 2017.

St John's Anglican Church, designed by S. C. Farr, was consecrated in 1872 and later enlarged. Services had been held, prior to the building of the church, in a schoolroom. The church was roughcast in 1956. The parish hall, overlooking Selwyn Street, was built in the early 1900s and extended in 1961.

In 1896, Leeston became the location of the only Salvation Army barracks in Ellesmere. In March 1902 the barracks were sensationally up-ended by a whirlwind while a meeting was in progress, but remarkably nobody was seriously injured. The barracks closed in 1946. After being used as a clothing factory for some years the building was demolished in the 1970s.

Besides the churches, Leeston supported a considerable number of social and cultural organisations. They included lodges and musical societies. One building, thought to have been erected around 1882 as a lodge hall, became the headquarters of the Ellesmere Brass Band in the early 20th century and so neatly illustrates the importance of both sorts of organisations in Leeston's life. The band was incorporated as a society in 1904 and probably used the former lodge building from its early years, though the society did not become the building's owner until some years later.

Leeston also became a centre for education in the Ellesmere district. The Leeston school opened in 1867, after a public meeting at which the Board of Education promised support if a school was established. The school had a peak roll of 275 in 1890, but by 1903 the roll had dropped to 128 with an average attendance of 104. The school was then where Ellesmere children received their manual training in woodwork and ironwork. New classrooms were built in 1928 and in 1937-38 and a new assembly hall in 1960.

As transportation improved, many smaller primary schools in the district were 'consolidated' at Leeston. Between 1936 and 1944 the children from the Irwell, Doyleston, Lakeside and Brookside schools all started attending Leeston school. The Killinchy school closed in 1959 and some of its pupils also started attending the Leeston school.

Secondary education in Ellesmere was provided at Southbridge until 1981 (see below). In 1981 Ellesmere College was founded in Leeston to provide a secondary education for all children in the southern parts of the Ellesmere district.

Most Ellesmere townships and towns had only a public school. Leeston, unusually, had a second, the Catholic school, which opened in 1879. A new school building was completed in 1894 and the following year sisters of the Notre Dame des Missions order took over teaching in it. A convent was built for the sisters in 1898 and in 1903 the school moved into a new wing of the convent building. The convent was demolished in 1994. A new school, St Joseph's, was built in 1924. The school still had a roll of more than 90 in 1964 but it closed in 1986. It too, like the convent, is no longer extant.

Leeston's town hall was built as a private venture in 1877. It became a movie theatre before it was finally demolished in 1990. By that time the 1953 community centre and war memorial hall, built by the town board, had become the town's main venue for social, cultural and other community events.

The Ellesmere Hospital opened in Leeston in 1924, with four maternity and five general beds. The last birth in the hospital was in 1992. It subsequently became a hospital for long-stay elderly patients and is still in use today. Leeston was also the centre for professional services for many residents of Ellesmere. This role is illustrated by a notable older house, at 2 Chapman Street, which was built in 1877, to a design prepared by the notable Christchurch architect W. B. Armson, as a doctor's residence and surgery. It remained a doctor's residence until 1946 when it became the home, and also later the offices, of a local legal firm. Few other Ellesmere towns, even Southbridge, offered medical, legal and other professional services.

The principal recreation ground in Leeston itself, Leeston Park, was originally a paddock across the road from the hotel which was owned by successive publicans. Various sports were played in the 19th century on the paddock: including rugby, after a club was founded in 1877, and cricket, after a cricket club was founded a year after the rugby club. A cycling club was formed in 1899 and an excellent cycling track, claimed in 1903 in the Canterbury volume of the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* to be one of the finest in Australasia, was formed. A small grandstand was built beside the track. It was proposed as early as 1910 that the ground be purchased as a public park, but the licensee of the hotel at the time was unwilling to sell. The grounds were finally bought by the Leeston Park Association in 1947. The 3.2 hectares of the grounds were increased to 5.3 hectares by the gift and purchase of adjoining land. Basketball and netball were added to sports played on the park, which also provided space for a camp ground and play ground.

'Leeston Cycling Track', undated. Source: Selwyn Kete.

A large recreation ground of more than 80 hectares mid-way between Leeston and Southbridge was gazetted in 1878 and vested by the Selwyn County Council in the Ellesmere Domain Board. The board ploughed and fenced the land and built a grandstand and other buildings on it. The domain was the scene of early horse racing in the Ellesmere district. After the Ellesmere Golf Club was formed in the early 20th century, with keen support from local doctor and champion golfer George Gosset, links were established on the recreation ground. Although the club subsequently had periods in recess, the course remains today.

The first race meeting in Ellesmere was held in Leeston in December 1865. By 1868 a grandstand had been built. The race course remained popular into the first half of the 20th century, but local meetings eventually ceased as improved transport meant country folk could more easily get to larger race meetings in Christchurch.

In 1969 the Rakaia River Bed Racing Club inaugurated a regular programme of motor racing in Ellesmere. Race meetings were held for the first decade of the club's life in various locations. The club evolved into the Ellesmere Motor Racing Club, which in 1980 secured permission from the local council and the Domain Board to build a track on domain land. Construction of the track began in 1981. Now known as the Ellesmere Speedway, the track has been used continuously for motor racing up to the present.

In Leeston itself what had been designated a market square in the subdivision of the 1860s was bought from the English beneficiaries of the original landowner by the Leeston Beautifying Association in 1914. As Memorial Square it became the town's most important public open space and came under the control of the town board in 1922. The war memorial, a handsome cenotaph built of white Sydney sandstone with marble wreaths and granite panels on a blue stone base, was unveiled at the centre of Memorial Square in October 1924. Later the Ellesmere county council offices were built on the western side of the square.

Leeston's sewerage scheme, mooted before World War II, was finally built in 1975. The scheme was upgraded in 2004 as Leeston continued to grow and standards of public health improved. The town was reticulated for water between 1975 and 1988.[49]

Southbridge

Only eight kilometres separate Leeston and Southbridge. Early rivalry between the towns to be the main settlement of the district was over by the end of the 19th century, when Leeston had established a clear primacy. It maintained that primacy through the 20th century. Initially, however, Southbridge looked likely to become the larger, more important place. In the 1870s, for example, the immigration barracks for the district, where new immigrants were accommodated before they found work, were built in Southbridge, not in Leeston.

'Shortly to be demolished: the immigration barracks, Southbridge'. *Weekly Press* 18 June 1913, p. 10. Source: Kete Selwyn.

The jockeying of Leeston and Southbridge for status as the district's most important town was also evident in the history of newspapers in the Ellesmere district. The district's first newspapers, the *Ellesmere Advertiser* and *Ellesmere Guardian* were both started up in Southbridge in 1880. The *Advertiser* was short-lived and in 1885 the *Guardian* moved to Leeston, only to be suspended, but then resume publication in 1891. After 1916 all newspaper publication in Ellesmere was based in Leeston.

From the mid-1880s on, Southbridge stagnated relative to Leeston and even went into decline (its population of 668 in 1886 had shrunk to 396 in 1901; it subsequently grew again but was only 475 in 1964). Southbridge nevertheless remained a busy, prosperous town through the 20th century.

Main street, Southbridge in 1909. Source: Kete Selwyn.

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[49] For Leeston see Singleton, p. 53, 56-57, 152-73, 449-53, 462-70; *Cyclopedia*, p. 699; Graham and Chapple, pp. 44-45, 61-66, 84-85, 93, 108, 105-07, 117-21, 123-24, 147, 152-60, 162-63, 167-75, 197-99; Patterson, pp. 332-33; Hanrahan, pp. 125-33; *Selwyn Times*, 14 March 2018, p. 15.

The township was surveyed in 1866 by the runholder Charles Bridge (who had retained more than 600 hectares of his run as freehold). Sections were advertised for sale in January 1867. By the time Southbridge was surveyed there was already a church (St James' Anglican) and a blacksmith and wheelwright's shop where the town was soon to grow. Within a few months of sections being offered for sale there was a hotel and general store; soon after that a coaching and other businesses were founded. The town hall was opened in 1873 and a library in 1875, both built by a private company but subsequently purchased by the town board (see below). By the mid-1870s the town had several more shops and a second hotel. Until 1908 the town had two hotels, but in that year the Royal burned down and was not rebuilt; like Leeston, Southbridge subsequently had just one hotel. Three lodges were active by 1880. The Orange Lodge, established in 1874, built itself a brick lodge hall in 1889, which outlived the lodge itself, being used later in its life by a small-bore shooting club.

A new town hall, which opened in 1930 and was remodelled in 1964, was a defiant expression of Southbridge's perception of its own importance and is one of rural Canterbury's most notable buildings. It was designed by Christchurch architect G. W. Haines. A new library, opened close to the town hall in 1931, was a memorial to a longstanding council employee and the town's librarian. The old library building of 1875, built to accommodate a library which opened in the original town hall in 1873, was not demolished until the 1960s after serving as the town board office and fire station. A new fire station was built in 1957, prior to the demolition of the old library. This station was replaced in 2015.

Thompson Memorial Library and Southbridge Town Hall. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

The first post office opened in Southbridge in 1867. A new post office was built in 1875, but the office was subsequently moved to the railway station and it was not until 1960 that a new, stand-alone building was opened in High Street. It remained a post office only until 1988 when, along with many other post offices throughout New Zealand, it was closed as a result of the economic and administrative changes of that decade. The building now houses a fish and chip shop and café.

The town gained its first church as early as 1865, before the town was even surveyed. St James' Anglican Church was consecrated in August of that year. The vicar, the legendary W. J. G. Bluett, was then stationed at Burnham. St James' was enlarged in 1884 but destroyed by fire in 1934. The second St James', built of brick to a design by E. R. Wilson (an Invercargill architect whose brother was vicar of Southbridge at the time), was consecrated in August 1935. It stands at the corner of High and Hastings Streets, immediately adjacent to Southbridge School. A vicarage designed by B. W. Mountfort was built in 1874 but demolished in 1962 after a new vicarage had been built in 1955.

A Presbyterian church, St John's, opened in Southbridge in 1870 after the town's Presbyterians had been meeting in the schoolroom for two years. A new church was built in 1884, but the 1870 building remained in use as a church hall. Both buildings were demolished in c.1970 when a new church was built. A brick manse standing next to the church in Lee Street survives; the church closed in 2007.

Five years after the Presbyterian church opened, a Methodist church, which had been built north of the growing town in 1869, was moved into the town's centre. (The church's original site, where seven roads converge at Bishops Corner, became a cemetery.) The church building was sold in 1949 and became a residence.

A Catholic church, St Joseph's, opened in O'Connells Street in September 1878. Active in promoting the building of the Catholic church in Southbridge (and in Leeston) were members of the McEvedy family. The McEvedy brothers emigrated to Australia in 1858, came on to Hokitika in 1864, then in 1866 abandoned gold-seeking for farming, buying their first land in the Sedgemere district. Notable old farmhouses in the Southbridge and Sedgemere districts are associated with the family. A new church, built in 1894 and extended in 1905, served Southbridge's Catholics until 1982. It was subsequently sold and became a gallery and then also a dwelling.

Southbridge's school opened in November 1868. Its roll began to decline in the 1890s, after reaching a peak in 1890 of 389. After the old school burned down in 1924, a new primary school, which opened in 1926, was built on a different site across the road and a secondary school, which opened in 1929, was built on the site of the old primary school. The opening of the Southbridge district high school in 1903 marked the beginning of public secondary education in the district. It was one area in which Southbridge remained more important than Leeston until Ellesmere College, located in Leeston, was established in 1981.

Southbridge School. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Like other Ellesmere towns, Southbridge had some small-scale industry in the 19th century. A water-powered flour mill opened at Milltown, to the south, in 1865. Renamed the Southbridge Roller Mills in 1898, it operated until the 1940s, being converted first from water to steam power, then to electricity. The building was dismantled after the mill closed. Another flour mill was started near Southbridge in the 1860s by William Inwood, whose large family estate was called Waikewai. The mill prospered for a number of years but ceased operating at the end of the 19th century, partly because the supply of water in the creek on which the mill was built decreased as nearby land was drained and developed. The mill building survived until the late 1950s; its demolition left only the water race as evidence of the mill's existence.

'Waikewai' homestead in 1926. Source: Pan-0119-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

But secondary industry in Southbridge, as in all other Ellesmere towns and townships, was never as important to the economic well-being of the town as servicing the surrounding farms and storing the products of those farms prior to their shipment into Christchurch. The flour mills near Southbridge were one aspect of this economic reliance of the town on local farms. Southbridge also had an implement works which developed out of a blacksmith's shop established in 1865. Several grain merchants had offices and storage sheds in Southbridge. There was also a creamery in Southbridge around the turn of the century.

Being the terminus of the railway from Hornby, which was officially opened to Southbridge on 30 July 1875, helped ensure that, although it lagged behind Leeston later in the 19th century and early in the 20th, Southbridge remained a thriving town. Coal, timber and other general merchandise arrived in Southbridge by rail for distribution around the district and grain, flour, wool, potatoes and livestock were loaded out for Christchurch and Lyttelton.

Virtually all of the Homebrook run, on which Southbridge was located, had been freeholded by 1865. Some notable larger freehold farms were established in the rural areas surrounding Southbridge, including Oakleigh. Charles Hurst made the transition from runholder (he held the 5,600-hectare Valette run in Mid Canterbury for a time) to freehold farmer when he purchased Oakleigh in 1866. Around 1,200 hectares of the farm's total of a little more than 2,100 hectares was soon converted to 'artificial' pasture. Around his two-storey dwelling Hurst planted 25 hectares in garden, orchards and plantations. Moville Farm, owned by George Baxter, grew from around 105 hectares in 1863 to more than 800 hectares by 1903. Baxter grew wheat on a large scale for several years before becoming chiefly a sheep farmer. His handsome homestead was built of brick and stone.

Southbridge was where the first farmers' organisations in Ellesmere began. A farmers' club, formed in 1869, sponsored a ploughing competition in the year it was founded. The club was followed by a horticultural and rural industries society and an agricultural and pastoral association. The association held its first show in January 1871 in Southbridge. It was an early sign that Leeston was to outstrip Southbridge when the second show, in December 1871, was held in Leeston. In 1873 the association established its permanent home in Leeston, not Southbridge.

The first Ellesmere Horticultural Society was formed in 1881, but soon went into recess. Its successor, the Southbridge Horticultural Society, formed in 1898, continued through the 20th century.

Music-making in Ellesmere began in Southbridge with the formation of an orchestral society and a glee club in the town's early years. A Southbridge brass band was formed in 1876, some years before a band was formed in Leeston. But when the long-lived Ellesmere Brass Band was formed in 1903 it was based in Leeston, where a band room was acquired, not in Southbridge.

Ellesmere Brass Band Hall, Leeston. Source: A McEwan, July 2017.

Southbridge was never as important as Leeston as an administrative centre. In 1885, when its population was more than 600, Southbridge became a town district, which gave it a measure of autonomy from the road board based in Leeston. One of the town board's early actions was to purchase the town hall and library which had been built as private ventures. In 1895 the board built public baths behind the town hall which were not replaced until the early 1970s. In 1957, just before it went out of existence, the town board supervised the building of a new fire station by working bees, 'a splendid example' it was observed 'of what can be accomplished by a well-directed community effort'. The town retained its independence until 1959 when it amalgamated with Ellesmere county.

Southbridge Park had its origins in 1913 when a recreation ground was opened on the local domain. A grandstand was built in 1923. From soon after the park opened until the mid-1980s it was the scene of popular Labour Day sports meetings.[50]

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[50] For Southbridge see Graham and Chapple, pp. 46-47. 52, 55-68, 88-105, 118-19, 148-52, 154, 157-59, 162-63, 165-66, 171-74; Singleton, pp. 78-82, 128-44, 449-53; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 708, 710-11, 713, 780; Hanrahan, pp. 183-84; *Selwyn Times*, 14 March 2018, p. 15.

Little Rakaia and the Rakaia River

The Rakaia River flows from the main highway bridge to the sea about ten kilometres south of Southbridge. Between Southbridge and the river is an ill-defined area which became known as Little Rakaia. Although Little Rakaia had a school, from 1874 until 1907 and again from 1919 until 1938, and very briefly a post office (1896-1901), there was never a store, hall or church, which even the smallest settlements that qualified as villages usually possessed.[51]

The Rakaia River itself, between the main highway bridge and its mouth, posed a risk of flooding to the Killinchy and Southbridge districts. The risk of the river breaking through into the Killinchy swamp was recognised in 1865. Embankments at weak spots along the river banks were proposed and in 1872 the North Rakaia River Board of Conservators was established to deal with the threat. The board erected groynes from the bridge for more than 20 kilometres towards the sea. Later the North Canterbury Catchment Board took over responsibility for the river protection works.

The river was also, however, recognised as a useful source of water for stock and for irrigation. An 1878 report for the new Selwyn County Council identified the Rakaia and Hororata Rivers as potential sources of water. (The story of water being taken from the Rakaia River above the main highway bridge and from the Hororata River is told in Chapter 3, The Inland Plains.) On the seaward side of the highway bridge an intake was built to bring water to the dry areas of the Heslerton and other runs on the extreme southern edge of the Ellesmere district. Irrigation from intakes on the Rakaia River was particularly crucial when the over-grown and rabbit-infested Northbank station, formed out of part of the Heslerton run, was developed and subdivided after 1948.[52]

Between the main road bridge over the Rakaia and the river's mouth was a crossing of the river known as Dobbins Ford. It was used for movement between the Ellesmere district and Mid Canterbury from the early 1870s. Although Rakaia Island was within the Ashburton road district it was generally serviced from the Ellesmere side of the river using Dobbins Ford. In 1878 there was agitation to extend the railway line from Southbridge across the river by way of a bridge at Dobbins Ford. Another effort was made in 1882 to have the river bridged at that point. A ferryman was stationed at the ford from 1879 until 1885, but the river was never bridged there. Since 1955 Rakaia Island has been reached by way of private bridges from Ellesmere district.[53]

The Rakaia Huts

At the mouth of the Rakaia River a small cluster of fishermen's huts began to develop in the very last years of the 19th century when professional people from Christchurch, including doctors and lawyers, began camping in the area. It very soon became predominantly a recreational fishing settlement, although shooting was also a popular activity. The first attempt to introduce salmon into the Rakaia in 1876 failed. A further attempt in 1900 was successful and by the time World War I began the salmon run in the Rakaia was well established. Whitebaiting as well as salmon fishing was an activity popular among the hut owners.

By 1920 the number of huts in the settlement had risen to 27, up from just three 20 years earlier. The hut owners held yearly licenses to occupy the sites of their huts from the Ellesmere County Council. In 1922 legislation formalised the situation of hut owners leasing land that was actually road reserve. In the same year a subdivision created around 20 private freehold sections. By the 1960s there were around 70 baches and more substantial holiday homes, around 50 on land leased from the council and around 20 on freehold sections. Later an early Lands and Survey Department camping ground was replaced by a site developed by the Selwyn District Council. A further large subdivision was formed beside the new camping ground. There was a shop at the Rakaia Huts from the mid-1950s until the mid-1980s. The huts and the camp ground are virtually on top of a moa-hunter archaeological site which was first reported by Julius von Haast in 1869.[54]

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[51] For Little Rakaia see Singleton, p. 126; Graham and Chapple, pp. 51-52, 162-63, 167.
[52] Singleton, pp. 54, 150-51; Graham and Chapple, pp. 90-92, 110-12.
[53] Singleton, pp. 119-21.
[54] Graham and Chapple, pp. 53-54, 80-82; Singleton, pp. 122-25.

Lakeside

Between Leeston, Southbridge and Lake Ellesmere is a large area of productive farmland which was originally mostly swamp, with a heavy cover of flax and raupo. Two small settlements, Lakeside and Sedgemere, developed in the area but because Leeston and Southbridge were so close neither became even a village. They had schools, churches and public halls but never significant places of business.

Although the land was swampy, freeholding in the Lakeside district out of the Birdling Brook and Price's runs began in the 1860s. The settlers dug drains and formed roads with the assistance of the Ellesmere Road Board. A number of notable properties were established in the Lakeside area. Several of them were subdivided in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, making Lakeside an area of mostly smaller family farms.

One larger property inherited its name, Birdling Brook, from one of the original runs. Much of the 5,100-hectare run was freeholded in the 1860s by the runholder, Richard Taylor, who then sold off land as smaller farms. The homestead block, Birdling Brook, retained several older farm buildings, though a new homestead was built on the property in 1957.
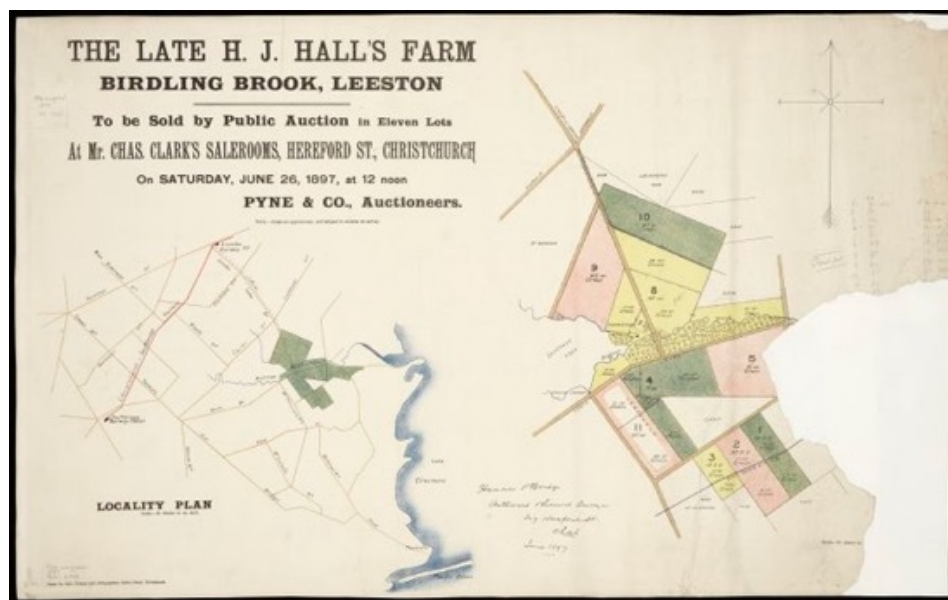
Birdling Brook sale poster, 1897. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington,

Robert McIlraith first took up land in Lakeside in 1870s and his property Brooklands was in the family's hands until the end of the 20th century. Brooklands was originally the name of the large property of E. J. Lee, who had subdivided his land in 1878. When Robert Inwood subdivided his large property Altonbrook in 1901, the homestead block was purchased by Wattie Lochhead who already owned adjoining land. Altonbrook remained a Lochhead family property until 1964. A son of Thomas Overton, who owned Meadowbank in the Irwell district, bought a property called Walsingham Farm in 1876 which was subdivided in 1920. There were also numerous Irish settlers in Lakeside, among them the McPhersons (Northern Irish Presbyterians) whose concrete house of c.1875 is still a notable Lakeside landmark.

Lakeside was a classic 'mixed farming' area, the same farmers often running sheep, milking some cows and growing grain. Dairying was sufficiently widespread in the area for a creamery to be opened in 1893.

Lakeside is near Timberyard Point, at the mouth of Harts Creek. Through the years that punts, barges, schooners, small steamers and whaleboats brought timber from the sawmills at Little River across the lake Lakeside was busier than other small settlements in the area. The trade across the lake ceased in 1886 when the railway line to Little River was completed. Many years later, in 1933, the old landing reserve became a recreational domain and picnic area vested in the Ellesmere county council. A gun club formed in 1920 started using a site on the north side of Harts Creek for shooting matches, but ten years later the club moved to a new site near Leeston and its last annual meeting in the Lakeside hall was held in 1931, though annual 'Duck Dinners' continued there until 1940.

A school was opened at Lakeside in 1875; its roll peaked in 1890 at 80. After a fire destroyed the original building, a new school was built in 1910. After the school closed in 1940 Lakeside children were taken into Leeston for their schooling.

In 1903 the school and the creamery were judged to be the only features of the district of note. Lakeside's defining building, the memorial hall (demolished), came later.

Soldiers' Memorial Hall, Lakeside (demolished). Source: NZ History.

The school was used for social and other occasions until August 1917 when the Soldiers' Memorial Hall was opened at what had been known until then as 'creamery corner'. The hall became the centre of social life in Lakeside. A new kitchen and ladies' room were added in 1932 and a new supper room built in 1952. Tennis courts were built beside the hall in 1931 and the club remained active for more than 60 years, before closing in the 1990s. Several other sports clubs made use of the hall through the middle years of the 20th century. Table tennis was played in the hall after the end of World War II. Football was already well-established in Lakeside by the time the hall was built, the club being formed in the 1890s. Hockey was played by a Lakeside club in the 1930s.

A library was built at Lakeside in 1875, the year the school opened. It functioned until 1952 when the books were transferred to cupboards in the hall. When the hall opened there were confident expectations that 'creamery corner' would become an important and busy centre, but that never happened. The hall, for so long the focal point of life in Lakeside, was damaged beyond repair in the earthquakes of 2010-11 and was demolished in 2013. By mid-2017 plans to build a new hall on the site were well advanced.[55]

Sedgemere

Sedgemere, like Lakeside, is located in an area that was originally swamp. There was possibly a flax mill in the area in the late 1860s. The conversion of the Sedgemere district into farmland depended on the cutting of culverts through the ridge of beach shingle that ran from Taumutu to the mouth of the Rakaia River. Various culverts were cut from the 1870s onwards. The most important culvert drained the spring-fed Coopers Lagoon to the sea. A remnant of the lagoon remained and was later recognised to have great wildlife importance. Concreting of the culverts began in the 1890s. In 1914 a special rating area was created to pay for the drainage works that kept Sedgemere dry enough for successful farming. New culverts were cut in 1937, 1946 and 1948. Clearance, maintenance and rebuilding of the culverts has continued into the present.

Sedgemere developed across parts of several runs – Waterford, Price's, Homebrook and Birdling Brook. As in adjoining Lakeside, once land had been freeholded out of the runs, a mix of large and small properties characterised the Sedgemere district. One property, Blackwater, was in the hands of members of the McEvedy family from 1870 until 1969. Holcombe was owned by the colourful clergyman, Bluett, until his death in 1885. Waikewai was freeholded in 1862 by James Inwood, who set up one of the early flour mills in the district. Around the turn of the century some of the larger freehold properties were further subdivided. As occurred all across the Selwyn District many of the local roads in Sedgemere bear the names of early land owners – McEvedy, Bluett and Washbourne among them.

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[55] For Lakeside see *Cyclopedia*, p. 705; Singleton, pp. 335-40; Patterson, pp. 84-85, 102-13, 294-301, 313, 316-23, 325-27, 360-65; Graham and Chapple, pp. 162-63, 167; *Selwyn Times*, 18 July 2017, p. 5..

Unlike nearby Lakeside, Sedgemere acquired a church. St Mark's Anglican Church, designed by Benjamin Mountfort, was consecrated in May 1882. The Sedgemere school opened the following year, as a side school of Lakeside. It became a separate school two years later. Its roll peaked, at 76, in 1890. One of those who promoted the founding of the Sedgemere school was the Ngai Tahu parliamentarian H. K. Taiaroa whose homestead, Awhitu House, was at Taumutu. (The homestead burned down in 2003.) Unusually for the time (when nationwide there was a separate system of native schools) both Maori and Pakeha pupils attended Sedgemere School and the school's end-of-year picnics were held for many years at Awhitu House.[56]


St Mark's Anglican Church, Sedgemere. Source: A Spice, December 2017

Although the Lakeside school was closed in 1940, the school at Sedgemere, further from either Leeston or Southbridge than Lakeside, continued well beyond the middle of the 20th century. In 1964 Sedgemere school still had 21 pupils and it was not closed until 1969. The old school building is now a residence. The survival of the Sedgemere school until that late date, when most of the other country schools in Ellesmere (Doyleston, Killinchy, Brookside and Lakeside) had been closed long before gave Sedgemere an ongoing focus for community life and helped give the area a sense of identity.

Sedgemere also had a post office from the 1880s until 1924. The Sedgemere hall opened in January 1917, a few months before the Lakeside hall. Around ten years later a supper room and indoor rifle range were added to the hall. The Lakeside-Sedgemere Miniature Rifle Club, formed in 1924, held its matches at the range in the Sedgemere hall until 1963. As at Lakeside, table tennis was played in the Sedgemere hall in the years after the end of World War II.[57]

Taumutu

Taumutu's greatest historical significance lies in its long Maori history. Nevertheless, only a relatively small amount of land at Taumutu was reserved for Maori and a number of European farming families became established in the district. After 1878, when the prominent Ngai Tahu leader H. K. Taiaroa built his principal residence, Awhitu House, at Taumutu, the district became one in which there were unusually close, for the late 19th and early 20th centuries, relations between Maori and Pakeha. This has already been noted in respect of the Sedgemere school. The Hone Wetere church, built on an ancient pa site at the initiative of Taiaroa and opened in April 1885, was also used by Maori and Pakeha.
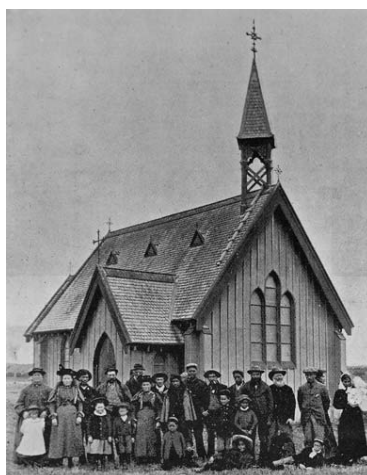

Hone Wetere Church, Taumutu. Source: Christchurch Libraries.

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[56] http://keteselwyn.peoplesnetworknz.info/places_of_interest/topics/show/397-taumutu
[57] For Sedgemere see Patterson, pp. 24-28; 160-61; 266-71, 302-04, 323-27, 329-30, 349-56; Graham and Chapple, pp. 51, 152, 163, 167. Singleton, pp. 341-46.

The farms established by European settlers in the Taumutu district were mostly relatively small. Small farming in the area was only made possible by the cutting of the culverts through the shingle ridge that lay behind the beach from Taumutu to the mouth of the Rakaia. The cutting of these culverts has been discussed in the section on Sedgemere.

Taumutu was also historically important as the point at which the lake was periodically opened, and at which attempts were made to create a permanent outlet for the lake, to relieve flooding of farmland around its margins. This is discussed in the section on Lake Ellesmere above. The other strong European presence in Taumutu, besides the area's farming families, was the fishing community which became established at Fisherman's Point. This is also discussed above in the section on the lake.[58]
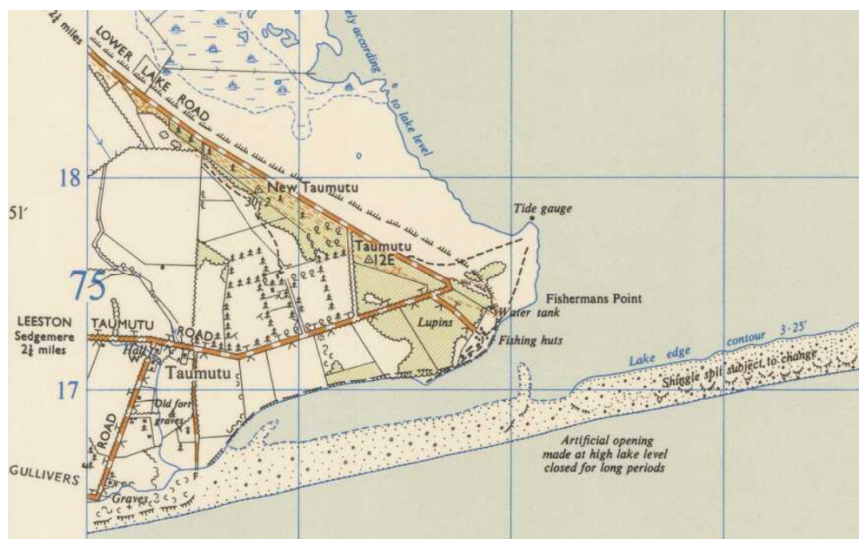
Detail of 1958 Department of Lands and Survey map showing Taumutu and Fisherman's Point.
Church marked below text stating 'Old fort & gravers'. Source: LINZ / Alexander Turnbull Library.

Selwyn is the only district in Canterbury which has gold mining as part of its history. The mining took place at the two geographical extremes of the district – in the mountains at the head of the Wilberforce River (see Chapter 6, The Mountains) and right on the coast at Taumutu.

Gold washed down the Rakaia River, probably from the reefs up the Wilberforce River, and was carried north up the coast by currents. It was found in small quantities in deposits of black sand on the beach at Taumutu and for a short distance south towards the river mouth. Gold was first discovered on the beach in the 1880s and small amounts were recovered using simple cradles. In second half of the 1890s more ambitious attempts to recover the gold in the beach sands began with the formation of two gold mining companies – the Taumutu and Southbridge Gold Mining Company and the Canterbury Ninety Mile Beach Gold Mining Company. An 'amalgamator' was imported to improve the chances of recovering payable amounts of gold, but neither company was successful.

In 1922 a new company, the Golden Sands Mining Company, proposed dredging between the mouth of the Rakaia River and Coopers Lagoon to recover gold from ancient buried leads. Farmers who feared their land would be damaged opposed the plan. When samples showed insufficient quantities of gold to warrant the expense of dredging the project was abandoned. During the Great Depression of the 1930s up to 30 unemployed men washed sand on the beach, but only meagre amounts of gold were obtained.[59]

The Taumutu beach was also the scene of the only shipwrecks in the history of Selwyn District. Up to 1900 at least eight small ships engaged in the coastal trade between Lyttelton and ports to the south came to grief on the coast between the mouth of the Rakaia and Taumutu. No relics of these shipwrecks are known to remain.[60]

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[58] For Taumutu see Patterson, pp. 132-45, 330-32; Graham and Chapple, pp. 92, 155-56; *Cyclopedia*, p. 704; Singleton, pp. 356-61.
[59] For gold mining on the beach at Taumutu see Singleton, pp. 347-52; Patterson pp. 310-12; Graham and Chapple, pp. 177-78.
[60] For shipwrecks see Singleton, pp. 353-55; Graham and Chapple, pp. 179-81.

Chapter 2

The state highway and rail 'corridor'

Introduction

Before 1989 the line of the 'great south road' (state highway 1) and the 'great southern railway' (the South Island main trunk), as they were known in the 1850s and 1860s, separated Ellesmere county from the Malvern and Selwyn counties. Only a small part of Ellesmere county, on the north bank of the Rakaia River, was west of the highway and railway. Though the line no longer separates different local body areas it does still separate the Ellesmere district from the inland plains. The farmland and townships in the corridor share many aspects of their histories with the larger districts that lie on either side, but because the road and railway influenced the development of the transport 'corridor' it has a history distinct from that of the two large districts which it separates.

The runs

Near Christchurch two runs – Coringa and Fields – straddled the line of the south road and railway. Fields, which included where Weedons and Rolleston later developed, ran sheep and cattle in the 1850s before, in about 1858, it was sold to James Fitzgerald and in effect incorporated into The Springs. Coringa was a run of the inland plains and is discussed in Chapter 3. Further out from Christchurch the line of the road and railway crossed the Broadlands and Dunsandel runs. Broadlands was a large run of around 10,000 hectares which came into the hands of a prominent early resident of Christchurch, John Cracroft Wilson, who ran cattle on it in the 1850s and 1860s. Sheep replaced cattle in the late 1860s. Wilson eventually sold the run to his manager, C. H. McAlpine, whose family later held runs in the Waimakariri high country (see Chapter 5). In 1879 the run was cut up and sold by McAlpine's trustees.

The much smaller Dunsandel run, of between 2,500 and 2,800 hectares, was the only run which lay substantially in the road and rail corridor. The absentee owner of the run (which was managed for him by Messrs Harman and Stevens) freeholded more than 1,500 hectares, which were subdivided and sold off as smaller farms in 1877. The homestead was sold on a block of just 240 hectares, but this property was later increased to a more sizeable farm.[1]

Between the Selwyn and Rakaia Rivers, the eastern extremities of two large runs, Camla and Haldon, which were primarily runs of the inland plains, straddled the road and rail corridor. The boundary between the two runs was about where the Bankside railway station was located.[2]

The south road and the great southern railway

By 1852, two years after Christchurch had been founded, there was already a wagon track leading from Riccarton, just west of the new town, to the Selwyn River. The track was used mostly by runholders getting to and from their holdings on the plains south of Christchurch. After Alfred Lake built an accommodation house where the track crossed the Selwyn River it became known as 'Lake's track' but by the end of the 1850s it was commonly being called the great south road. Lake's accommodation house was on the south side of the Selwyn. In 1856 a new accommodation house was built on the north bank of the river. It was initially known as the Woolpack then, after 1861, as Giggs' after its proprietor. In 1859 another accommodation house, the 'Halfway House', was built close to where Rolleston was later located. As the track was improved and became a road, coaches began to provide regular services along it, at first just to Waterholes, 15 kilometres from Christchurch. The early accommodation houses between Christchurch and the Selwyn went into decline once the railway reached the Selwyn River and then the Rakaia.[3]

Until the Rakaia River was bridged in 1873 travellers crossed the river at various points, initially on horseback or on foot, at fords both upstream and downstream from where the south road met the river. The south road in these early years did not follow exactly the line of today's state highway 1. It crossed the Selwyn by way of a ford about three kilometres above where the main road bridge was built later, continued on to Bankside, then veered inland again to a ford on the Rakaia

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[1] Singleton, pp. 38-39; Acland, pp. 40-42, 98-99.
[2] Acland, pp. 86-90.
[3] Singleton, pp. 94-98.

near where Mead was later located. A ferry service across the Rakaia was established in 1858 where the early south road reached the Rakaia and the North Bank hotel was built at the ferry. The hotel burned down in 1871. The road did not settle on its present line until the Selwyn was bridged in 1893, in a more direct line between Rolleston and the Rakaia bridge. A concrete bridge replaced this original road bridge over the Selwyn in 1927.[4]
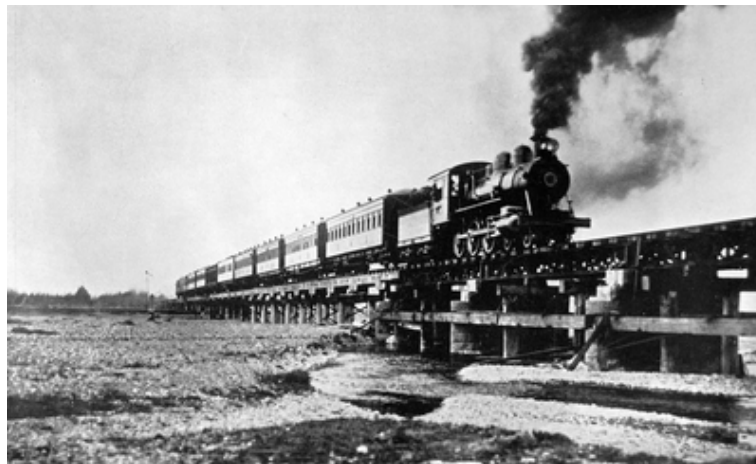
Midland Express crossing the Selwyn River bridge, *Weekly Press* 12 September 1906. Source: Kete Selwyn.

The Provincial Government authorised the building of a railway south of Christchurch as far as Rakaia in 1863-64. Construction of the line began in May 1865. It was opened as far as Rolleston in October 1866 and to the Selwyn in October 1867. The first efforts to bridge the Selwyn River were frustrated by severe flooding, which destroyed the first two bridges built. Construction of the line ceased once it had reached the Selwyn and did not resume until 1872. It was opened to the north bank of the Rakaia on 2 June 1873. A combined road and rail bridge carried the line over the river. (A temporary, light-weight, traffic bridge had been built across the river in 1869.) The timber for the permanent bridge (except for its iron-bark piles) was brought from Little River across Lake Ellesmere. The bridge was lengthened in 1882. The line between Christchurch and Rakaia had been built to the Provincial Government's wide gauge. It was converted to the national narrow gauge between 1874 and 1876. The 1873 bridge over the Rakaia continued to carry both rail and road until separate bridges were built in 1939.[5]

Bob Semple, Minister of Works (holding cane), opening the Rakaia Road Bridge, 25 March 1939.
Source: PAColl-5482-061, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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[4] Singleton, pp. 109-13; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 201-05; Graham and Chapple, pp. 129-32.
[5] Singleton, pp. 83-86, 114-18; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 201-05; Graham and Chapple, pp. 129-32.

The towns and townships

Templeton and Weedons

Templeton, now effectively a suburb of Christchurch, lies on the border between the city and the district – a further indication of the extension of Christchurch's 'sphere of influence' into Selwyn District which is remarked upon in Chapter 2. Most of the commercial centre of Templeton and its residential area are in Christchurch City but one important historic building, the former Trent's chicory mill, is in the Selwyn District. The mill was established in 1867, then rebuilt in brick after a fire in 1873.

Weedons is the first settlement in the transport corridor which is wholly in the Selwyn District. The nucleus of the township was an accommodation house built on land which was part of The Springs run on the great south road. The accommodation house was the first stopping place of the Cobb & Co. coaches on the road south of Christchurch. The 'Halfway House' opened in 1859 and was leased in 1861 to William Weeden whose name, somehow corrupted, became applied to the area. In 1862 a township of approximately 300 sections was laid out around the Weedons accommodation house. The optimism evident in the size of the subdivision proved excessive. At most four sections were sold and when the railway was opened to Rolleston in 1866, the license of the accommodation house was transferred to Rolleston.

Main's Halfway House, Weedons, c. 1865. Source: CCL Photo CD 17, IMG0058, Christchurch Libraries.

The first dwelling house was built in Weedons in the early 1860s, by an early purchaser of freehold land from the government. Other freehold agricultural holdings were soon taken up in the area. Methodists began meeting in Weedons in 1869 and in 1876 they opened a church in the settlement. In 1903 Weedons had, besides the long-established Wesleyan church, a public school and a post office at the railway station. Though Weedons was never more than a hamlet, the school, opened in 1871, has a continuous history up to the present. A new school was built in 1966, and the old, by then in use for nearly a century, was sold for disposal. When a new school house was needed in 1955 a prefabricated model house erected at an industries fair in Christchurch was re-erected in Weedons. Although the church closed in 1985 there is still a cemetery where it once stood.[6]

A Royal New Zealand Air Force camp was established at Weedons during World War II. The camp continued for at least three decades after the end of the war (there were 30 families living there in the 1960s) and for many years the radio masts near the camp were a landmark for travellers on the south road. When the camp was established a second railway station, north of the original Weedons station, was opened, but both stations have long since been demolished. Part of a recreation reserve set aside by the provincial government in 1876 became, in 1967, the site of a golf course which remains in use.

Rolleston

For many years Rolleston was scarcely larger than Weedons. Like Weedons, Rolleston developed on land that was originally part of Fitzgerald's and Cox's Springs run. The first attempt to stimulate the growth of a town at Rolleston was made in 1863, before the railway had been built that far south. The subdivision was a failure. Rolleston enjoyed a brief spurt of growth in the short time it was the railhead of the great southern railway, from October 1866 to October 1867. It was during that year that the license for the accommodation house at Weedons was transferred to Rolleston. The opening

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[6] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 721-23; Singleton, pp. 95, 258. Also http://www.peelingbackhistory.co.nz/templeton-weedons-e-m-temple-william-weeden/

of the hotel in Rolleston ensured that it, rather than Weedons, would become the centre of the local district. For many years the hotel and railway station *were* Rolleston for most travellers. The hotel burned down in July 1930 but was quickly replaced. (Tenders were called for a building in concrete designed by C. R. A. Dawe, former Christchurch city engineer and surveyor, in October of the same year).

Rolleston Hotel in 1956. Source: Kete Selwyn.

When building a branch line towards Lake Ellesmere was suggested in the late 1860s it was expected Rolleston would become a railway junction, but the Ellesmere district was served instead by a line which left the south line at Hornby. Then Rolleston did, after all, become a railway junction when the lines to Springfield and Whitecliffs were built in the 1870s.

But becoming a railway junction did not lead to further growth. There has always been a railway station at Rolleston. The present one, built after its predecessor burned down in 1967, is the fifth. The station built in 1923 was built on a new site, further from the hotel. The turning triangle at the junction of the lines south and west and the overhead tanks, supplied by a waterwheel from which steam trains replenished their water, were landmarks of the town for many years.

An 1878 subdivision, of more than 300 quarter-acre sections, was only slightly more successful than the failed subdivision of 1863. A few scattered buildings were erected on sections in the vicinity of the hotel and railway station. A school was opened in 1893. The original building was demolished in 1974 but the school remained open, serving the small township and the surrounding farms.

Rolleston School buildings, image on the right showing building just before its demolition in 1974. Source: Kete Selwyn.

A sale yards also opened in the 1890s, but they were used only until 1905. A blacksmith's shop was opened in 1897, but the township did not have a butchery until 1918 and the first general store did not open until after the end of World War I. When the Industrial School in Burnham closed in 1918 and the Defence Department took the site over, a redundant hall was moved to Rolleston to become the town's memorial hall. It survived until the 1990s.

The Junction service station opened on the main highway in 1939. A sawmill was operating in the town in the 1930s and in 1947, soon after the war ended, a tile factory opened. Unusually for townships in the Selwyn District, Rolleston was without a church until 1973 when a Union church opened. It was built as a combined effort by Lincoln's Catholic, Anglican and Union (Presbyterian and Methodist) parishes and the Hornby Methodist parish.

Templeton-Rolleston section of SH1 being built, c. 1930. Source: PAColl-6181-56, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

In the late 1950s Rolleston was still just a scattering of houses near the station, hotel, school and community hall. The late 1950s and 1960s saw a few more houses erected east of the railway line, on part of the area included in the 1878 subdivision plan. In 1970 a block of shops opened, taking the place of the old general store.

Through all these years Rolleston existed as a minor farm servicing town and to meet the needs of the travelling public, whether by rail or road. A hint of what the future held for Rolleston came when the Labour Government announced, in November 1973, that a new town to accommodate up to 80,000 people would be built at Rolleston, on some 4,000 hectares of land in both the Ellesmere and Paparua counties. After the National Party won the general election in November 1975 the plan was abandoned and Rolleston resumed, for the next 20 or 30 years, a leisurely rate of growth.
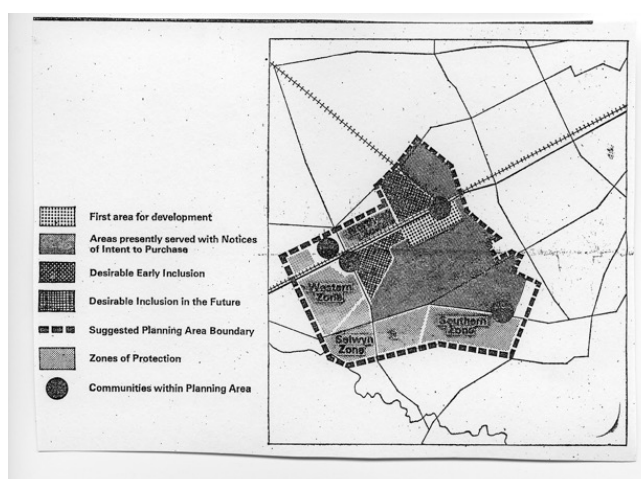
Rolleston New Town, 1975. *Christchurch Star* 8 October 1975. Source: Kete Selwyn.

In 1994 the Ellesmere county council finally approved a change to its planning scheme to allow for greater and more rapid growth at Rolleston. Until the 1980s, Rolleston's water came from rainwater tanks, water races and a well at the station. The growth of Rolleston envisaged in the 1994 plan change made better arrangements for water supply and sewerage necessary. The Ellesmere county council had previously sunk a new deep bore to supply water to the growing town and a private sewage scheme to serve the new subdivisions was built in the early 1990s. Land was purchased for reserves and a community centre, incorporating a library, was built. A new supermarket and shops were also built, an industrial park created, and sewage treatment and water supply further upgraded. The seal was set on Rolleston's rise to pre-eminence in Selwyn District by the district council's decision in 2005 to build its new headquarters there. By the second decade of the 21st century, the sleepy little railway junction town on the main highway had become a large, self-sufficient town, though a sizable proportion of its population commutes to Christchurch for work.

Faringdon subdivision, Rolleston, c.2012. Source: Te Ara.

In 2016 an area described as 'south-west Christchurch', though it lay almost entirely in the Selwyn District and included West Melton, Prebbleton, Lincoln and Rolleston, was identified as the third fastest growing region in New Zealand (behind only Hobsonville and Central Christchurch). Between 2013 and 2023 the population of the area was projected to grow by 85 per cent. Not all of this growth was to be accommodated in Rolleston – its 2013 census population (10,000) was not expected to double until the 2030s – but the town's phenomenal growth in the early 21st century has transformed its character even more profoundly than recent growth in Prebbleton and Lincoln. The Christchurch southern motorway, and a decision to four-lane the highway from Rolleston into Christchurch, has effectively tied Rolleston into the city and sharply distinguished it from the other larger towns of the Selwyn District like Darfield and Leeston, both formerly but no longer headquarters of local government.[7]

Burnham

Burnham, thanks to first its industrial school and then its military camp, has been distinct in the district from towns whose main role was to service the farms of the areas surrounding them. After the Burnham estate was freeholded in the early 1860s by Richard Bethel, he donated a site for an Anglican church. All Saints' was completed early in 1864 and opened in April of that year. The church was designed by Henry William Harper, son of the Bishop, who was living at the time with his brother Charles on Charles's Malvern Hills station. Based at All Saints', the 'squire parson' W. J. G. Bluett, who had arrived in Canterbury in December 1865, held services in homes, hotels, schools and road board offices over a wide area that embraced most of the Ellesmere district and also places inland of the main road and railway line.

Interior of All Saints' Church, Burnham Camp. Source: A McEwan, February 2018.

In the early 20th century the church was relocated to the industrial school (see below). The building was lengthened by six metres and a bell turret added. When the Defence Department took over the site of the industrial school and established the Burnham military camp after World War I, the church became the only garrison church of the New Zealand Army. The land on which the church had originally stood became part of Lincoln College's Ashley Dene farm. The vicarage, also built in 1864, was demolished in 1916, but in the 1980s the old cemetery at the original site of the church was 're-discovered'.

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[7] Singleton, pp. 83-86, 243-56; Hanrahan, p. 234; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 726-28; *Selwyn Times*, 29 November 2016, pp. 1, 4-5.

All Saints' Church being moved. Source: Kete Selwyn.

At what became Burnham, a railway station called Leeston Road was opened in 1867 on a windswept and waterless part of the Broadlands run. A hotel, also built in 1867, burned down in 1876. As at Rolleston and Weedons, an attempted subdivision in 1878 was a failure and no town developed.

The Burnham industrial school was established by the Provincial Government in 1873-74, on land set aside for the purpose in 1871. A two-storey timber and corrugated iron building had separate wings for boys and girls. It took in both children who were destitute and young people in trouble with the law. Its critics charged that it just as often turned unfortunate youngsters into criminals as reformed those who had already shown criminal tendencies. By 1877 there were 71 boys and 36 girls living at the industrial school. After the death of an enlightened first master the school became notorious for its harsh treatment of children. Local police had to help with catching runaways. After 1901 most of the girls in need of 'reforming' were sent to a hostel in Burwood, Christchurch, but the school continued to be used to house delinquent, troublesome or homeless boys until it was closed in 1918. It was given notoriety by the writings of the politician John A. Lee who spent time in the school as a boy.[8]

Scenes from Burnham Industrial School. *Canterbury Times* 5 February 1902. Source: Kete Selwyn.

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[8] Singleton, pp. 411-15.

In 1874 Burnham was chosen as the New Zealand site from which to observe the transit of Venus and oversee five sub-observatories around the country.[9] Burnham was chosen as the primary observing site because it was close to the railway and the telegraph, which enabled clocks to be synchronised with other observers around the country and longitudes to be fixed accurately.[10] The 1874 observation was not successful but a monument in Burnham commemorates the successful 1882 observation of the transit.
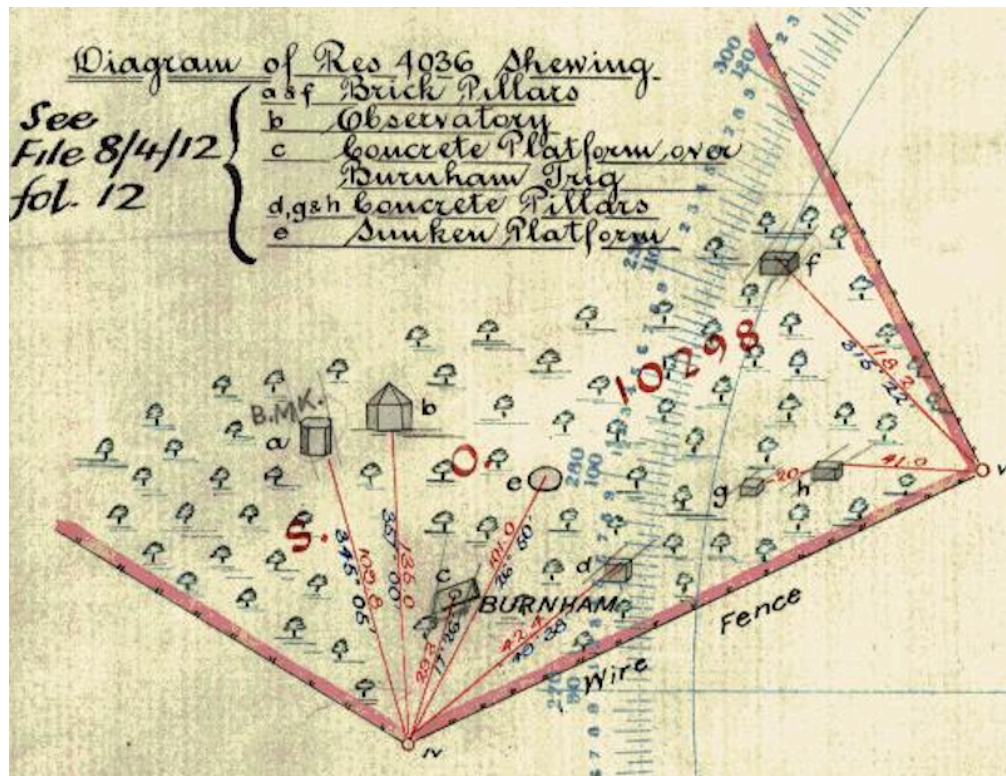
'Site of Transit of Venus Observation 1874', Detail of SO 5638, dated March 1920. Source: LINZ.

By 1903 Burnham, the township, had grown to a small settlement near the industrial school. There was a post and telegraph office at the railway station, a school (opened in 1884) and, with the relocation of All Saints, a church. In 1899 the government opened a poultry station, one of four in the country, on four hectares of land that had been part of the industrial school property. The station, intended to raise the standard of egg-laying flocks, had 34 pens, a large shed for brooders and incubators and its own feed-milling machinery. There was also for a period a sawmill at Burnham and a local police station.

In the early 20th century this small township served the surrounding farming district. One typical farm, Burnham Grange, combined almost 100 hectares of freehold land with around 75 hectares of leasehold. The owner in 1903 had purchased the first parts of his farm in 1870 when it was all rough tussock. He was engaged in sheep farming, grain growing and dairying – the standard combination of Canterbury's mixed farming on the Canterbury Plains.[11]

Three years after the closure of the industrial school in 1918 the Defence Department held its first territorial camp at Burnham. The site and buildings of school were transferred to the Department of Defence for a military camp in 1920. The area became a military reserve in 1922. The camp grew over the years into the largest military establishment in the South Island. Troops were trained there during World War II and after the war young men undertaking their compulsory military training (until it was abolished in 1972) spent three months at the camp. A new railway station was erected at Burnham after the military camp had been established, to cope with comings and goings of military personnel.[12]

[9] *West Coast Times* 2 December 1874, p. 2.
[10] http://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2012/poised-to-mark-transit-of-venus-history/
[11] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 778-79.
[12] Singleton, p. 85.

WWII soldiers of the 3rd echelon waiting for the leave train at Burnham Railway Station, c. May 1940.
Source: DA-12371-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

While All Saints had become the garrison church of the camp, Catholic soldiers were not provided for until services were held in the camp during World War II. The services continued after the end of the war for camp personnel and Catholics in the civilian Burnham community. In 1966 'the Catholic hut' was dedicated to St Michael. Military priests were stationed at the camp until the early 1990s.[13]

During World War II there was a brothel in a Burnham house, one of the few recorded throughout the Selwyn District. The extent to which the military camp dominated life in Burnham and made it a place very different from other Selwyn District townships was evident in 1953 when the new school was located within the camp. The old building was taken to Courtenay and the school's original site became a domain. In 2004 the domain was disposed of because all the facilities needed in the Burnham area were available within the camp. The general store, which had been built on the site of the hotel after the fire of 1876, closed in 1979 and most of the building had been demolished by 1983.

Although the township of Burnham was, for most of the 20th century, overshadowed by the military camp, there remains a local Burnham community based on the farming families in the surrounding district and, more recently, the owners of lifestyle blocks. [14]

Selwyn Township

A township called Selwyn had a brief existence, though Selwyn has survived as a place name, on the south side of the Selwyn River where the main road and railway cross the river. The first hotel in the area opened in a local homestead. Separate premises were soon built and in 1861 the premises came into the hands of G. H. Giggs. Known by the name of its proprietor, Giggs' became a well-used stopping off point for travellers. In anticipation of the arrival of the railway, land was subdivided at Selwyn in 1862, but little was built until the station was opened in October 1867. It was built on the Ellesmere side of the river because of problems with the bridge.

After the railway reached the Selwyn in 1867 work on the line was suspended for around five years. In those five years Selwyn flourished as a railhead township on the south bank of the river. General stores and a hotel were built by the station. In its heyday the town boasted a bakery, a blacksmith, a bootmaker, a butcher, a saddler, a wheelwright, a tailor, a livery stable, a threshing machine operator and a boarding house, as well as the hotel. When the line was pushed further south, to reach the Rakaia River in the middle of 1873, the businesses moved from Selwyn to Dunsandel. In some cases the actual buildings were moved the short distance south. One of the last buildings to go from Selwyn was the hotel, a two-storeyed building with around 12 bedrooms and a large dining room, which was moved to Dunsandel in 1895. (It was not demolished until the late 1950s.)

Within a few years, Selwyn was a ghost town. By the early 20th century the village had almost entirely disappeared. By then all that remained were a creamery, the station (with a sub-post office in it), a wheelwright's premises and one shop. The large goods shed at the station was still being used by farmers when they sent their sheep, wool, cream and wheat into Christchurch. Years later, around 1951, a restaurant, the White House, was built near the site of the long-vanished township.[15]

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[13] Hanrahan, p. 40.
[14] Singleton, pp. 234-42; Popple, pp. 138-42; Hanrahan, p. 231.
[15] Popple, p. 60; Singleton, pp. 84, 207-09; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 779-80.

Dunsandel

After the railway had been extended to Rakaia a station-master was appointed to Dunsandel in 1873. A new station and goods shed were built, despite the proximity of the station and shed at nearby Selwyn township, because Dunsandel was more conveniently located for most of the farms in the district. The site chosen for Dunsandel was also far enough away from the Selwyn River to escape the risk from floods in the river. The new township took its name from the run on which it was located. For many years part of the town (the school, domain, railway station and a hotel) was in Ellesmere county and part (the highway, hall, churches and businesses) in Selwyn county. In 1963 the Rakaia riding of the former Selwyn county was included in an enlarged Ellesmere county, bringing all of Dunsandel under the one local authority.

By the end of the 19th century Dunsandel was a respectably sized township. It gained a new railway station in 1902, which remained open until 1973. Two years after it closed it was damaged by the great wind of 1975 and was demolished. St Thomas's Anglican Church was consecrated in December 1884. It was roughcast in 1964 and then, after being deconsecrated in 2004, became a private dwelling. The Presbyterians, after holding services in various venues from the 1880s, built a church in Dunsandel in 1907. The church was demolished after a new church was built, followed by a new hall, in 1993. The Methodists built their church in Dunsandel five years after the Presbyterians. The church, designed by R. W. England, was opened in April 1912. After it became redundant (the last services were held in 1971 after Dunsandel's Methodists united with the town's Presbyterians) it was used as a craft shop, then became the premises of the Dunsandel Historic Society. It has recently been sold by the society.

Former Dunsandel Methodist Church. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

At the time Dunsandel was founded the Provincial Government was offering a £ for £ subsidy for libraries. A local committee promptly raised the funds needed to erect a library, which also served as the town's hall. The hall was enlarged several times in the later years of the 19th century, then replaced in 1929. The hall of 1929 was also enlarged several times in subsequent years. It was used by a local theatrical group, the Dunsandel Players, from 1956 until the mid-1980s and housed the town's library from 1981 until 2001. The hall remained in use up to the time of the earthquakes, although it had competition from a sports centre built in 1984 and a new school hall, built in 2002. After the hall was demolished following the earthquakes a new community centre opened in August 2017. A significant part of the total cost of $3.9 million was raised locally and from foundations and charities.
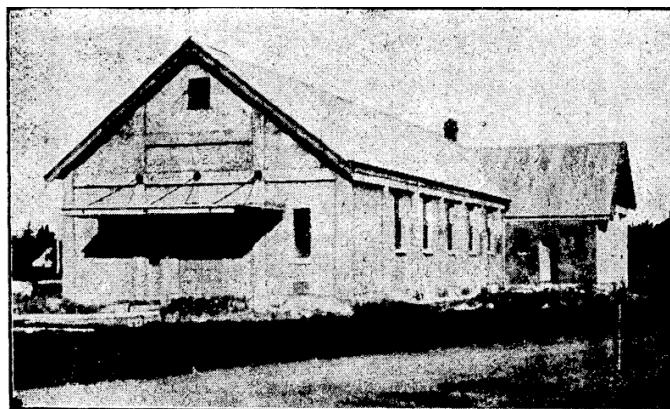
The new Dunsandel Town Hall, *Ellesmere Guardian* 4 October 1929. Source: PapersPast.

A school opened at Dunsandel in 1879. The Upper Selwyn School, which had been established about three kilometres away in 1871, survived until 1936 despite being close to Dunsandel. The original Dunsandel school building burned down in 1936. The school which replaced it was added to in the 1940s and 1950s.

By 1903 Dunsandel had a population of 236. Like other Selwyn District settlements, it flourished as a service centre for the farms surrounding it. One large property of nearly 400 hectares was bought out of the original run by Jonathan Sowden in 1877. In 1903 Sowden's farm was producing wheat, barley and oats. Turnips and rape were grown for sheep. Sowden was not a typical small farmer of the post-run era on the Canterbury Plains. He also owned around 445 hectares in western Dunsandel and more than a thousand hectares at Aylesbury. Other farms in the Dunsandel area in 1903 ranged in size from 150 hectares to 250 hectares. A few were larger – between 400 and 700 hectares. Some farms combined freehold and leasehold land. Despite the range of sizes and different tenures, almost all the farms combined raising sheep with cropping and dairying. A local sale yards operated in the town from the 1880s until the 1930s.

In 1909 five new farms in the Fyvie Settlement were created out of the Camla run near Dunsandel. There was a school on the Fyvie Settlement for only 14 years, from 1913 till 1927.

A domain was set aside at Dunsandel in 1887. From 1895 until 1969 the Dunsandel Sports Association held New Year's Day sports on the domain. The association was wound up in 1970. In 1914 the residents of Dunsandel sought assistance from the Ellesmere domain board to make improvements to the town's domain. By 1935 there were a bowling green, tennis courts and a pavilion on the four-hectare domain. In that year the Ellesmere domain board took over administration of the domain from the local board. The town's swimming baths, opened in 1911, were restored in 1950, then closed in 2003. A new post office was opened in 1952. After it was closed in 1988 a veterinary service took the building over.[16]

Bankside

Between Dunsandel and Rakaia a railway station was built at Bankside. It was never more than a tiny railway settlement, with a station, goods shed and two railway houses. The station closed in 1960 and nothing now remains of the settlement. Near Bankside is one of Canterbury's most interesting historic relics. During World War II a steel fuel storage tank with a capacity of 3,409,568 litres was installed in a brick-lined pit, which remains. The tank was part of a major military project which saw airstrips built at Te Pirita (see Chapter 3).[17]

BULK OIL FUEL TANKS
SALE BY WAR ASSETS BOARD
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CONSTRUCTION AT TIME OF EMERGENCY

Huge underground tanks built secretly during the war for the bulk storage of oil fuel are now being offered for sale by the War Assets Realisation Board. There are 28 of these tanks in New Zealand, and their capacity ranges from 500 gallons to 750,000 gallons. Some were installed at Royal New Zealand Air Force stations, and others were planned as secret aviation fuel dumps in the event of an emergency.

The 750,000-gallon tank is the largest of those for sale. It was built in a plantation less than 100 yards off the main highway at Bankside, which is 31 miles from Christchurch. The tank, which was largely made of steel plates from the wreck of the Port Bowen, was designed as a secret aviation fuel dump, and its erection was one of the best-kept secrets of wartime construction.

Press 13 November 1945, p. 4. Source: PapersPast.

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[16] Graham & Chapple, pp. 52-53, 119, 152, 158; Singleton, pp. 85-86, 210-21; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 780-83; *Selwyn Times*, 8 August 2017, p. 16; *Malvern News*, 11 Aug 2017.
[17] Singleton, pp. 87-88.

Chapter 3

**The Inland Plains**

Introduction

The inland plains of the Selwyn District lie between the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers, bounded by the western edge of Christchurch City and the line of state highway 1 to the east, and the toe of the foothills of the Southern Alps to the west. This is primarily a farming area and the settlements of various sizes scattered across the area developed mainly as farm service centres. Some flourished, often because they were centres of local administration, while others languished or almost disappeared, often because improvements in transportation made access to larger towns, and even Christchurch City, easier.

Exploration

There were no great physical obstacles to moving across the inland plains (though the rivers were dangerous when in flood) and most of the area had been traversed by Europeans even before the Canterbury Association settlers arrived to found Christchurch in December 1850.

In 1843 William and John Deans, looking for good grazing country accessible from their farm at Riccarton, explored the south bank of the Waimakariri probably as far upstream as its confluence with the Kowai River. They noted that much of the land between the Waimakariri and Selwyn Rivers lacked water. By the late 1840s the Deans were quite familiar with the land between Riccarton and the Malvern Hills.[1]

In 1848 Captain Joseph Thomas, sent out from England by the Canterbury Association to prepare the site of the Canterbury Settlement, despatched three members of his party, William Fox, Charles Torlesse and Thomas Cass, to investigate the plains inland of the site he had chosen for Christchurch. The party went up the south bank of the Waimakariri, around the eastern flank of the Malvern Hills, crossed the Selwyn and followed the Wairiri valley, along roughly the route of today's highway 72, to where Windwhistle was later located. They returned to Riccarton past the forks of the Selwyn (today's Greendale district). The Waikirikiri River was renamed the Selwyn at this time and Surveyors Gully in the Malvern Hills, which was to become an important coal mining area, was probably named by this party. In December 1848 Torlesse went up the south bank of the Waimakariri again. From a camp near where the gorge bridge was later built he and a Maori companion climbed one of the peaks of the range which bears Torlesse's name. From the summit Torlesse looked out over the inland plains and over the country lying to the west. In 1849 he returned inland and climbed a hill from which he was the first European to see Lake Coleridge.[2]
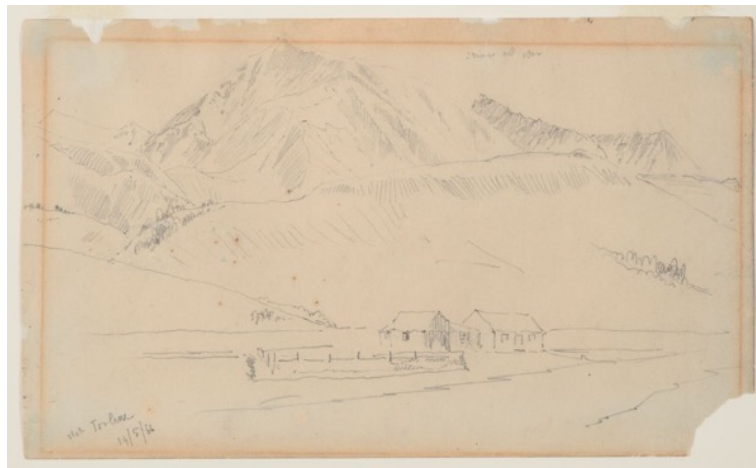
Mount Torlesse drawn by Nicholas Chevalier in 1866. Source: Museum of NZ / Te Papa Tongarewa.

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[1] Maffey, p. 19; Logan, p. 10; Popple, pp. 7-8, 10.
[2] Maffey, p. 124; Logan, p. 11; Popple, pp. 10-11.

In 1849, when the survey ship *Acheron* was at anchor in Lyttelton Harbour, a party visited Kaiapoi, north of the Waimakariri, and crossed the river at Courtenay on the return journey to Riccarton. The naturalist on the *Acheron*, Frederick Strange, went up the Waimakariri, across country to near Porters Pass and may have returned to the plains down the Selwyn Gorge.[3]

Once Christchurch had been founded surveyors, those looking for land to take up as grazing runs, and prospectors criss-crossed the inland plains in increasing numbers.[4]

The runs on the inland plains

Once John Robert Godley, bowing to the inevitable, had released land in the Canterbury Association block for lease as grazing runs, the inland plains of what became the Selwyn District were quickly taken by runholders. Some of the runs were short-lived, when some were incorporated into other runs and as parts of others were bought as freehold by either the runholders themselves or small farmers.

Coringa, the run closest to Christchurch, was first taken up in 1852. In 1858 the run passed to E. M. Templer, but by 1865 only 1,600 hectares of the 4,000-hectare run were still leasehold land. The next run up the south bank of the Waimakariri, Ashfield, was owned from 1852 until 1873 by the McLean brothers, who were among Canterbury's largest runholders. Much of the run had been freeholded by the time the McLeans sold it in 1873. By 1890 less than 300 hectares of the former run were still held on leasehold.[5]

Tresillian (which from 1863 included Sandy Knolls) was originally part of Ashfield. John Brabazon, one of two brothers who took over the run in 1864, freeholded more than 2,000 hectares of it. He shifted the run's homestead from a site close to the Waimakariri to near Aylesbury but in 1895 was declared bankrupt. The land was subsequently sold to small farmers by the company which held a mortgage over it.[6]

The name of one large run, which stretched south from the Waimakariri almost as far as the Selwyn, reflected the lack of water over much of the inland plains. The Desert, of more than 7,000 hectares, was first taken up in 1851. In 1867 it was still a large run combining both leasehold and freehold land. It was carrying some 6,000 sheep in that year. Ten years later, after a new owner had begun selling land off, the run was carrying just 3,000 sheep and by 1880 only 1,500.[7]

An even larger run, Racecourse Hill, which extended from the Waimakariri to the Selwyn, was more than 14,000 hectares in extent. It was first taken up in 1852 and a year later passed to two prominent names in early Canterbury history, J. C. Watts Russell and A. R. Creyke. Ledard, a small run between The Desert and Racecourse Hill, was added to Racecourse Hill in 1860. The first homestead on Racecourse Hill, called Bleak House (there is still a Bleakhouse Corner and Bleakhouse Road in the area), was on the Waimakariri but in 1859 a new homestead was built on the site still occupied by the third Racecourse Hill homestead (1912). Watts Russell and Creyke sold the run in 1860-61. In the 1860s and 1870s much of the run was freeholded in very large blocks, by the owners of the run itself and by neighbouring runholders. In 1885 the Racecourse Hill property included 3,000 hectares of freehold land but by the 1920s it had been greatly reduced in size.[8]

The first Racecourse Hill homestead. Source: Selwyn Kete

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[3] Logan, pp. 12-13; Popple, pp. 10-11.
[4] Popple, pp. 11-12.
[5] Acland, pp. 23-26.
[6] Acland, pp. 26-28.
[7] Acland, pp. 29-30.
[8] Acland, pp. 30-33; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 47.

The 13,200 hectares of a run even more famous than Racecourse Hill also stretched from the Waimakariri to the Selwyn. Homebush was taken up by the Deans brothers in 1851 under the arrangement they came to with the Canterbury Association to surrender their rights to the land on which Christchurch was to be built. The run included a large area of the inland plains but also extended into the Malvern Hills (see Chapter 4). After the deaths of both brothers, the run was managed until 1895 by James McIlraith, a brother of John Deans' widow Jane. McIlraith also bought land on his own account. Two more of Jane's brothers, George and Hugh, also had a hand in running the property. The freehold portion of Homebush leapt from a mere eight hectares to more than 7,000 hectares through the 19th century.

'Homebush' station homestead in the early 20th century. Source: PA1-o-1878, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

In the 1850s Homebush ran cattle but after John and Jane's son, John Deans II, attained his majority in 1874, by which time more than 4,000 hectares had been freeholded, the run changed from cattle to sheep. The transition to sheep was marked by the erection of a brick woolshed in 1879. Three years earlier a stable and water tower had also been built of brick. The innovative Deans also made use of water power for a number of farm operations.

The freehold of the large area of Homebush extending east from the edge of the Malvern Hills across the plains from the Hawkins River to the Waimakariri had been sold to other owners before the end of the 19th century. The large Gorge Hill block, which included the approaches to the Waimakariri gorge bridge, was sold in 1898. In the first decade of the 20th century, after the death of John Deans II in 1902, the remainder of the Homebush property was divided up among family members. One of the smaller properties retained the name of the original run. On the property still known as Homebush the notable brick homestead was a victim of the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-11, but the woolshed, stable and water tower remain as one of the most important group of farm buildings in Canterbury.[9]

Dalethorpe, the last of the major runs on the Waimakariri side of the inland plains, also extended from the edge of the plains into the Malvern Hills. The land was originally stocked, in 1850-51, by the Deans brothers and called by them 'Morven Hills'. The hills which were partly within Dalethorpe became known as the Malvern Hills, but whether 'Malvern' resulted from an inadvertent mis-reading of 'Morven' or was a name given deliberately because an important meeting at the time the Canterbury Association was founded took place at Malvern in England is uncertain. In 1851 the Deans brothers sold the run to John Watts Russell, one of the richest of the Canterbury settlers. Watts Russell called the property first Birchwood, then Dalethorpe. In the 1850s, Watts Russell increased the run to around 8,600 hectares. The number of sheep on the run increased from 2,524 in 1854 to 6,630 in 1857. Watts Russell sold the run in 1866. In 1874 it passed to George Rutherford junior. When Rutherford purchased Dalethorpe it was still almost all leasehold with only 25 hectares of freehold around the homestead. In 1889 Rutherford was able to freehold much of the land when the Midland Railway Company sold off its land grants. Rutherford also owned the High Peak and Benmore stations.

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[9] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 23, 46-47; Maffey, pp. 19, 99, 105, 114; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 769-70; Acland, pp. 33-34.

By 1903 Rutherford had freeholded an enormous 10,500 hectares. The run, carrying 21,000 merino sheep, then included only 2,000 hectares of leasehold. On Dalethorpe there was some land – level and with rich soil – suitable for subdivision along the Hawkins River. The first freehold purchases of some of this land were made as early as the 1860s and in that area classic 'mixed' farms became established, combining cropping (oats and wheat) with running sheep. After Rutherford sold Dalethorpe in 1911, when it was carrying 12,000 sheep, the estate was subdivided into smaller farms by a syndicate.[10]
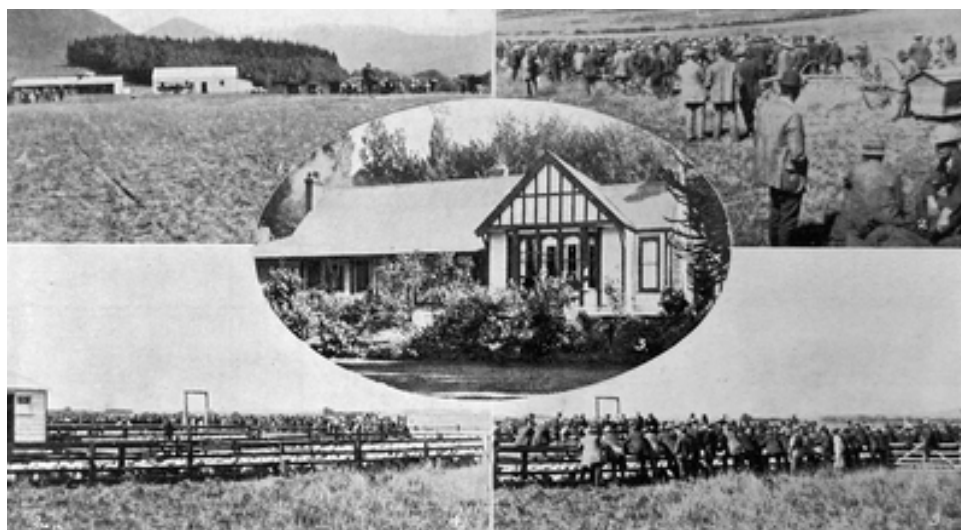
The Dalethorpe disposal sale was widely publicised; *Weekly Press* 27 March 1912. Source: Selwyn Kete.

On the southern side of the Selwyn District several large and famous runs lay between the Selwyn and Rakaia Rivers. Some of them had frontages on the Rakaia River. Both Camla and Haldon came far enough down the plains to have small areas on the seaward side of the south road and railway line. Haldon was for 60 years in the hands of members of the Bealey family. Seven individual runs, which made up the 16,000 hectares of Haldon, were taken up by John and Samuel Bealey between 1852 and 1854. From 1878 the run was held by Samuel Bealey alone. Samuel had been a superintendent of Canterbury but lived most of the remainder of his life in Britain. The Mead settlement was cut out of Haldon by the government in 1903. In 1910 the sons of Samuel Bealey cut up the remaining 2,800 hectares of Haldon which they had freeholded and sold the land as smaller farms. One of the most important relics of the great pastoral runs on the Canterbury Plains is a brick woolshed built on the Rakaia Mead sub-farm of Haldon station in the early 1870s. It is comparable to the better-known Homebush woolshed near Coalgate.[11]

Camla, which was on the lower Selwyn alongside Haldon, was only a little smaller, at 12,000 hectares. The run was owned from the mid-1850s by Parker Westenra. He freeholded more than 1,600 hectares of the run and parts of it were held until 1974 by members of the Westenra family. The homestead was moved to a new site after the 1868 flood, but the woolshed remained at the original site. A new homestead was built in the first decade of the 20th century, with a second storey added to it sometime in the mid to late 1920s. In 1910 Camla was still a large property – 3,400 hectares of freehold and 600 acres of leasehold, carrying 7,000 sheep. The Fyvie Settlement was established later on part of the Camla freehold.[12]

Inland from Haldon and Camla were the Hororata and Terrace runs. The smaller Hororata run (6,800 hectares) stretched from the Hororata River to the Rakaia. Successive owners, notably John Cordy from 1858 until his death in 1886, freeholded large areas of the run then sold the land off piecemeal to smaller holders. In 1903 the station was still large (combining 1,600 hectares of freehold and 2,800 of leasehold) but eventually the homestead block was reduced to a small farm of around 140 hectares.[13]

Part of The Terrace run was taken up in 1851 by Mark Stoddart. Other parts were taken up by the Studholme brothers, who already owned The Point further inland. John Hall bought Stoddart's leasehold land in 1853 and later in the decade also bought the Studholme leasehold land to create a single run of around 12,000 hectares. By 1878 Hall had freeholded

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10 Acland, pp. 230-32; Maffey, p. 19.
11 Acland, pp. 86-88; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 24, 94-95; Singleton, pp. 29-30.
12 Acland, pp. 88-90; Singleton, pp. 30-31.
13 Acland, pp. 85-86; *Cyclopedia*, p. 750-53; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 100.

almost the entire run. In that year only 8,000 of his 23,000 sheep were being run on leasehold land. In the late 1870s and 1880s Hall installed water races over a considerable area of The Terrace. Immediately before his death in 1907, Hall sold around 8,000 hectares to a syndicate for subdivision into smaller farms. His sons, Godfrey, John and Wilfred, were settled on separate properties (The Terrace, Haldon Pastures and Glenroy). In 1912 Wilfred built the Arts and Crafts homestead Gunyah on his property.[14]

Godfrey Hall 'Terrace Station, Hororata' in 1925. Source: Pan-0055-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Smaller runs on the inland plains included Waireka (3,200 hectares between the Hawkins and Selwyn), Bray Down (4,000 hectares also between the Hawkins and Selwyn) and Milton (4,000 hectares below Racecourse Hill where the Hawkins and Selwyn Rivers joined). These runs were taken up in the early 1850s and were bought and sold several times before being freeholded between the 1870s and 1920s. Here as elsewhere on the inland plains the freehold farms varied greatly in size.[15]

Roads and accommodation houses on the inland plains

For the first ten years of settlement the inland plains were held mostly as large leasehold runs and the only buildings were the isolated homesteads, woolsheds and other outbuildings of the runholders. But even in the 1850s, when development across the plains was rudimentary, tracks were formed to provide the runholders with access to Christchurch. There was a rudimentary track along the south bank of the Waimakariri linking the homesteads of the various runs by 1857.

Other tracks which were first formed when the inland plains were held almost entirely as large leasehold runs included what became Homebush Road (from the Waimakariri across to the foot of the Malvern Hills), Bealeys Road (from what became the Aylesbury corner to Hororata), Wards Track (from Bangor through Charing Cross to Rolleston), Stranges Road (from Charing Cross to the Selwyn) and the Selwyn-Waimakariri Road (from the Selwyn through Kirwee to Courtenay).

When production of coal, initially in the hills near Little Racecourse Hill (Sheffield), began in the late 1850s and early 1860s what quickly became known as the Coal Track was formed. The track ran from near Coalgate down to the great south road. Today's Coaltrack Road follows its line. A reserve was also set aside for a tramway from Sheffield to Rolleston. Its line was set by the ploughman who carved the initial furrow by setting his sights on the 'gap' in the Torlesse Range. (The gap is the distinct notch in the crest of the Torlesse Range above Springfield which is visible from far out on the plains.) The road from Waddington to Kirwee is still known as Tramway Road.

With the formation of road boards in 1863 the long, slow business of properly surveying and forming the roads across the inland plains began. The discovery of gold on the West Coast in 1864 provided considerable impetus for improving the rough tracks that were followed by the gold prospectors. With the opening of the road over Arthur's Pass in 1866 what later became known as the Old West Coast Road became more than just a road linking the rural areas of the inland plains with Christchurch.

The Old West Coast Road began its life as a track along the south bank of the Waimakariri River linking the run homesteads with each other and with Christchurch. The track ran from Yaldhurst through Courtenay, to the east of where Waddington developed later and on past Little Racecourse Hill (which became Sheffield) to Kowai Pass (Springfield). When gold was discovered on the West Coast and the Provincial Engineer Edward Dobson recommended that a road be built up the Bealey valley and over the pass which his son Arthur had discovered, the track from Yaldhurst to Springfield became part of one of Canterbury's two earliest 'highways', the other being the south road to Timaru.

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[14] Acland, pp. 81-85; Singleton, p. 29; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 95-98, 236.
[15] Acland, pp. 36-40.

A coach service was begun along the route from Christchurch to Springfield in 1861. With the completion of the road over Arthur's Pass this road ceased to be a local route but became part of the through route to the goldfields. A local company owned by L. G. Cole took the name of a famous line of American coaches, Cobb & Company, and took over running the coaches to Springfield and, eventually, on to the West Coast.

Coaches began running all the way to Hokitika as soon as the road was opened in early 1866. For the convenience of travellers accommodation houses were built along the road from Christchurch through Courtenay and Sheffield to Springfield. The first accommodation houses between Christchurch and Springfield were built before the West Coast gold rush began, to serve people travelling to and from the runs and the first smaller freehold farms that were being established by the early 1860s. But the traffic generated by the gold rush saw the accommodation houses became more numerous, larger and better established.

The Miners' Rest (first known as the Malvern Hotel, although it was some distance from the Malvern Hills) was just 16 kilometres from Christchurch. It opened in 1863. In the Courtenay district a hotel was built on the river frontage of The Desert run in 1857, close to a convenient crossing of the river, but it lasted only until 1860. Watson's Half-way House opened about 1864 on what became the Old West Coast Road between Yaldhurst and Courtenay. The initial cob building was replaced by a wooden hotel with dormers, which survived until 1970. Next came White's accommodation house at Courtenay (c.1860), which started on the riverbed, but was soon rebuilt on the terrace above the river. This building survives as a private home. The hotel served not only miners heading west but also those who crossed the Waimakariri at the ferry near Courtenay.

Former White's accommodation house, Courtenay. Source: Heritage NZPT.

The Clare Inch hotel opened at Little Racecourse Hill (Sheffield) in 1861. It lost its licence in 1867. The Malvern Hills hotel was built on the road to the West Coast between Sheffield and Annat in 1865. In 1874, when Sheffield became the rail terminus, the licensee of the Malvern Hills hotel built a new hotel near the Sheffield station. A second hotel, designed by the Christchurch architect Theodore Jacobsen was built in 1883. It competed for custom with the Railway hotel, but the latter eventually lost its licence, leaving the second hotel as the only one in the township.

The first accommodation house in Springfield, Willis's, opened in 1863 but lasted only until 1870. In 1865 the first hotel on the site of the present Springfield hotel was built. It burned down in 1880. Its replacement was bought in 1895 by W Cloudesley, who also owned the Castle Hill hotel for a period.

These early accommodation houses were the first 'public' buildings on the inland plains. They provided paddocks, yards and stabling for horses as well as meals and beds for travellers. The first coaches on the run to Springfield and on to the West Coast carried just eight passengers and ran only twice a week. After 1880 passengers heading for the Coast took the morning train to Springfield where they boarded the coaches for the onward journey. After 1880 the story of coaching to the Coast belongs to the pastoral high country and the mountains, where the story of 'heading west' is continued.[16]

Apart from the road heading west, most of the roads of the inland plains remained little more than rough tracks into the late 1860s. It was only after significant areas had been freeholded by small farmers and after production of coal from the Malvern Hills fields increased that roads were improved.

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[16] For the early roads and accommodation houses on the inland plains see *Cyclopedia*, p. 773; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 296-97; Popple, pp. 51-59; Logan, pp. 75-76.

The railways on the inland plains

The spread of smaller freehold farms and the more intensive production from the land that resulted, along with the mining of coal in the Malvern Hills, were the main stimulus for the construction of the railway built west from Rolleston across the plains towards the mountains. This rail line was later to become part of the line to the West Coast via the Waimakariri gorge and Arthur's Pass. Initially the line from Rolleston to Sheffield and on to Springfield was, like Canterbury's other early rail lines, built primarily to carry farm products (and in this case coal as well) into Christchurch.

The line from Rolleston to Sheffield opened on 1 December 1874. There were stations between Rolleston and Sheffield at Bealey Road (Aylesbury), Kirwee, Whitecliffs Junction (Darfield) and Racecourse Hill. Less than a year later, on 3 November 1875, the branch line from Darfield to Whitecliffs was opened. (This line is discussed in Chapter 4.) That the railway line was built primarily to bring Malvern Hills coal to Christchurch was demonstrated by the fact that Sheffield remained the terminus of the line for five years. Work on the extension of the line from Sheffield to Springfield began on 5 April 1879. The construction of railway lines over the flat plains was relatively easy and the line was opened to Springfield on 5 January 1880.

The final chapter of the construction of railway lines on the inland plains saw the completion of the line which linked Sheffield with Oxford on the north side of the Waimakariri River. The line included a spectacular early engineering achievement, the building of the impressive gorge bridge over the Waimakariri. The bridge was built in 1876-77 to railway standards. Once the bridge was opened the ferry at its site, a self-acting double punt which began operating in April 1872, ceased. A railway line was laid over the bridge and the line between Oxford and Sheffield opened in 1884. The bridge was a combined road/rail bridge from 1884 until 1934 when the line between Oxford and Sheffield was closed. Just before its closure the bridge was bought from the railway department by the Main Highways Board. The bridge is still used, long after the railway line closed, by road traffic. Sections of the old railway formation can still be seen between Sheffield and Oxford and Curve Road follows the line of the railway into Sheffield station.
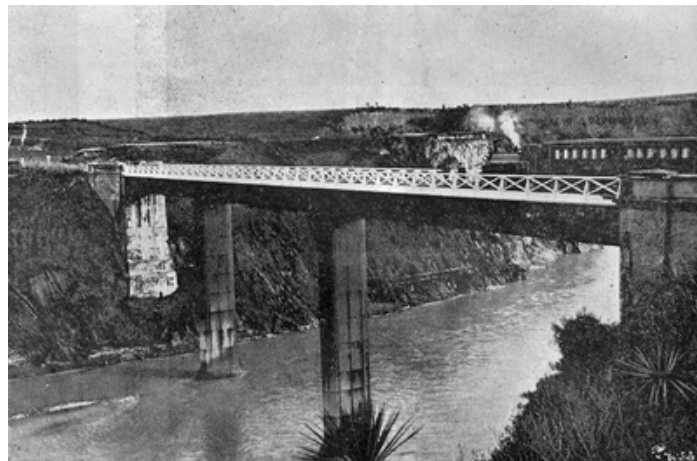
Waimakariri Gorge Bridge. Source: Selwyn Kete.

The line between Oxford and Sheffield was intended to be part of a Canterbury interior railway, which was to continue from Sheffield down to Temuka in South Canterbury on a route along the upper edge of the Canterbury Plains, close in to the foothills of the Southern Alps. Though the route was fully surveyed, the project was deferred in 1880 after a railway commission had examined it. The grand scheme was eventually abandoned.[17]

Freehold farms and farming practices

Farming in runholding days involved little more than turning sheep loose on the rough tussock of the plains and mustering them once a year for shearing and dipping. Wool was the only commodity produced. It was sometimes washed on the runs before being sent, by bullock wagon or dray, to Christchurch, then on to Lyttelton for shipment to Britain. There was no way in those days of getting sheep meat to overseas markets; surplus sheep were in some places 'boiled down' to produce tallow which could be exported. Possibly because there was a rather early and rapid shift to smaller freehold farms, on

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[17] For the railway line west of Rolleston and the Oxford to Sheffield line see Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 28, 100, 199-200; Popple, pp. 61-66; Logan, pp. 112-14.

which cropping was as important as running sheep, there seem not to have been any large boiling down works anywhere in the Selwyn District in early colonial times. The larger runs had substantial woolsheds in which the sheep were shorn and the wool sorted and baled. Early woolsheds survive on two important early runs – Homebush and The Terrace. Some runs also had their own dips, and on others sheep were, for a time, washed before they were shorn as an alternative to washing the wool after shearing. Paddocks on the leasehold runs were large and the sheep were left to their own devices for much of the year.

As in Ellesmere, settlers began freeholding small farms out of the leasehold runs on the inland plains in the 1860s. The process continued apace in the 1870s until by the end of that decade almost all of the inland plains was a mosaic of freehold farms of different sizes. Some of the runholders themselves bought the freehold of extensive parts of their runs. These became some of the larger freehold farms on the inland plains.

The Racecourse Hill estate was one of these larger freehold farms that grew out of a leasehold run. The original run was more than 16,000 hectares. It remained a pastoral, mostly leasehold, run until around 1860. Soon after 1860 one of the partners who owned the run, H. I. Mathias, bought the freehold of nearly 4,500 hectares of Racecourse Hill. He fenced and ploughed the land and dug races to bring water to every paddock. After Mathias died in 1885 his stepson, H. A. Knight, became the owner of the property. Over the next 20 years Knight sold off parts of his land piecemeal until by 1903 Racecourse Hill itself had been reduced to just over 1,800 hectares. It was still very much larger than most farms on the inland plains at that time. Knight had nearly 300 hectares under crop and was running around 7,000 sheep. Between 2,000 and 3,000 lambs were sent for freezing each year, in addition to wethers which were fattened on the property. There was a woolshed with nine shearing machines driven by an oil engine and a stable with stalls for 20 horses. The homestead was set in 12 hectares of garden which included flower and vegetable gardens, an orchard and shrubbery, tennis courts, lawns and a lake. A plantation of 80 hectares sheltered the homestead and its grounds.[18]

The Desert farm at Courtenay was a property on the Waimakariri of around 270 hectares which had been the homestead block of the old Desert run. The residence on the Desert farm in 1903 was a handsome two-storey house surrounded by a garden and approached by way of a long avenue of trees.[19]

A few wealthier settlers who had not held runs also purchased large areas of land and established farms larger than most settlers. The Bangor estate at Hawkins was a freehold property of more than 2,000 hectares, described in the *Cyclopedia* of 1903 as being both agricultural and pastoral. Around 400 hectares were cultivated for growing wheat, rape and turnips; the property carried around 7,000 sheep and sent around 3,000 lambs away annually to the freezing work. The homestead was surrounded by an 80-hectare plantation.

Bangor Estate clearing sale – 1100 head of sheep for sale; *Weekly Press* 23 March 1910. Source: Selwyn Kete.

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[18] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 761-62.
[19] *Cyclopedia*, p. 739.

Freehold estates of intermediate size included Broadgate in the Kimberley district. Its 770 hectares were used for growing oats and wheat and for running sheep. A 'substantial' homestead was surrounded by a large garden. On Churchlea, which had been part of the Racecourse Hill run, grain was grown on around 100 hectares, turnips and rape on an area only a little smaller, and sheep grazed on the estate's other 570 hectares. The Waireka estate, of around 1,000 hectares grew turnips, rape and oats and ran between 4,000 and 5,000 sheep. An immigrant who had served in the British army in India, Colonel Brett, who played a key role in introducing water to the inland plains named his large firm Kirwee after a place in India where he had served.[20]

As settlers who did well gradually bought up adjoining land some initially small holdings developed into large farms. Lyppiatt farm in the Halkett district began around 1864 as a holding of a little more than 30 hectares. It grew gradually to around 150 hectares, then in the late 19th century it more than doubled in size when Arthur Davis bought nearly 200 hectares of Aylesbury estate land. Davis's son William was on Longfield, a nearby farm of around 86 hectares. Other farms in the Halkett area in the early years of the 20th century ranged in size from a little more than 60 hectares to around 120 hectares.[21]

The initial freehold purchasers chose land which had access to water and could be reached easily from Christchurch. The earliest freehold farms were established on the south bank of the Waimakariri and along the Hawkins, Selwyn and Waireka Rivers. The farms alongside the Waimakariri, in Courtenay and 'Upper Courtenay' (Kimberley), were also along what was one of the earliest 'roads' on the plains, the track that became the Old West Coast Road. The Coal Track from near Coalgate down to Norwood, on the north bank of the Selwyn River, provided early access to the main south railway line and Christchurch for small farmers who took up land along the other rivers, in the Greendale area for example.

With the transition from extensive pastoral runs to more closely subdivided farms, farming practices and produce changed. Although the freehold farms varied greatly in size – from less than 150 hectares to more than 1,800 hectares – the farming differed only in scale, not in nature. All the freehold farms, large and small, were 'mixed' farms. The combination of running a flock of sheep, growing grain and such other crops as potatoes, combined in some places with dairying, saw classic 'mixed farming' develop on the inland plains of the Selwyn District. 'Mixed farming' was more typical of the Canterbury Plains than of any other part of New Zealand. Wheat was usually the first crop grown by the small farmers but they were soon also growing oats, turnips and rape as feed for their animals. The success in 1882 of shipping frozen meat to Britain gave such mixed farming a more secure financial foundation. As the freezing industry became established, the balance between growing grains and other crops shifted towards running sheep, although most farmers continued to run their properties as both pastoral and agricultural farms. Butter and cheese were also shipped on refrigerated ships but above all it was being able to export meat as well as wool from sheep that ensured that smaller freehold farmers were able to survive and prosper.

Corriedale hoggets wintering on turnips, Kirwee, 1949. Source: Lincoln University Living Heritage.

The pattern of 'mixed' farming established in the later 19th century persisted across the inland plains for most of the 20th, although there were changes such as the introduction of new breeds of sheep and cattle, of deer and of new crops, in addition to green crops for winter feed and cereals. Some areas specialised in particular crops. The Sheffield-Annat district, for example, became one of New Zealand's main sources of seed potatoes. Peas also became an important crop along with grass and clover seed to which some farmers turned as the growing of wheat and oats declined. The decline of growing

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[20] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 741-44.
[21] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 733-35.

oats coincided with the transition from horses to tractors as the main source of motive power on farms. But it was not until the introduction of irrigation in the later 20th century that 'mixed' farming gave way on some properties to dairying alone. (This is discussed further in the section on water and farming on the plains.)[22]

To enclose and subdivide their holdings, early small farmers on the inland plains, as in Ellesmere, resorted to 'ditch and bank' fencing, which involved cutting sods to create a small ditch and then using the sods to form a low wall or bank running alongside the ditch. Gorse was often planted along the top of the bank. Wire fences came somewhat later.

The houses of these smaller farmers were different from the grander homesteads of the runholders and of the larger freehold farmers, which many runholders, or their sons, became. One typical early dwelling of a small farmer is Coton's Cottage, near Hororata. Bentley Coton, who had arrived in Canterbury in 1859 as a 24-year-old labourer, freeholded around 20 hectares out of the Haldon run in 1864. On his 20 hectares he ran dairy cows, kept pigs and chickens and grew potatoes. He built himself a cob cottage in which he and his wife Sarah Jane lived until their deaths in 1913 and 1919 respectively. Rebuilt twice, in the 1970s and again after the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-11, Coton's Cottage is a rare example of the sort of home the earliest small farmers built for themselves. In 1989-90 the old totalisator building from the Hororata race course was relocated to beside Coton's Cottage, remodelled to look like an old accommodation house, and used to house the museum of the Hororata Historical Society. Those involved with the museum had earlier looked at the Hororata Presbyterian church, the Mead school and the Darfield Presbyterian church as possible premises.[23]

Coton's Cottage and Museum, Hororata. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Although earth (sod, cob or pisé de terre) was used for the earliest dwellings, as timber became available from the Big Bush on Easdale Nook, one of the runs below the Torlesse Range, and from the Oxford area across the Waimakariri River, larger and more comfortable timber houses were built. Corrugated iron replaced the thatch typical of the original sod or cob cottages. [24]

The introduction of new agricultural machines – reapers and binders in the 19th century and combine harvesters in the 20th for example – also led to changes in the types of out-buildings farmers needed. Woolsheds became smaller and sheds used for a variety of purposes which replaced large stables became more common. Open-sided hay sheds replaced weather-proofed haystacks in the second half of the 20th century.

Small farmers became the mainstays of new farming groups and organisations. The Courtenay Agricultural and Pastoral Association was formed in 1872 as a farmers' club. It held shows at Courtenay for several years but then bought land for a new, permanent show ground in Kirwee.[25]

Courtenay Show at Kirwee. *Weekly Press* 27 November 1924. Source: Selwyn Kete.

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[22] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 9; Popple, Introduction by James Hight, no pagination, pp. 123-31.
[23] Dennis, passim.
[24] Popple, pp. 27-39.
[25] *Cyclopedia*, p. 738.

In the 1890s and early 1900s the Liberal government created further small farms by 'busting up' big estates. There were no major government purchases and subdivisions (like Cheviot Hills in North Canterbury and Waikakahi in South Canterbury) on the inland plains of the Selwyn District, but at several places on the plains the government bought larger freehold properties and subdivided them into smaller farms. The district of Mead, for example, came into existence when the government bought a large part of the former Haldon run and carved up around 2,400 hectares of land into 21 new properties ranging in size from less than five hectares to more than 320 hectares. The land was originally held by the new settlers on lease in perpetuity, but these leases were eventually transformed into freehold.[26]

Tree planting on the plains

One other feature of the transition from extensive pastoralism to more intensive mixed farming on the inland plains was the planting of trees, some for amenity but most for shelter and also, later, for the production of timber. The homesteads of the larger freehold properties were often surrounded by large plantations which provided both shelter and amenity while smaller homesteads made do with just lines of trees primarily for shelter. Longer shelter belts were planted between paddocks mainly to protect farmland from the destructive force of the nor'-west winds that periodically swept across the plains eroding the soil. Plantations and shelter belts became integral features of the rural landscapes of the inland plains of Selwyn District.

Shelter belt on Longridge farm, near Glenroy, in 1925. Source: Pan-1576-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The planting of new shelter belts continued through the 20th century. Soil erosion by nor'-west winds remained a problem, particularly in the Mead-Te Pirita district, in the years after the end of World War II. In the 1950s the Catchment Board subsidised the planting of further 'across-the-wind' shelter belts. With the large-scale conversion of many former mixed farming properties to dairying in the later 20th century many shelter belts were removed, altering the rural landscapes of many parts of the inland plains.[27]

Although shelter was the motive for the earliest plantings, other plantings from quite early days were for production and amenity. The first reserves for tree planting were established by the Provincial Government before the provinces were abolished in 1876. Between 1879 and 1885 the Canterbury Plantation Board had control of around 12,500 hectares of land between the Waimakariri River and the Mackenzie Country. In 1885 nearly 500 hectares of land the board had planted in Selwyn County were handed over to the county council. By 1910 the county had more than 2,500 hectares planted in trees. When the original large Selwyn County was split up in that year its plantations passed into the hands of the Selwyn Plantation Board. The plantations of the board lay in all nine new counties created by the breakup of the original Selwyn County.

The Selwyn Plantation Board was the only organisation of its kind in the country. It remained a board (reconstituted under a new Act of Parliament in 1953) until 1992 when, during the economic reforms of that decade, it became a corporation. From 1948 the board had its headquarters and a nursery in Darfield. Its significant plantings included a large plantation of Douglas fir on the Hororata-Coalgate road (planted in the early 1940s) and plantations in the foothills of the Wairiri valley and in the Glenroy and Dalethorpe areas (where planting continued from the 1950s to the 1980s). The board was a significant supplier of saw logs for the Canterbury timber industry. When it was disestablished the board controlled 12,000 hectares of land of which 9,000 were planted. [28]

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[26] Singleton, pp. 228-33.
[27] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 726-28; Singleton, pp. 223-24.
[28] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 279-84; Graham & Chapple, pp. 126-28; Popple, pp. 85-87.

Amenity plantings were undertaken by both individual property owners (particularly the owners of larger properties who could afford to withdraw land from agricultural or pastoral production) and those administering domains. The Sheffield Domain was planted around 1880, the Kowai Pass Domain in 1883 and the Hororata Domain in 1903.[29]

Several individual property owners played important roles in encouraging the planting of trees for shelter, amenity and production (of building timber and firewood). John Hall of The Terrace station planted extensive areas around his homestead to both ornament and protect the property. On Homebush members of the Deans family created similarly extensive plantations (around 60 hectares) from the 1870s on.

The interest in trees of one Selwyn District landowner, T. W. Adams of Greendale, had national significance. The tree Adams started using for shelter belts, *Pinus radiata*, became the main tree for production forestry throughout New Zealand in later years. On his death in 1919 Adams left 40 hectares of plantations and £2,000 to Canterbury College.[30]

T. W. Adams. Source: Lincoln and Districts Historical Society collection LHS652, Selwyn Kete.

Water and farming on the plains

It was recognised in the early years of settlement that, although there was abundant water in the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers and sufficient in the Selwyn River and its tributaries for farming, the lack of surface water on large areas of the inland plains between the Waimakariri and Rakaia was likely to hamper farming in those areas. This was not such a serious problem in runholding days, because the properties were large enough to have at least one frontage on a river and the paddocks into which the runs were divided were individually large enough that stock grazing them had access to water at some point.

The lack of water became a more serious problem as smaller freehold farms, particularly those running stock, spread across the plains. Agriculture could flourish even on the drier parts of the plains through reliance on rainfall, but stock required water on a much more regular basis than when rain fell. Wheat could be grown successfully on properties which lacked a river frontage in areas like Greendale and Courtenay. But when the wheat boom collapsed and as the freezing industry got into its stride small farmers wanted to take advantage of the demand for lambs and needed regular and reliable supplies of water for their stock. Once the existence of artesian water beneath the plains had been confirmed in the 1860s it was possible to sink wells and raise water using windmills, but that expedient was too costly for most small farmers. Carting water by dray from the rivers was also expensive and time-consuming.[31]

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[29] *Globe* 24 August 1880, p. 2. *Press* 5 October 1883, p. 3; 30 June 1903, p. 6.
[30] Popple, pp. 85-87; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 280. See also http://www.peelingbackhistory.co.nz/t-w-adams-1842-1919/
[31] Popple, pp. 39-40, 123-31.

The first stock water race in Canterbury was dug not in the Selwyn District but south of the Rakaia, at Westerfield near Ashburton, in the late 1860s. In the Selwyn District runholders made the initial efforts to improve water supply on the dry plains in order to increase the carrying capacity of their runs. In the 1870s John Hall inaugurated a system on his Terrace Station, drawing water from the Hororata River, through two intakes at Laindon and near Glenroy. Hall also drew water from Washpen Creek above Glenroy. The Selwyn County Council eventually took over responsibility for the races, which served other properties as well, once Terrace station was subdivided, under an agreement with the Hall family. This agreement caused problems from 1971 on when steps were being taken to inaugurate a piped water system in the area.[32]

But it was the need of small farmers for stock water that led to the inauguration of the first public stock water supply system from the Kowai and to the extension of the stock water race system to, eventually, more than 3,000 kilometres of races.[33]

The initiative for the supply from the Kowai River came from a relatively large freehold farmer. James de Renzie Brett came to New Zealand in 1865, after he had retired from the British army in 1863 and bought more than 400 hectares of land out of the Desert and Ledard runs. He named his property Kirwee after a place where he had served in India.

Brett was a member of the provincial council and he moved in 1871 that it investigate supplying the plains between the Waimakariri and Hawkins Rivers with water drawn from the Waimakariri. The possibility of bringing water to the dry plains was subsequently investigated by an engineer, C. E. Fooks, who recommended an intake on the Kowai River in preference to drawing water from the Waimakariri or Hawkins. The work was authorised by the Provincial Government in 1874 and a contract for the work was let in 1875. Construction of the intake and race began in August 1876. The river was dammed and a tunnel, nearly a kilometre long and lined with locally made bricks, was dug beneath a river terrace to where the water could feed into an open race. Concrete falls prevented scouring where the race fell steeply. The race was dug initially to a point between Springfield and Sheffield where it discharged into Bishops Creek. The system was opened on 27 December 1877. In 1878 the Selwyn county council accepted responsibility for the race and took control of the system on 1 January 1879.

The council moved quickly to extend the race beyond Bishops Creek. The main race reached Waddington in 1880. Further concrete falls to prevent scouring were constructed and concrete culverts built where roads and rail lines crossed the race. The work included a dog-leg around the Sheffield railway station, which had been built over land reserved for the race. (The concrete channels at the bends of this dog-leg remain.) At Waddington the race branched; one leg headed in the direction of Darfield down the main road and the other continued on towards Kirwee down the coal tramway reserve. By January 1883 water was reaching as far down the plains as Rolleston and Burnham. By that year all the main branches of the race and the side races that took water onto the farms were in place. A water race district was proclaimed in 1881, with a supply race provided for every 600 hectares of land. Individual farmers built the secondary races within those large blocks.

Selwyn water race, Springfield. *Weekly Press* 9 March 1904. Source: Selwyn Kete.

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[32] Singleton, pp. 223-24; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 239, 259-62.
[33] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 9.

A bad flood in 1902 damaged the headworks and almost filled the tunnel with shingle. A new intake was formed about 800 metres up the river and a new open race, built partly in a deep cutting, which by-passed the tunnel. The new race joined the original race just below the tunnel's mouth. Three years later the tunnel was cleared out and an auxiliary intake with a new cutting was formed to feed the tunnel.

On 25 January 1930 a memorial erected at Kirwee to Colonel Brett was unveiled.[34] Although he had died in 1889, Brett's efforts to get the system built were long remembered. Water still (in 2018) runs in the original race, from the headworks built after the 1902 flood. Still visible in the early 21st century are the concrete abutments of the original dam, the downstream mouth of the tunnel dug in 1877 (which is no longer in use), and the cuttings formed in 1903 and 1908 when first a new intake was built and then the tunnel brought back into use as an auxiliary source of supply. The wooden flume built to carry the new head race built after the 1902 flood damaged the original works was replaced in 1994.[35]

Brett Memorial, Kirwee. Source: D McEwan, March 2018.

The Kowai is a relatively small river and in the 1880s the Selwyn County Council considered augmenting the supply from the much larger Waimakariri. Fooks had rejected the Waimakariri as a possible source of water because in its upper reaches on the plains the river is deeply entrenched and flows below high banks. Fooks therefore decided the difficulties of getting water from the Waimakariri up to the level of the high plains made the Kowai a preferable source. But as early as the 1880s the supply from the Kowai was overtaxed and there were recurrent problems with the headworks.

In 1889-91 an intake was constructed on the Waimakariri just above the gorge bridge. A tunnel carried water under the approach to the gorge bridge to an open race which crossed gullies on two big flumes. Once the race reached the level of the plains it was continued on down to Kimberley where it joined the existing, Kowai River system. In 1908 one of the flumes that carried the race over a gully as it climbed the high river bank to reach the level of the plains collapsed. The Waimakariri River intake was abandoned and the Kowai became again the sole source of water for the race system.[36]

After floods caused problems at the intake on the Kowai in the 1950s, the Waimakariri scheme was revived. The old intake tunnel was cleared out and the water carried by pipes and tunnels up the terrace to Waddington, where it was fed into the races supplied from the Kowai. The new supply was officially opened on 9 March 1961.[37]

Lower down the Waimakariri an intake was built at Halkett in 1885, which fed races that took water down to the edge of Christchurch. In 1902 the South Waimakariri River Board installed a smaller intake nearby to supply water to its plantations on the southern side of the river. The Selwyn County Council built a new intake at Halkett just before it went out of existence in 1911. The new Paparua County Council, part of the territory of which was included in the Selwyn District created in 1989, then took over the Halkett system which is still in use. [38]

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[34] *Press* 24 October 1929, p. 11.
[35] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 134, 233-37, 239-41, 254; Popple, pp. 109-19; Logan, pp. 146-47.
[36] Logan, pp. 146-47; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 240, 242; Popple, pp. 118-20.
[37] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 251-54.
[38] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 243; Logan, p. 149.

After the Selwyn County Council took over the races John Hall had formed on his Terrace station, it developed a new system which took water from the Rakaia River near Te Pirita. The contract for the intake and head race was let in March 1881. A wooden flume took the water from the river to the top of the terrace and so onto the plains. A second intake on the Rakaia was built soon afterwards. In 1880 the council also built a new intake on the Hororata River on land that had previously been within the Haldon run. Water from the Rakaia reached Norwood by the end of 1883. The Selwyn council upgraded the systems that drew water from the Hororata, on Haldon land, and from the Rakaia at Te Pirita, in 1900. At Te Pirita a new intake and embanked head race were built, allowing the original wooden flume to be dismantled. Water from the Rakaia and Hororata (Haldon) systems also served part of Ellesmere county and periodic disagreements over water races occurred between the two councils. It was not until the 1963, with changes to county boundaries, that both systems came under the control of the Ellesmere county council alone.[39]

One smaller scheme, built in 1884, supplied the Greendale district with water drawn from the Hawkins near Waddington. Another, completed by 1886, supplied farms between the Selwyn and Waireka Rivers with water drawn from the Selwyn near Glentunnel. Water from the intake at Glentunnel eventually reached Dunsandel and even further down country. There was also a race from the Selwyn at Coalgate, which served land between the Selwyn and Hororata Rivers in the Whitecliffs, Glentunnel and Coalgate districts.[40]

'The experimental ditch-cleaning machine at work on a water race', 1953. Source: Lincoln University Living Heritage.

All these systems used open races to provide, primarily, water for stock although some water was used for domestic supplies (despite its quality not being high as a result of travelling across farmland in open races). Only a very small amount of the water was used to irrigate crops. In the last quarter of the 20th century open races supplying stock and domestic water were superseded in many areas by pipes. The same decades saw the development of irrigation on the inland plains of the Selwyn District.

A small scheme which anticipated later, more extensive piped water systems saw water pumped from the Hororata River up to a tank from which a main ran down Downs Road. The main was extended in 1954, and the rising main replaced in 1956-57 and again in the 1970s. The area served by this early piped water scheme was finally absorbed into a later scheme.

A piped water scheme for the Malvern Hills was authorised in 1974. Supply wells were sunk and the scheme officially opened on 19 October 1979. A plaque near the Glentunnel Hall commemorates the opening. A scheme for piped water between the Hororata and Rakaia Rivers, extending inland as far as Windwhistle, was opened on 3 August 1984. The plaque commemorating this opening is near the Hororata Hall. A scheme for piped water to supply the plains around and below the Malvern Hills was investigated but never went ahead.[41]

Irrigation in Canterbury was restricted, until well after the end of World War II, to the area of Mid Canterbury, south of the Rakaia River, which was served by the Rangitata diversion race built in the 1930s. It was only in the later 20th century and early 21st that irrigation schemes on the inland plains of Selwyn District went ahead. A century of discussion preceded this major endeavour.

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[39] Singleton, pp. 54-55, 223-24; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 238-39.
[40] Popple, p. 120; Dobbie and Perrin, p. 239.
[41] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 262-68.

Irrigation of the plains was first seriously proposed in an 1883 paper written by an early engineer, but nothing was done. After World War II there was further talk of drawing water from the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers for irrigation. When Popple wrote his history of Malvern County in the early 1950s he remarked that 'any possible further development in regard to production would appear to be an irrigation scheme for the lighter lands'. A scheme to irrigate areas between the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers was being promoted at the time by the various local bodies. 'Should irrigation become an accomplished fact, the county has unlimited possibilities and the outlook for the future is very promising' Popple concluded. But several decades were to pass before irrigation became an accomplished fact on the inland plains.[42]

Irrigation began in the Selwyn District on a small scale in the second half of the 20th century based on wells driven by individual farmers. The inauguration of these individual schemes saw the start of controversial dairy conversions on the plains, as farmers sought to take advantage of buoyant dairy prices. The success of these systems on individual farms led to a decline of interest in forming community schemes, like those which went ahead on the Waiau Plains in North Canterbury and at Morven-Glenavy in South Canterbury. Investigation of a central plains scheme based on river water in the 1980s again led nowhere.[43]

In the late 20th century and early 21st concern about depletion by irrigation wells of the aquifers under the plains prompted revival of a scheme based on drawing water from the rivers which rose in the Southern Alps. The Central Plains Water scheme was planned to draw water from the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers. Though it addressed the problem of depletion of the aquifers, the proposed scheme intensified concerns that further dairy conversions of former 'mixed' farms which relied on rainfall and the stock water races would result in further deterioration of water quality in the Selwyn River and Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

The Central Plains Water scheme went ahead in the second decade of the 21st century. Independent commissioners, satisfied by the environmental safeguards promised by those promoting the scheme, gave the scheme the go-ahead. Stage 1, completed by 2017, drew water in a canal from the Rakaia River and distributed it through high-density polythene pipes to around 20,000 hectares of farmland. Stage 2, drawing water from the Waimakariri, was planned to provide water to irrigate a further 20,000 hectares. The second stage, which included 12 pump stations, a large reservoir beside State Highway 73 between Springfield and Sheffield and further buried pipes, is due for completion in September 2018. Although assurances were given that the scheme had been planned to avoid further deterioration of water quality and further depletion of aquifers it has continued to cause concern among environmentalists.[44]

Waimakariri River protective works

The Waimakariri was useful as a source of water for the farms of the inland plains, but also in its lower reaches a threat, not just to land that was later included in the Selwyn District but even to Christchurch City. In both the Halkett and Courtenay districts, protective works to prevent the Waimakariri from overflowing into old channels that led in the direction of Christchurch were erected in the 19th century. That the Waimakariri threatened Christchurch because its old beds were lower than its actual course was well recognised by 1860. It was realised that an overflow into those old beds could send the entire river flowing down through Christchurch and even into Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. There was talk of an 'unruly' and 'undisciplined' river escaping its bed. An 1858 flood sent a 'fresh' of Waimakariri water into the Avon (an old channel which began near Courtenay led directly towards Fendalton). In 1859 an accommodation house at Halkett was swept away by a flood. The first breastworks to turn the river away from weak points at the heads of the old channels were built in 1858. A further flood on Christmas Day 1865, which saw water escape from the river at Courtenay despite the first protective works, gave Christchurch a fright and prompted the suggestion stopbanks be built. These were begun in 1866, but a serious overflow in 1868, following heavy rain from the nor-'east, saw Waimakariri water flow down the Avon through central Christchurch.

In 1868 George Thornton, the provincial engineer, had three embankments built in the Sandy Knolls area to protect Christchurch. The following year a Board of Conservators was established and promptly built an upper embankment near Watson's accommodation house at Courtenay, to block off the old channels leading to Christchurch and Halswell, a bank at Sandy Knolls to block off another channel that led towards Christchurch, and a bank near McLean's station to block an old channel that led into the Styx River. The works were completed by 1871 and held back a major flood in 1874. By 1903 the area around the concrete protective works at Halkett had been planted in trees and was a popular picnic spot.

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[42] Popple, pp. 172, 175.

[43] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 268-71.

[44] *Malvern Times*, 4 August 2017; *Selwyn Times*, 8 August 2017, p. 3.

The Board of Conservators became the South Waimakariri River Board which was charged with preventing overflows on the old riverbeds. Its work was taken over in 1922 by the Waimakariri River Trust which had responsibility for flood protection works on both sides of the – river.[45]


Waimakariri River in flood; a washout on the railway line near Cass, 16 November 1926. Source: Selwyn Kete.

The towns, townships and districts of the inland plains

Along the Old West Coast Road, Halkett, Courtenay and Kimberley were embryonic villages in the days when communications were limited and settlers needed shops, schools, churches, hotels and other facilities near to hand. None of the three ever developed into townships.

Halkett

Halkett was settled by small farmers in the 1860s, some buying their land off Captain Halkett who gave the land for a local school. An accommodation house for local travellers and those riding the coaches that used the Old West Coast Road was opened in around 1864 on the Courtenay side of Halkett, but by the early 20th century it had long since become the homestead of a farm. The public school, opened in 1870, had a roll of 36 in 1903. Both Anglican and Presbyterian churches were erected in Halkett in the early 1870s. St Matthew's Anglican Church (see below) opened to the west of the school, at the crossroads of Halkett, Woolshed, Station, and Intake Roads, in 1873. In 1937 it was replaced by a church built of concrete. A Presbyterian church opened in 1873, the year after the Anglican church, east of the school at the crossing of Halkett, Calders, Mckays and Sandy Knolls Roads.[46]
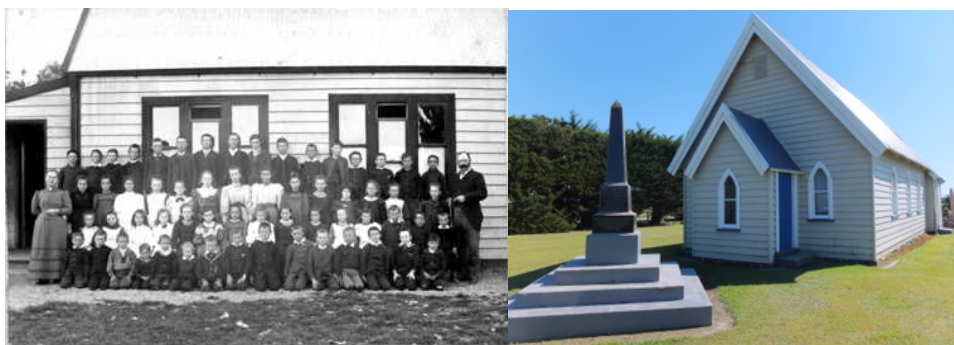
Halkett School in c. 1890. Source: Selwyn Kete. Halkett Hope Presbyterian Church and War Memorial. Source: D McEwan, March 2018.

Courtenay

The Courtenay district lay across the boundary of the Desert and Racecourse Hill runs. With good access to Christchurch it was settled by small farmers relatively early. The Waimakariri River was usually fordable at Courtenay and, until the river was bridged at Kaiapoi, early travellers to North Canterbury avoided swamps nearer the coast by coming up the river and crossing it at Courtenay. The accommodation house at Cust was not far from the ford on the north side of the river. For a time a ferry – a horse-powered punt, worked by cables – took travellers across the river at Courtenay. The ferry began operating in January 1861. The building of bridges over the Waimakariri, first at Kaiapoi, then at the gorge, put an end to most crossings of the river at Courtenay.

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[45] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 131, 732; Logan, pp. 9, 14-15, 24-25, 138-39.
[46] *Cyclopedia*, p. 732; Popple, p. 146.

White's accommodation house opened at Courtenay in 1861, the year the ferry service began. When coaches were using the Old West Coast Road Courtenay also had a store. In 1864 the accommodation house became a stopping off point for a mail service from Christchurch which went on, beyond Courtenay, to Racecourse Hill, The Point and Snowdon.

A 'Township of Courtenay' was surveyed in 1863 and sections offered for sale in December of that year. A small settlement soon developed in the vicinity of the accommodation house. By the 1870s the village included a second store, a second hotel, a blacksmith's shop, a Brethren chapel, a library and a school. The school opened in 1867, with 25 on the roll.[47] A Courtenay farmers' club was formed in 1872 at the homestead of The Desert run, where ploughing matches had already been held. The club faltered but was revived in 1877 as an agricultural and pastoral association which held its first shows at Courtenay.

What cut Courtenay's growth short was the building of the railway several kilometres south of Courtenay, through Kirwee. Both accommodation houses and the stores closed when the railway reached Kirwee in 1874. The Courtenay Road Board and Courtenay Agricultural and Pastoral Association also decamped to Kirwee. The former had likely held its first meetings in White's accommodation house, but it moved to Kirwee (possibly as early as 1869) and built an office there in 1878-79. The public pound established at Courtenay in 1870 was moved to Aylesbury in 1885. Nevertheless in 1903 Courtenay still had a public school, a lodge hall, a public library and a domain. The settlement shared an Anglican church with Halkett, with St Matthew's half way between the two.[48]

St Matthew's Anglican Church, Courtenay. Source: D McEwan, March 2018.

Kimberley

The Kimberley district (known originally as Upper Courtenay) lay between Courtenay, Waddington and Darfield. The area was originally part of the Racecourse Hill run. Captain Halkett gave a site for a public school in Kimberley in the district that bears his name. The school opened in 1874 with 20 pupils; by 1903 the roll was 36. In 1903 Kimberley also had a domain, a Bible Christian (Methodist) church which opened in 1894 and a post office. A cricket club began playing on the domain in the 1880s. Kimberley today is little more than the name for a crossroads between Darfield and Courtenay.[49]

West Melton

On the northern edge of the inland plains only West Melton, on what is now state highway 73, has pretensions to being a township rather than just a district. The diversion of road traffic from the Old West Coast Road to the road that ran from Yaldhurst through West Melton, Aylesbury, Kirwee and Darfield to Sheffield and Springfield, stunted the growth of the Old West Coast Road settlements but benefited Yaldhurst and West Melton.

West Melton was initially slower to develop than Courtenay because it was on lighter land and away from the river. Settlement of the district began in the 1860s and quickened when water races reached the district. The first races were supplied from the Kowai River scheme, constructed in 1876-77. In 1886-87 an intake from the Waimakariri at Halkett also supplied water to parts of the West Melton district.

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[47] Tender notice, *Press,* 20 October 1866, p. 1.
[48] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 738-39; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 132, 136, 297; Popple, pp. 41-43, 56, 61, 99, 136-37, 142-44, 146, 49-50, 159-60.
[49] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 745-46; Popple, p. 154.

The late 1860s and early 1870s saw West Melton begin to take shape as a village. A Methodist chapel erected in 1868 was the settlement's first church; it was later taken over by the Presbyterians who had built a church in nearby Halkett in 1873. The surviving St Paul's Anglican Church, designed by B. W. Mountfort, was consecrated in November 1884. The Presbyterians had begun holding services in West Melton in the 1870s but did not have a church in the settlement until they bought the former Methodist church in 1915. When the Presbyterians built a new hall in West Melton in 1962, the old church became a farm shed. The Baptists, strong in nearby Greendale, were active in West Melton only in the 1870s and 1880s and never had a church of their own there. A cemetery was opened in West Melton in 1878.

St Paul's Anglican Church, West Melton. Source: Selwyn Kete.

There were probably denominational schools in West Melton in the 1860s; the West Melton school district was formed in 1871 and a school was opened in that year. The original teacher's residence was demolished in 1955 and in 1963 the original school moved off site to become a farm shed. A new school was built. The roll had dropped to below 20 in the 1940s but by 1971 had risen to around 100, higher than the previous peak in the 1890s of more than 60.

The first store (which included a post office) opened in 1872. The original store building burned down in 1930. In 1937 another store opened in a former blacksmith's shop which had opened in 1882. As West Melton began to grow after the end of World War II a new general store building was erected. The hotel opened in 1881.

The West Melton Saleyards Company, formed in 1892, built yards, a dip and a shearing shed. Sales were held until the 1920s. The shearing shed was eventually converted into a hall and served as the local meeting place until it burned down in 1935. The Saleyards Company continued to run a local hall. It finally changed its name to the West Melton Hall Company in 1959, two years before the hall was taken over by the local county council which enlarged it by adding a new kitchen, supper room and lounge. The hall was replaced after the earthquakes of 2010-11.
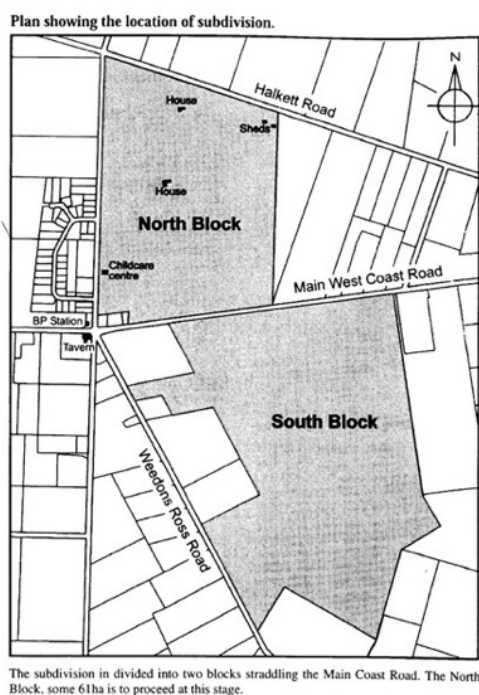
By 1903 West Melton had Anglican and Wesleyan churches, a public school with a public library next door to it, a hotel, a store, a blacksmith's shop and saleyards where monthly sales were held. Tennis, cricket, athletic and cycling clubs were active and in 1909 land in West Melton for recreational activities was given to the local community by a landowner. The domain was little used for many years and was leased to neighbouring farmers, but the formation of a domain board in 1957 saw the grounds improved and tennis courts and a pavilion built.

Earlier, a recreation ground had been opened in 1873 and a cricket ground and cycling and athletic tracks were formed. The ground eventually fell into disuse and in the 1940s was subdivided and sold by the Crown.

Shortly after the end of World War II the New Zealand Army opened a rifle range north of West Melton, between the Old West Coast Road and the Waimakariri River. Volunteer military units had practised shooting in the area in the early years of the century. In 1971 the Canterbury Aero Club established a training airfield at West Melton which was used by members of the club and other aviators for many years.

By 1971, when the West Melton school celebrated its centenary, the population of the district had begun to climb with the proliferation of smaller 'lifestyle' blocks, some of which were farmed part-time by owners who commuted to jobs in Christchurch.

The village's growth in the late 20th century and early 21st was stimulated by this proliferation of lifestyle blocks and by large-scale subdivisions to the north of the town centre, the east side of Weedons Ross Road and the west side of Iris Taylor Avenue. In November 2016 a mall opening at West Melton was emblematic of the township's transition from a rural service centre, which had strong local farmers' organisations in the first half of the 20th century, to a residential area that was effectively an outer suburb of Christchurch.[50]

Plan showing the location of subdivision.

The subdivision in divided into two blocks straddling the Main Coast Road. The North Block, some 61ha is to proceed at this stage.

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Proposed plan of 'Gainsborough' (the North Block).

Three road entries are planned, two off Halkett Road, one of Weedons Ross Road. Trees are shown in black, and two reserves are shown opposite the school.
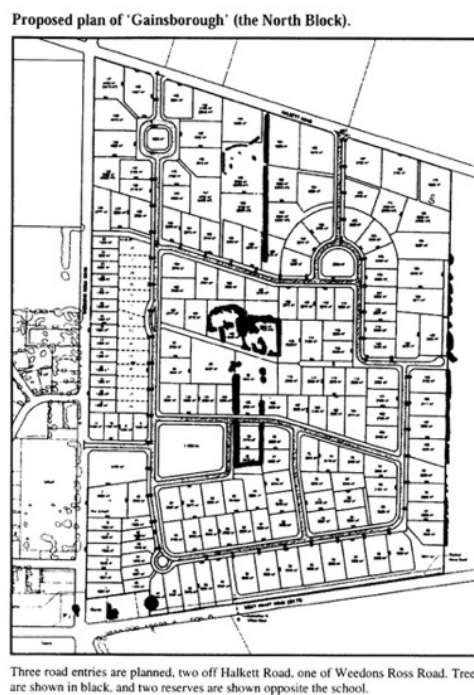
7

Gainsborough Development, West Melton, c. 2006-2007. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Aylesbury

An area near Aylesbury was originally known as Yorktown because a number of Yorkshiremen were among the early settlers there. They unwisely, based on their experiences in their home county in England, chose to settle on drier land and most eventually moved to more favourable areas. Aylesbury itself was known first as Bealey Crossing, the name of the first railway station which was opened in 1874, when the line between Rolleston and Sheffield was completed. The district was on the southern edge of the Tresilian run. When the run's homestead was moved from its Waimakariri River frontage to the property's western edge, it was named Aylesbury.

By 1903 the Aylesbury estate had been reduced to around 750 hectares and was one of the larger of the district's freehold farms, which ranged in size from 80 to 800 hectares. Another of the larger farms, Fernbank, of around 360 hectares, was divided into 12 paddocks, some of which were used to grow grain and rape and turnips as feed for the farm's sheep. But the Aylesbury railway station, which had taken its name from the estate, never became the nucleus of a proper village. A post office was opened at the railway station and a public school built in 1881 but there was never a store or hotel and the district had no public hall until 1949, when local residents bought the surplus school. The hall later became a play centre.[51]

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[50] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 724-26; *Selwyn Times*, 29 November 2016, p. 7. For West Melton see particularly the 1971 publication issued at the time of the school's centenary.
[51] Popple, pp. 46, 144-46; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 730-31.

Train collision at Aylesbury. *Auckland Weekly News* 4 March 1942, p. 22.
Source: AWNS-19420304-22-2, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

Kirwee

Kirwee grew in size and importance when several of the organisations and institutions which had been established in Courtenay moved the short distance south when the railway reached Kirwee in 1874. The second office of the Courtenay Road Board in Kirwee, which replaced the first in 1912, was used as Kirwee's library until 1961 when it was moved to Darfield (demolished 1989). In the late 1870s the licence of White's accommodation house in Courtenay was transferred to a new hotel in Kirwee.

What also spurred Kirwee's growth from the early 1880s was the arrival of water down the race from the Kowai River. The building of the race had been promoted by local farmer, Colonel Brett, whose property gave its name to the township. The district's want of a regular water supply was thus, it was noted in the *Cyclopedia* of 1903, 'removed by the resourcefulness of Colonel Brett'.

St George's Anglican Church, Halkett. Source: D McEwan, October 2017.

The township grew up around the railway station. By 1903 Kirwee had a hotel (established around 1878), with 15 bedrooms, a dining room that could seat 60 and stables, and a number of businesses, including a blacksmith's shop which opened in 1884. The school opened in 1881 and had a roll of around 40 in 1903. St George's Anglican Church was consecrated in 1883. The Methodists established a strong presence in Kirwee, where there was a West Courtenay Prohibition League and a Band of Hope, but there was never a Methodist church in the township. A Baptist church opened in 1878. (This church was removed in 1936.) The Presbyterians built their church in Kirwee in 1907. A post office established originally in the railway station was eventually transferred to its own building. Stores and a bakery opened and a flour mill was in operation in the 1880s.

Kirwee Tavern. Source: A McEwan, March 2018.

The Kirwee domain was originally part of a plantation reserve owned by the road board. The board allowed the Kirwee Kennel Club to use part of the reserve, four hectares of which eventually became a recreation reserve. A cemetery, which had been in use since at least 1879, was taken over by the Malvern County Council in 1921. The agricultural and pastoral association's building was used as a public hall and there were also sale yards at Kirwee. Around 1910-12 the sale yards company erected a six-stand machine shearing shed for public use. The shed was still being used in the 1950s. Like other local sale yards, use of the yards at Kirwee ceased when the freezing companies started buying lambs direct from farmers.

In later years, Kirwee managed to hold its own to a certain extent against a growing Darfield and remained a village rather than fading away like Aylesbury and Courtenay. The inauguration of a high-pressure water supply in 1979-80 led to further development in the village. Lifestyle blocks near Kirwee contributed to its continuing survival.[52]

Darfield

The village which benefitted principally from the diversion of road traffic from the Old West Coast Road to what is now state highway 73, and from the construction of the railway line from Rolleston to Springfield, was Darfield. All across Selwyn, a village's location in relation to lines of transport influenced whether it forged ahead or fell back. Darfield is also a notable example of the importance of serving as a centre for local government and administration in determining which villages prospered and grew and which stagnated and declined.

Darfield had a relatively late start. Soon after the railway line to Whitecliffs, which branched from the line between Rolleston and Sheffield at what was originally known as Whitecliffs Junction, was built in 1875 a town was surveyed at the junction. The nascent village was known briefly, in 1878, as Horndon Junction before becoming Darfield in 1879. While Darfield came into existence as a railway junction town, it also benefited from its location on the road network; from 1879, when the road between Aylesbury and Darfield was formed and soon came to be preferred by travellers over the Old West Coast Road, Darfield was also on the main road route between Christchurch, the Malvern Hills and the West Coast.

The post office opened in 1875 in the railway station. A telegraph office was opened in 1877, a savings bank in 1884 and a telephone exchange in 1912. A separate post office was opened in 1925 and closed 70 years later as a result of nationwide changes in the delivery of postal and other services. The redundant building became a home and glass studio.

Through the 1880s Darfield acquired the institutions and facilities of a typical rural service town. As in most Canterbury rural settlements, churches were early buildings which served as nuclei of townships.

A Catholic church, the Church of the Holy Angels, opened in 1880. The church became an important centre for Catholicism in the wider district; in 1896 the parish priest was tending to around 300 Irish Catholic families up and down the railway lines that ran in three directions from Darfield. The building was enlarged in 1888-89. At the same time a Presbytery was built. This first church burned down in January 1936. The foundation stone of its successor, St Joseph's (designed by H. Francis Willis), was laid in October and the church, built of poured concrete, was consecrated in June of the following year.

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[52] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 735-37; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 139, 341-44, 362; Popple, pp. 132-33, 156-57.

St Joseph's Catholic Church, Darfield. Source: D McEwan, October 2017.

Methodist services commenced in Darfield in 1882. In 1889 a Baptist church which had been built in Yorktown, near Aylesbury, was shifted to Darfield by the Methodists, but Methodism was stronger in nearby Greendale and the Darfield church was in a sense merely an adjunct to the Greendale Methodist church. The building, however, survived the move of the Methodists to the new Trinity Church in 1979 (see below). Moved across the road the former Methodist church became commercial premises and survives, though greatly altered. St Andrew's Anglican Church was opened in 1897 and consecrated in 1902. Darfield's Presbyterians built a church which was opened in November 1892 on the site which was later chosen for the church, Trinity, which the Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans share. Since 1979 the three denominations have all worshipped at Trinity.[53] The organ in Trinity Church is a Hobday model that was built in 1914 for Masterton's Methodist church. The Presbyterian church was demolished after Trinity opened and the Anglican church was deconsecrated at the same time.[54]

Darfield's school opened in February 1883, which was later than most schools in the wider district. A short-lived district high school opened in 1902. After it closed Darfield children had to travel into Christchurch for their secondary education until another short-lived district high school functioned from 1913 until 1921. Thirty years later, in 1951, a new district high school, separate from the primary school, was opened. It became a full high school, as distinct from a district high school, in 1962. After a fire in 1972 a virtually new school was re-opened in 1978. Darfield also had a convent school which opened in 1899 and drew children from Coalgate, Springfield and Kirwee, as well as local Darfield children. Run by the Sisters of Mercy, and at one time offering secondary education also, the school eventually closed in the 1980s, some 90 years after it opened.[55]

Businesses also became established in Darfield in the 1880s. The first hotel opened earlier than the school, in 1881. The venerable building was demolished and a new hotel was built in 1969. Several storekeepers opened their doors in the 1880s and Darfield soon became a larger commercial centre than any of the other settlements of the inland plains or of the nearby Malvern Hills district.

Darfield Hotel, undated (demolished). Source: Selwyn Kete.

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[53] See https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/darfield-church-memorial The church contains war memorial plaques and was built from elements of the earlier buildings.
[54] http://nzopt.org.nz/organinfo/Trinity%20Church%20Darfield.pdf ; *Star*, 18 July 1892, p. 3; *Press*, 19 October 1893, p. 6.
[55] *Selwyn Times*, 14 March 2018, p. 15.

The year 1888 saw Darfield's industrial history begin with the opening of Moffatt's flour mill.[56] It was powered by water from a county council water race. Initially it ground the wheat using grindstones but was converted to rollers around 1892.[57] Joseph Moffatt, who had also built mills in Annat and on the Hawkins River before he opened his Darfield mill, filed for bankruptcy in January 1895, having over extended himself with loans to pay for the roller plant at a time when flour prices were not high enough to turn a good profit. The mill finally closed down just before the outbreak of World War I.

The story of clay-based industries in Selwyn District, which began in the Malvern Hills, was continued through the second half of the 20th century in Darfield. W. D. Boyes and Sons began making bricks (but not pottery or pipes) using Malvern Hills clay in 1958, having acquired the site of their works five years before. It became the only brick works left in the South Island and the largest in the country. Another firm, the Albion Brick and Pottery Works, which used clay from Bush Gully near Coalgate, also operated in Darfield between 1982 and 1993.

The same year that Moffatt's flour mill began production (1888), sale yards were opened by the Darfield Saleyards Company which had been formed the previous year. A public sheep dip was built at the yards in 1904. The dip long survived the ending of local sales and the final winding up of the Saleyards Company in 1947.

Around the middle of the 20th century, Darfield became an important centre for sawmilling. The Beattie Lumber Company which opened its mill in 1945 remained in business for 31 years. Another mill opened in 1946 and a sawmill was still operating on the edge of Darfield in the early 21st century. The opening of the sawmills was appropriate for a town which, about the same time, became the headquarters of the Selwyn Plantation Board.

In the 20th century, Darfield also became an important centre for local transport across the inland plains and even further afield. Two firms – Rae Brothers and Frews Transport – began operations in the early 1920s. They were joined by Greens Transport in 1949.

The town itself, right through the 20th century, supported the usual range of shops found in rural towns throughout New Zealand. One Darfield example of such a local firm was Cridge's butchery, which opened in 1909 and had its own abattoir until 1963.

Former Thompson's Store, Darfield. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Through its history, Darfield had two important areas of public open space used for sports and recreation. Part of the land formerly owned by the saleyards company became Almond Park. A combined tennis, bowling and croquet club, formed in 1931, bought land from the saleyards company and established facilities for all three sports on the park. The sale yards office was used briefly by the Malvern County Council in 1911-12 but was demolished after 1974.

The Darfield domain has a longer history than Almond Park. Under the control, at different times, of a domain board and the local council, the domain was first set aside in the 1880s. It was extended between 1969 and 1974 from around four to about 12 hectares.

Darfield acquired its first public hall in 1894 and its second in 1916 after a hall company had been formed. The saleyards company was also involved in building the second hall, which was opened as a memorial hall in December 1916.[58] A hall society ran the facility for the next 50 years. It was used for the usual wide range of entertainments and social events of a

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[56] *Press,* 2 April 1888, p. 6.
[57] *Star,* 17 January 1895, p. 2.
[58] *Press* 20 June 1894, p. 6.

country town like Darfield. A library was added to the hall in the 1950s. In the late 1960s the town became divided over whether to improve the existing hall or build a new hall on a different site. In 1975 the council finally accepted a site in the domain for a new building that was to be a cultural, recreational and social centre. The project eventually proceeded in 1979 and the new centre was officially opened in October 1980. The memorial hall was demolished after the new facility had been opened. In 1983 the council opened a new library in rented premises which it bought in 1986. Subsequently, after the local government amalgamations which saw Darfield's role in local administration change, the library moved into the former county council chambers (see below).

Darfield Memorial Hall (demolished). Source: Selwyn Kete.

Darfield also owed its gradual rise to pre-eminence among the towns of the inland plains to the opening of a hospital there. The Darfield Hospital, with four maternity beds and a casualty ward, was officially opened on 27 May 1927 after ten years of negotiations between the North Canterbury Hospital Board and the Malvern and Tawera county councils. Before the end of the year around 20 babies had been born in the hospital. The hospital celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2017. It remains open in part because of the vigorous advocacy of a Friends of the Hospital group.

Darfield Hospital. Source: D McEwan, March 2018.

Darfield's position as a place where more and better medical services were provided than in other towns nearby – on the inland plains and in the Malvern Hills – was later confirmed with the opening of a medical centre. The Darfield Medical Centre had its origins in a suggestion made by local doctors in 1976 that the county council buy premises where medical services could be centralised. The council acted on the suggestion in the following year. A dental surgery was added to the centre in 1979. An ambulance service had previously been established in Darfield in 1968, when the St John Ambulance Association took over the old Malvern county council offices and bought a vehicle to be based there.

Although Darfield effectively monopolised medical services for the wider inland plains area, it had only one of several fire stations. A volunteer brigade was formed in the town in 1956-57, at a time when the town's population was growing, and a station was opened in July 1958. There were also auxiliary brigades and units through the latter 20th century at Kirwee, Sheffield, Springfield, South Malvern and Hororata.

Darfield's role as an administrative centre began in the late 19th century but only became a major factor in the town's growth after it became the seat of the Malvern County in 1911. There was a court house in the town from 1895. After court sittings in Darfield ended, the court house was shifted in 1964 to become a shed on a Glenroy farm. The police station for the general area which had been at Annat moved into new headquarters in Darfield in 1895. When the station at Annat was closed, the lock-up which had been at Annat was moved into Darfield where, since relocated again, it serves as a reminder of Darfield's role as a centre of policing on the inland plains.

Darfield was the administrative centre of Malvern County for the county's entire existence. The county council first met in April 1911 in the East Malvern Road Board office in Sheffield, but then leased a brick building from the Darfield sale yards company for its meetings and offices. In 1912-13 the council built itself brick premises of its own on North Terrace and occupied the new building in March 1913. The county clerk's residence was next door. Darfield's importance as the county seat increased after the amalgamations of 1963 and 1967. Most of the former Selwyn county was amalgamated with Malvern in 1963. When Tawera county amalgamated with Malvern in 1967, Darfield became the centre of administration for more than 500,000 hectares.

Former Malvern County Council Chambers, Darfield. Source: A McEwan, April 2018.

In 1965 Christchurch architect John Hendry designed a new office for the county council on South Terrace, on land that had been the pound reserve. (The public pound established at Greendale in 1874 was moved to Darfield in 1885.) The building was opened on 7 May 1968. The old county council chambers became the premises of the St John's Ambulance Association. The new building was extended in 1984 but when the new Selwyn District, formed in 1989, decided to locate its headquarters elsewhere, the Darfield building was downgraded to become a library and council service centre.

Darfield was also for many years the headquarters of the Malvern Electric Power Board, established in 1923, which was responsible for the distribution of power in Darfield and Hororata and the area between them. Power was turned on in Darfield by the electric power board on 11 June 1925. After the Central Canterbury Electric Power Board had been established in 1965 the headquarters of the area's power distribution authority moved to Hornby. The power board's office building became first a real estate office and then a gallery. The Selwyn Plantation Board (see above) also had its offices in Darfield for many years from 1948 and the corporatised body which succeeded it still does.

When Popple wrote his history of Malvern County in the early 1950s he noted that Darfield alone among the rural townships of the county was progressing. He attributed this to Darfield being the location of the county council, the power board and the plantation board, as well as of the district high school and maternity hospital. He noted also that stock and station firms and other rural service industries supplying a wide area were based in Darfield.

Darfield grew significantly in the last third of the 20th century. In 1967 the town had around 200 houses and around 800 people. Council-promoted and private subdivisions in the 1970s saw the population of the town rise to more than 1,000 by 1975 and to 1,151 by 1981. (This was an increase of 40 per cent between 1966 and 1981.) Darfield had had an independent town committee within the Hawkins ward since 1969; by 1980 it had grown sufficiently to become a separate ward of the county. The population of Darfield continued to increase in the following years, although more slowly, to 1,200 in 1989. By 2013 the population had reached 1,935. The increase after 2010 was attributed partly to people moving from Christchurch after the earthquakes of 2010-11 (though the town was close to the centre of the September 2010 earthquake) and partly to the jobs that became available when Fonterra opened a new dairy factory to the north of the town. Darfield's progress in relation to Kirwee, Sheffield, Springfield and the townships of the Malvern Hills was further boosted by the building of this factory.[59]

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[59] Popple, pp. 45, 102, 121, 148-49, 157, 173; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 7, 10, 166, 284-87, 344-58, 359-60, 362-66, 368-70, 373; Hanrahan, pp. 78-79; Caffeys, pp. 355-56; *Selwyn Times*, 7 March 2017, pp. 28-29; *Malvern News*, 4 August 2017; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 740-44.

Sheffield

Although Sheffield sits out on the plains, away from the edge of the Malvern Hills, it belongs in a sense to both the inland plains and the Malvern Hills. The township owed its origins and early development to the mining of coal, but the main centre of coalmining (and of pottery making) was on the hills' southern and western flanks where the histories of Coalgate, Glentunnel, South Malvern and Whitecliffs are far more closely intertwined with the story of mining and pottery. After beginning as a colliery town, Sheffield became a rural service town virtually indistinguishable from the other settlements on the inland plains. Like these other settlements, Sheffield owed its later vigour and vitality to the surrounding farms.

Early accommodation houses were established near Sheffield in part because of the coal mines in the area. The Half-way House was opened in 1857 and in 1861 John Buchanan built his Clare Inch accommodation house on Coalpit Road in what was then Little Racecourse Hill.

Soon after John Jebson took up his interest in coalmining in the Sheffield district he cut some land up into building sections and, being a religious man, built a small Methodist chapel. The chapel subsequently became a public hall, then the premises of the local Oddfellows lodge. The lodge moved the building to Waddington in 1902. It survived there until it was demolished in 1954.

After the railway reached Sheffield in 1874 the township grew. Sheffield was for six years, 1874 to 1880, the terminus of the line. The station at Little Racecourse Hill was soon renamed Malvern but in 1876 the name was changed again to Sheffield.

Sheffield Railway Station, January 1974. Source: WA-71670-F, Whites Aviation Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Sheffield enjoyed the advantages of being a centre of local government in the later 19th century. The original Malvern Road Board (1867-70) met at the Malvern Arms hotel, which was built in 1865 between Sheffield and Annat. The original Malvern road district was subdivided in 1870. One of the new road boards, the East Malvern board, built an office in Sheffield in 1871. From 1876 the office was also used for court sittings. When Malvern county came into existence in 1911, absorbing the Courtenay, South Malvern and East Malvern road districts, the county council met first in Sheffield but then moved to Darfield. The Sheffield office was used as an armoury by a local volunteer unit, then after 1918 by the Malvern Agricultural and Pastoral Association. It survived in various community uses until 1970 when it was burned down as a fire brigade exercise.

St Ambrose's Anglican Church was consecrated in January 1882. After the first Methodist chapel built by John Jebson had been turned to other uses, the Methodists bought a church from the Canterbury Baptist Association in 1886. This building was enlarged in 1899 and later closed.[60] St James' Presbyterian Church was built in 1910 and stuccoed in 1959. The church closed in 2016 and has since been converted to residential use. The original St Ambrose's church was replaced by a masonry building in 1955.

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[60] 'Canterbury Methodist Churches', Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives, p. 31.

First St Ambrose's church in the snow. Undated. Source: 4-6635, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

Schools along with churches usually formed the nucleus of small towns throughout the Selwyn District but although Sheffield had churches relatively early in its history it had no school until after the end of World War II. This was because the Malvern school at Waddington (see below) was close enough to Sheffield for the children to walk to school there. (One pupil who did this in 1920-21 was the poet Allen Curnow, whose father was the vicar of St Ambrose's at the time).[61] There appears to have been, briefly, an early school in Sheffield which closed when the Malvern school was built in Waddington in 1875. Sheffield remained without a school until 1949, when a new consolidated school was opened there.

An eight-hectare domain provided the town with space for cricket, rugby and, for a time, a New Year's Day athletic sports. A cricket pavilion was built on the domain in 1924. In 1977 a new building provided facilities for a number of sports. The domain also doubled as a show ground. A food and produce show held at nearby Russells Flat in 1899, then at Annat, led eventually to the formation of an agricultural and pastoral association in Sheffield in 1905. The new association started holding its shows on the domain and built a shed there in 1911.

Camp at Sheffield Domain, *Weekly Press* 24 October 1900, p. 11. Source: Selwyn Kete.

A town hall was built in Sheffield in 1901 by the proprietor of the Sheffield Hotel. The hall, across the road from the hotel, was described in 1903 as 'one of the best town halls in the country districts of Canterbury'. Able to seat 400 for meetings, concerts or dramatic performances, the hall had an elevated stage and a supper room. It was also used for dances. In 1954 the hall was remodelled but the old hall remained behind the new frontage and other additions. The Sheffield hall, owned and administered by residents, was converted to a community centre in the late 1960s. Its future became uncertain after the earthquakes of 2010-11, but it seems likely to remain.

Sheffield had a sale yards from possibly the 1870s, though perhaps not until the 1880s. The Malvern Saleyards Company erected new yards in Sheffield in 1897 on land bought from the adjoining hotel. A public dip was added in the following year. Use of the yards declined when freezing companies began buying lambs direct from farmers and farmers began sending all their adult sheep in to the weekly Addington sales. Nevertheless an annual ewe fair is still being held at the Sheffield yards, attracting 16,000 ewes and achieving record prices in February 2018.

[61] http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Ba39Spo-t1-body1-d3.html

Sheffield had also, by 1903, two stores and a blacksmith's shop. A saddler, butcher, blacksmith and bootmaker were also in business in Sheffield from the later 19th century. The town's post and telegraph office was at the railway station. In 1903 a cordial and aerated water factory, started in 1880 and one of the largest country businesses of its kind in Canterbury, was producing 1,000 dozen bottles a month.

The local literary institute ran a library in Sheffield between 1874 and 1909. A new library opened in the 1930s and was moved into the Sheffield hall in 1967. War memorial baths were opened near the school in November 1953 and a new fire station was built in 1966.

Historically Sheffield has never played as important a role serving the needs of travellers as Darfield or Springfield, but the relocation of the Sheffield pie shop from Vogel Street to the former post office on West Coast Road prompted more travellers to pause in Sheffield in the early years of the 21st century.[62]

Waddington

The first settlers in the Waddington district bought land out of the Homebush run in the 1860s. One of these settlers, William Waddington, subdivided a township in 1874, the year the railway opened to Sheffield. Its location on the railway line stimulated the growth of the township, even though Waddington was never more than a 'flag' station. The town's early residents were miners as well as railwaymen.
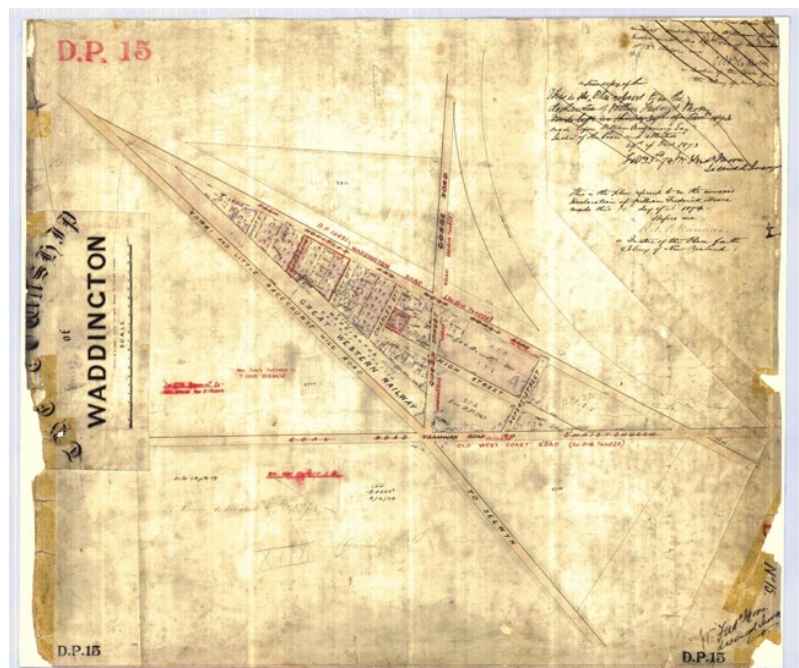
1874 survey plan of Waddington, DP 15. Source: LINZ.

Waddington was so close to Sheffield that the histories of the townships became intertwined. The school and cemetery that served Sheffield were both in Waddington, but Waddington never had a hotel or the advantage of a road board office. The only church built in Waddington was a Primitive Methodist chapel, which opened in 1875. A parsonage was built in 1880-81 but it was sold in 1955 and is now a private home. The church and land were sold in 1969.

The Malvern school in Waddington opened in August 1875. The building, possibly designed by Thomas Cane, was extended in 1879. The Waddington school was the parent of the side school opened at Annat in 1883. The roll of the school at Waddington peaked in 1886 at 134. James Hight, the rector of Canterbury University College and a former pupil, was present at the 60th anniversary celebrations in 1935. When the new school in Sheffield opened in April 1949, the Waddington school building continued in use for some time as a manual training centre, but then became a St John's Ambulance camp. The school building remained in use by St John's until the earthquakes of 2010-11 when it was cordoned off while the rest of the camp remained in use.

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[62] Popple, pp. 44, 132-33, 136-37, 142-44; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 229-30, 298, 331-41, 376-78; Maffey, pp. 74, 178, 214, 354, 365-66; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 763-64.

Former Waddington School. Source: A McEwan, April 2018.

In the later 19th century Waddington had a range of local businesses to rival Sheffield's. In 1874-75 it had a general store with a post office attached to it, two butcheries (the building in which Frederick Bull ran his butchery survives and is now a private home), a bakery, a smithy and a carpenter's shop. There was also a boarding house whose residents probably included itinerant farm workers in an age when farming was much more labour-intensive than it became in the 20th century. A public pound opened in Waddington in 1880, but already Sheffield had grown into the larger town. As late as the 1970s Waddington still had a local store, but within a few years it had become a purely residential satellite of Sheffield.[63]

Annat

Like Waddington, on the other side of Sheffield, Annat suffered from the competition of the larger town. Although by the early 21st century it had become a 'lost' village, with only a house or two marking where it was, in the 19th century Annat had a school, hotel, police station, general store, blacksmith's shop, post office and 'flag' railway station. The school opened in 1883, initially as a side school to the Malvern school in Waddington. A new school was built in 1886, the year in which its roll reached 89, and the school became independent of Waddington. Subsequently the roll declined to as low as 23 and the school was finally closed in 1949. A Methodist church was built in Annat in 1886 and sold in 1965.

In 1882 Annat was the location of a small farm settlement promoted by the government of the day largely at the initiative of William Rolleston. Around 30 sections ranging in size from two to 20 hectares were subdivided and offered to settlers. These small holdings were never truly economic and were eventually absorbed into larger farms but for a while some settlers tried to make a living from dairying and a creamery operated from 1902 until 1916.

The township's decline began in the late 19th century. The hotel lost its licence in 1893. It became a general store, then burned down in 1918. By the 1970s its replacement had long since closed down and was derelict.[64]

Springfield

Like Sheffield, Springfield owed some of its early vigour to the mining of coal in the Malvern Hills but for most of its life it has been primarily a farm service town, meeting the needs of farmers on the surrounding plains and hills. It has also been, historically, a stop-off point for travellers on the West Coast Road, from coaching to motoring days, as the last township before the road enters the mountains.

Springfield came into existence in the 1860s with the building of the road and telegraph line to the West Coast. Goldfields traffic led to the establishment of businesses at what was then known as Kowai Pass. The Kowai Pass Hotel opened in the early 1860s and a post office was established, probably in the hotel, in 1866. Around 1894 W. J. Cloudesley, who had managed the hotel at Cass and then erected a fine stone hotel at Castle Hill, took over the Springfield hotel. By 1903 the hotel, which had begun life as a 'small, unpretentious accommodation house' had, by successive enlargements, grown to an establishment with 40 rooms and a large livery stable. In 1901 Cloudesley built a hall next door to his hotel. He also owned a small coal mine less than half a kilometre from the hotel, from which he supplied his own premises and other local customers. A second hotel in Springfield, at the eastern approach to the town opposite the domain, closed in the 1890s.

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[63] Popple, p. 44-45, 99, 151-53; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 331-41; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 759-61.
[64] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 331, 337-38; Popple, pp. 153-54; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 767-68.

Springfield Hotel at the turn of the 20th century. Source: *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, NZETC.

By the mid-1870s Kowai Pass was a thriving small town, with a blacksmith, carriers, carpenters, a contractor, corn dealers, millers, shoemakers, butchers, bakers, masons and sawyers all in business there. A school opened in March 1871 and had a second room added in 1877 to cope with the increasing number of children in the township. The roll peaked in 1889. The schoolmaster in 1896-97 was Frederick Alley. His son Rewi (1897-1987), born in Springfield, had a remarkable career in China through the turbulent years before and after its revolution. A memorial in the town commemorates Rewi Alley's birth there. The original school building was replaced in 1931 with a new building on a different site nearer the station. Baths were built at the school in 1954 and other additions and improvements made. The winding down of railway operations in Springfield affected the school's roll but it remained open.

Anglicans began holding services in Springfield in the 1860s and the township's first church, St Peter's, was of that denomination. Designed by B. W. Mountfort, the church was consecrated on 16 April 1885 by Bishop Harper. It was built next to the Kowai Pass cemetery, in which the first known burials date from 1876. St Peter's had a long association with the Johnson family of Mount Torlesse station. Church picnics and balls were held at the station for many years. In the early 1950s Peter Johnson asked the Christchurch architect Heathcote Helmore to design a lychgate for the church. It was completed in 1954. St Catherine's Catholic Church, built to a design of Collins and Harman, was consecrated in May 1908.[65] Hugh Cassidy (see below) had secured the section and paid for the building. The last mass held in the church took place in December 1974 and it was subsequently demolished.

Coalmining played an important role in Springfield's early days, though not, as at Sheffield, in its origins. The first collieries near Springfield opened in the 1870s. Others followed in the next few decades. Some had brief lives and produced small amounts of coal. A flood closed the first Springfield colliery temporarily in 1893 but after it reopened it continued to produce coal until 1935. It was by far the most productive of the coal mines near Springfield, having produced nearly 100,000 tons by the time it closed. Coalmining continued until after the end of World War II and the last small mine closed in 1954.

Springfield had brickworks and a pottery for some years, located behind the hotel with a tramline to the station yard. The local industry was eventually killed off by competition from cheaper bricks sent by train from Christchurch. Springfield was also where timber milled at Kowai Bush was shipped off to Christchurch until the railway was extended to Kowai Bush itself.

The establishment of coal and clay-based industries added to the economic activity already generated by the servicing of travellers. With those new industries Springfield 'assumed the appearance of a genuine town'. The building of the first water race from the Kowai River, which passed through Springfield, gave a boost to farming in the area (as it did over a large area of the inland plains) and to Springfield as a farm service centre.

In 1873 Hugh Cassidy bought the coach service to the West Coast and based his operations at his Bushy Park farm near the township. Cassidy remained in Springfield until his death in 1922, just before the opening of the Otira tunnel ousted his coaches from their last preserve – the road over Arthur's Pass from the Arthur's Pass village to Otira.

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[65] *Greymouth Evening Star,* 28 May 1908, p. 1.

Springfield became the railhead for the line from Rolleston when the line beyond Sheffield was opened on 5 January 1880. The first Springfield station was built in 1878, in anticipation of the opening of the line, and replaced in 1923. Construction of the line beyond Springfield began in 1890. The construction of the line – it reached Broken River in 1906 and Cass in 1910 – was the catalyst for temporary construction villages located along it. Springfield businesses took advantage of these temporary villages to establish stores which moved up the line as the works progressed. The Nimmo and Hoglund families – both with long-established general stores in Springfield – had temporary stores at Paterson Stream, Staircase Gully, Broken River, Cass, Goldney Saddle and Arthur's Pass.

Springfield Railway Station. Source: Kete Christchurch.

Once the Otira tunnel opened in 1923 Springfield became an important centre for rail operations. Steam engines were serviced there and trains shunted. From 1939 powerful Kb locomotives were kept at Springfield for the haul up to Arthur's Pass which included several steep gradients. The departure of the last steam engines in 1968, which coincided with a decline in the carrying of general freight by rail, saw the importance of the railway to Springfield's prosperity diminish.

The second Springfield railway station burned down in 1963. Its replacement opened on 15 June 1965. One of the few stations constructed in New Zealand in the 1960s (Selwyn District has another at Arthur's Pass), it has been identified by the Rail Heritage Trust as a heritage item. The refreshment rooms at the station closed on 21 November 1987, but the building was later re-opened as a cafe.

Springfield Railway Station. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

At the turn of the century Springfield had a reputation as a place good for visitors' health. In the 1903 *Cyclopedia* it was observed of Springfield that 'the air is remarkably pure and invigorating, and medical men recommend Springfield to persons in search of health and requiring relaxation from business'. The existing hotel appears to have been sufficient to meet the demand of people visiting Springfield to benefit their health.

In 1910, with the creation of Tawera county out of the Upper Waimakariri and Malvern road districts, Springfield became a county seat. The new county council used the local offices of the Malvern road board as its headquarters. The impact of being an administrative centre was not as great in Springfield as in Darfield, however, because Tawera county consisted mainly of the pastoral high country and mountains inland from Springfield and the county council was never particularly energetic or active.

Like other towns of the inland plains, excepting Darfield, Springfield stagnated or underwent slow decline through the 20th century. In the early 1950s a local fund-raising effort, supplemented by a contribution from the county council and a subsidy from the government, raised enough money to build the substantial Tawera war memorial hall, which opened on 22 October 1954. Two milestones from the West Coast Road flanking a flagpole in front of the hall were a nod towards Springfield's 1860s origins as a stopping-off point on the way to the goldfields. Between 1955 and 1964 the hall also did service as a movie theatre.[66]

Kowai Bush

The small settlement of Kowai Bush sits so close underneath the Torlesse Range that geographically it is hardly on the inland plains at all. It developed on land that was part of, first, the Easdale Nook run and then the Mount Torlesse run (later station). Kowai Bush is the only settlement in the Selwyn District which owed its early existence as much to sawmilling as to the farms around it. The Easdale Nook bush was an important source of timber in Canterbury's earliest days, until fires – a major one occurred in 1865 – largely destroyed the forests, though sawmilling continued after 1865. There were further fires in 1893 and 1907 which effectively ended the sawmilling industry at Kowai Bush. The last large-scale sawmilling provided timber for the temporary viaduct erected over Paterson Stream when the railway line was being built. Fragments of the original native bush survive at Kowai Bush, now protected in a reserve. Once the sawmilling industry went into decline Kowai Bush became the centre for farms on the plains towards Springfield and on the tussock country towards and a short distance up the Waimakariri gorge.

Railway viaduct at Patterson's Creek (Paterson Stream), Kowai Bush, 1926.
Source: APG-1686-1/2-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

A post office at Kowai Bush was opened in 1879. It closed in 1885, then re-opened in 1895 in a new building. It was closed again at the very end of 1937, when a rural mail service around the district began.

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[66] Popple, pp. 148-49; Maffey, pp. 365-66; Gillespie, pp. 52, 62-63, 107-08, 136, 210-12, 247, 249-64; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 61-62, 81-82, 298, 322-28; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 771-73, 776; Hanrahan, pp. 184-85.

A school was opened at Kowai Bush in 1881. The pupils included children of farming families and, from the 1890s on, railway construction workers (see below). The roll in the early 20th century was around 60, but as rail construction progressed further up the gorge a portable classroom was moved from camp to camp and fewer children were schooled at Kowai Bush. At Kowai Bush a new school, built further back on the same site, was opened in 1930. The first school building was relocated and served as a community hall for some time but was eventually demolished. The school closed at the end of 1970 but was converted into a holiday home rather than being demolished or removed.

After the decision was made to resume construction of the Midland line to link Canterbury and Westland by rail, the line reached Kowai Bush after the two branches of the Kowai River had been bridged. A station was opened, to which a ladies' waiting room was added in 1914. Beyond Kowai Bush the first obstacle was Paterson Stream. Once the Paterson Stream viaduct (the first major viaduct on the line) was complete construction activity moved well beyond Kowai Bush, but the railway remained a presence in the settlement for many years. The railway house at Kowai Bush burned down in 1969 and the station closed in 1973. By then there were only around six houses permanently inhabited within about a kilometre of the station and even the crossing loop was being used infrequently. The station, waiting room and stockyards were subsequently all sold for removal. All that was left at Kowai Bush were an old toilet and the foundations of the other buildings.

Although the construction of the railway was an important chapter in the history of Kowai Bush it was primarily, both before construction began and after it ended, a farm service and holiday settlement. In the early 20th century dairy farmers in the district sent their cream or milk to the creamery at Annat.

In 1914 a national army training camp was established near Kowai Bush at Mount Torlesse station. The owner of the station, Major Johnson, had a military background and was active in the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry, a volunteer military corps. A war memorial, topped by the figure of St George and the dragon, was unveiled in January 1920. Among the invited guests of Major Johnson were Sir Heaton Rhodes and Lady Rhodes. Made of Mount Somers stone, the monument is inscribed with the names of five local men who died serving on World War I. Later the name of a local man who was killed in action at Singapore during World War II was added to the memorial.

Kowai Bush War Memorial. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Like nearby Springfield, Kowai Bush was touted as a healthy place for visitors – in 1903 it was claimed in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* that Kowai Bush was 'much frequented by persons in search of health'. Visitors patronised the boarding and guest houses set up in the village. From about the 1920s Christchurch families began building holiday cottages (baches) at Kowai Bush. One of the earliest families to holiday there were the Pascoes. In 1927 Paul Pascoe, who had just embarked on his architectural training in Christchurch and who had first visited Kowai Bush in 1921, designed a cottage for his recently widowed mother Effie. Pascoe was to go on to become one of Canterbury's leading Modernist architects. Guests at the Pascoes' cottage included the writer Ngaio Marsh and the artist Olivia Spencer-Bower. (Paul Pascoe also designed a church for Kowai Bush but it was never built.)[67]

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[67] *Cyclopedia*, p. 776; Gillespie, pp. 1-2, 56-59, 106, 112, 120-24, 162-64, 213; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 329-31, 362.
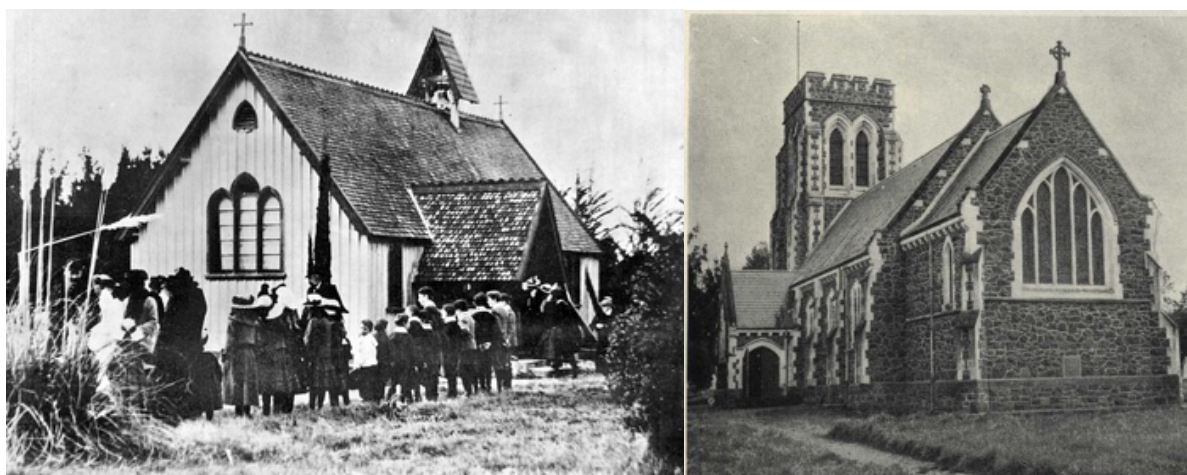
Hororata

The largest township towards the southern edge of the inland plains is Hororata. It developed close to three large runs which became large freehold estates – Haldon (the Bealey brothers), The Terrace (John Hall) and Hororata (John Cordy). Closer settlement began in the 1860s and by the 1870s, despite the owners of the three runs having freeholded large areas themselves, there were a number of smaller freehold properties in the area. The area was better watered than other parts of the inland plains so the village developed relatively early on.

In the late 1860s a blacksmith opened a shop in Hororata. In the same decade a flour mill was built, which burned down in the 1890s. The township's first hotel was also built in the 1860s. A new hotel built on the Haldon Road was shifted into the township in the 1870s. A public school opened in 1869, a post office in 1873 (when the post office on Snowdon closed) and the first Anglican church in 1875. A library opened in the town in the same year. In 1879 the Rakaia Road Board bought an area of 1.2 hectares as a cemetery for the town, which was, like other local cemeteries, governed by an independent board for many years, but was taken over by the Selwyn County Council in the 1930s.

By 1903 Hororata had a race course, a public library, a hotel, two churches – 'English' and Presbyterian – a public school, a town hall, general stores and a blacksmith's shop.[68] Cricket, football, racing and cycling clubs were flourishing. Both the first and second Anglican churches (see below) are still extant, on either side of Hororata Road, near its intersection with Scotts Road. The 1909 vicarage, which was converted for use as an Anglican healing centre in 1986, was demolished in 2011 after it was damaged by the Canterbury earthquakes. St Columba's Presbyterian Church is now a private home.
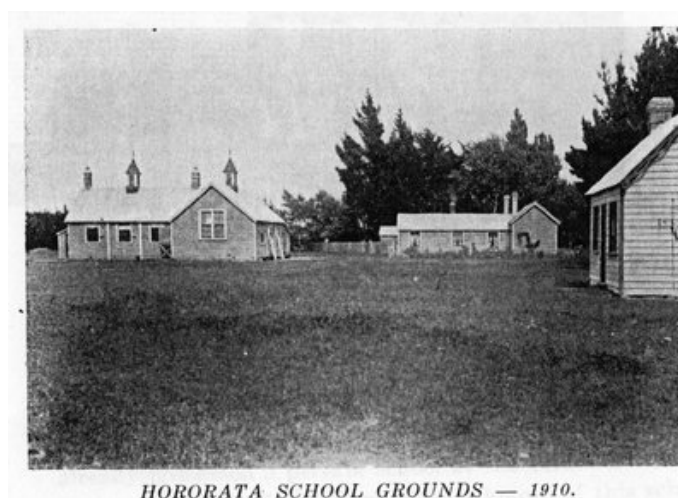
HORORATA SCHOOL GROUNDS — 1910.
Source: Selwyn Kete.

Left] Sir John Hall's funeral cortege at the first St John's Church; children from Hororata School lining the path.
Canterbury Times 3 July 1907. Source: Selwyn Kete.
Right] Second St John's Anglican Church (1911). *Auckland Weekly News* 17 June 1936, p. 44.
Source: AWNS-19360617-44-5, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

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[68] http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d6-d35.html

Although at some distance from the main mining and potteries district of the Malvern Hills, the Harper Hills, nearer Hororata than any other township, were a source of minerals. Bentonite clay was mined on the eastern face of the hills, which were also a source of moulding sand, burnt lime and building stone. Apart from the activity associated with mining and quarrying in the Harper Hills, Hororata had almost no industry, once the flour mill had burned down.

Like Darfield, Hororata did enjoy the advantage of being a seat of local government. The large Rakaia (originally West Rakaia) road district extended from the great south road to the Main Divide between the Selwyn and Rakaia Rivers. The earliest meetings of the Rakaia road board were held at Windwhistle but after the Lake Coleridge road district separated from Rakaia, the Rakaia board moved to Hororata. For a time its office was in the township and its meeting room four kilometres away, but from 1881 the road board did all its business at a single building in Hororata. A council cottage was built next to the road board office.

Between 1911 and 1963 the council of the smaller Selwyn county, which was formed out of the Rakaia and Lake Coleridge road districts when the original Selwyn county was split up, had its headquarters at Hororata. A new county council office and clerk's house were built in Hororata in 1913 beside the school. But when most of Selwyn county amalgamated with Malvern in 1963 (the rest became part of Ellesmere county), Hororata lost its status as a county seat and council staff moved to Darfield.

Former Selwyn County Council clerk's house (1913), Hororata. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Unlike the settlements along the roads to the West Coast, Hororata was never really on the way to anywhere, except the runs and farms further up the Rakaia River and in the Lake Coleridge basin. A railway was surveyed from Norwood through Hororata right up to the Harper River above Lake Coleridge but the line was never built.

Changes in Hororata in the first half of the 20th century included the building of the stone Anglican church, paid for by Sir John Hall as a memorial to his wife, which was consecrated on 27 February 1911, after Hall's own death. The old church nearby was retained as a hall. The original wooden school in Hororata burned down and was replaced by a new brick building in March 1915. School baths were built in 1924. A new post office was opened in 1921.

The hall which had been built before 1890 was taken over by the county council in 1952 and two years later was given a new frontage. At the same time the town's library was moved into the hall. The hall was further improved in 1962 and enlarged in 1975. The public fund-raising to affect these improvements was an example of the sort of effort that 'did much to unify rural communities' and was cited in a local history as proof 'of what can be achieved by a small but determined community'. A new fire station was built in 1970. The volunteer brigade also used the office and chambers of the former Selwyn county as its social rooms.

When the Lake Coleridge power station was built in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I Hororata was the site chosen for a major substation.[69]

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[69] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 750-52; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 91, 102, 104, 128, 130-31, 299-300, 307-13, 359; Maffey, pp. 355-56; Dennis, pp. 97-110.

Greendale

Greendale is a district on the Selwyn River about mid-way between Hororata and the main south road. In the area the Hawkins, Waireka, Waikirikiri (Upper Selwyn) and Hororata Rivers join to form the Selwyn River, which flows from the Greendale district towards Norwood, where the railway station closest to Greendale was located. Greendale is more or less equidistant from Hororata and Darfield. Most of the land was taken up as small farms in the late 1860s. It scarcely developed as even a hamlet and an early blacksmith's shop never became the nucleus of a true village.

One of the earliest freeholders in Greendale was T. W. Adams, who began cropping at the Selwyn Forks in 1865, before the area became known as Greendale. He bought more land at Greendale in 1868 and went on to become well-known not as a farmer but as a forester and promoter of the planting of trees.

Dexter and Crozier picnic at T. W. Adams' farm at Greendale. *Weekly Press* 12 April 1911. Source: Selwyn Kete.

A meeting held in December 1871 decided to form a school district and the Greendale school opened in October 1872. On Sundays, until churches were built, it was used by different denominations. An infants' room was added to the school in 1881. From 1891 until around 1915 there was a side school where the golf course was later built.

In October 1873 the Baptists, of which Adams was a staunch member, were the first to open their own chapel in Greendale, the year after a congregation had formed. When a new church was built in 1897-98, the old was retained as a Sunday school (replaced by hall, 1958-60). In 1976 local Baptists centralised their congregation in Darfield, and the Greendale Church is now privately owned. A Primitive Methodist Church opened in 1874 and was replaced in 1958. Catholic services were held at Greendale from 1878 in the Greendale school and road board offices but no Catholic church was built in the district. A Presbyterian church opened in Greendale in 1892.

Former Greendale Baptist Church. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

A public pound opened in Greendale in 1874 but was closed when a new pound opened in Darfield. A sheep dip, built by a private company, opened for use in 1885 and it was still in use in the early 1950s although the building of private dips had led to a falling off in the use of the public dip.

By 1903 the Greendale district had a population of around 370. The farms in the district were the usual Canterbury 'mixed' farms, growing grain and running sheep. By the early 20th century James Gough, who had settled in the district in 1866, had amassed more than 2,000 hectares of his own and had set his son-in-law up on another 450 hectares. He had an orchard of 350 trees and tall shelter trees protected the homestead and orchard. The village in that year had a school, hall and churches but the only businesses were general stores (in one of which was the post and telegraph office) and a blacksmith's shop.

In 1937 the local golf club was granted the use of a council reserve and formed a course on Coaltrack Road, south of the village centre. The club acquired the freehold of the land in the 1970s and eventually developed an 18-hole course. In 1946 the Malvern county council took control of the Greendale cemetery and a new hall was built on the domain in the 1970s.[70]

Charing Cross

On Bealey Road, half-way between Aylesbury and the Selwyn River, eight roads converge at a single point. The road junction became known as Charing Cross. There was never a village of Charing Cross, just a public school, a blacksmith's shop and a post office. The area was one of the furthest on the inland plains from any river and was consequently not closely settled until the 1870s, rather later than most of the inland plains. The school, opened in 1886, was the only substantial building at the crossroads.[71]

Mead and Te Pirita

Like Charing Cross, Mead and Te Pirita, on the Rakaia River frontage of Selwyn District inland from the main south road bridge, never developed as townships, though they had, between them, schools, churches, halls and a few places of business. Mead had brief early importance as the site of a ford and then a ferry over the Rakaia River, but once the bridge opened in 1873 traffic through the Mead district ceased.

It was not until the early 20th century when the government acquired about 2,400 hectares of Haldon run land, which had been freeholded by the Bealey brothers, that the district became more populous. The purchase included a brick woolshed and outbuildings on Burns Road. The government divided the land up into 21 properties of between a little less than five and a little more than 320 hectares. The applicants for the properties were selected by ballot at Rakaia in January 1903. The properties were initially held on lease in perpetuity but were eventually freeholded. The school that opened at Mead on 1 July 1907 closed in 1968. A post office (1908) was open for only two years or so. Although there was never a township at Mead, the community was sufficiently vigorous to erect a community centre on the domain in 1956. This hall and the school were all that made up Mead.[72]

Part of the Te Pirita district, which like Mead lay in the Rakaia riding of Selwyn county, was included in Ellesmere county in 1963, in order to place the entire stock water system, which had an intake on the Rakaia at Te Pirita, within one county. The rest of the Te Pirita district was placed in Malvern. Like Mead, Te Pirita existed as a farming district rather than a settlement. It became settled closely enough with the subdivision of John Hall's Terrace station in 1907 to warrant the opening of post office and a school. The former closed in the early 1930s, after rural delivery began, and the latter ran from late 1911 until it closed in 1962. A hall was built in 1945 and ten years later, there having been no early churches in Mead or Te Pirita, the Methodists built a church at Te Pirita which was also used by Anglicans. In the early 21st century the church passed into private hands.

Church of the Open Door, Te Pirita. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

[70] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 360-62; Popple, pp. 46-47, 99, 134, 146-47, 148-49, 150-51; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 746-48.
[71] *Cyclopedia*, p. 729; Popple, pp. 156-57.
[72] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 297-98; Singleton, pp. 228-33.

Te Pirita briefly played a part in the country's military history. In February 1942 a proposal was made to construct runways in the Te Pirita area, so that aircraft could be based away from the coast should the Japanese start shelling any part of Canterbury. The construction of three airstrips, with bunkers nearby, began in March 1942. For a few months Te Pirita was the scene of great activity as a large workforce and heavy machinery undertook the work. It was intended as a base for American bombers should the Japanese invade the North Island. When the Battle of the Coral Sea greatly reduced the threat of invasion work slowed, then ceased entirely around the middle of 1943. The land on which the airstrips had been built reverted to its owners and became farmland again. Although almost all traces of the runways have disappeared the remains of bunkers and other evidence of what was briefly New Zealand's largest airfield can still be detected. The underground fuel tank built as part of the overall project near Bankside, which was the closest point on the railway line to the airfield, was mentioned in Chapter 2.[73]

SECRET AERODROME

Built hurriedly at a time when an aerodrome to accommodate the world's largest aeroplanes was needed in New Zealand as the last line of defence against the Japanese, the flying field at Te Pirita, between Dunsandel and Hororata, has reverted to its owners, states the "Otago Daily Times." Three tremendous runways, each 7000 feet long and 200 feet wide, with 150 feet of level ground on each side of the stabilised strips, are still there, but fences have been constructed and sheep are grazing there. The construction of the Hororata aerodrome was one of the biggest secret war jobs in the South Island. Although it was built to take Flying Fortresses and larger machines, the only Flying Fortress to come to the South Island landed at Wigram and the largest plane to land at Hororata was an Oxford. While it was under construction the aerodrome was visited by American engineers, who said it was better than anything they had seen anywhere, and some American pilots gave their opinion that they would be prepared to land any machine on it.

Evening Post, 19 October 1945, p. 8. Source: PapersPast

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[73] Singleton, pp. 222-27.

Chapter 4

The Malvern Hills

Introduction

Between Sheffield and the Rakaia Gorge, state highway 77 runs around the southern side of the Malvern Hills, crosses the upper Selwyn River, follows the Wairiri valley to Glenroy, then skirts the end of the Rockwood Range to Windwhistle and from there descends a high terrace to where the Rakaia gorge bridges stand on the southern edge of the Selwyn District. The area the road traverses between Homebush and Glenroy has a distinctive character. It embraces most of the headwaters of the Selwyn River and is sandwiched between the edge of the inland plains (Chapter 3) and the true pastoral high country (Chapter 5). The area includes the Malvern Hills which, unlike most of Canterbury, have a history of mining and of industries based on coal and other minerals. Only the Mount Somers area of Mid Canterbury has a similar mining history to that of the Malvern Hills. The Malvern Hills are separated by the upper gorge of the Selwyn River from the Lady Barker and Rockwood Ranges.

The runs and farms

Several early runs lay entirely or partly in the area of downlands and hills between the inland plains and the high country that is now traversed by state highway 77. These runs included Malvern Hills, Steventon, High Peak, Rockwood and the western portions of Homebush and Dalethorpe. The larger parts of both Homebush and Dalethorpe lay on the inland plains, and are therefore discussed in Chapter 3, but both runs also extended into the Malvern Hills.

South and west of Dalethorpe and Homebush were smaller runs that lay mainly in the hill country of the Lady Barker and Rockwood Ranges. Immediately adjoining Homebush to the south-west was Steventon, a run on the south bank of the Selwyn that ran back into the hills to a boundary with High Peak. Relatively small, at approximately 4,000 hectares, Steventon has historic interest greater than its size might suggest because among its early owners were A. C. and R. C. Knight. The Knights, who took up the run in 1852, were nephews of Jane Austen and the run was named after her father's vicarage in Hampshire.

In 1866 the Knights sold their thirty-odd hectares of freehold and the lease of the remainder of the run to two partners. The wife of one of the partners, Frederick Napier Broome, was Lady Mary Anne Barker, whose *Station Life in New Zealand* (1870) later became an early New Zealand classic. Broome extended the cottage on the site in 1866 to become a homestead he called Broomielaw. But after just three years on the run, Broome sold out to his partner in late 1868, after suffering severe losses in the great snow storm of 1867. Broome's partner sold the property in 1873 – by then it included more than 300 hectares of freehold – to the Cordy brothers, sons of the pioneer John Cordy. In 1889 the Cordys bought more than 2,000 hectares from the Midland Railway Company. The balance of Steventon became two small grazing runs held on leases from the government.[1]

Steventon (Broomielaw). Source: Heritage NZPT.

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[1] Acland, pp. 226-29.

Also adjoining Homebush was a run called Malvern Hills, which included the great swamp in the Wairiri valley. In 1858 the run came into the hands of Bishop Harper who held it in partnership with one of the previous owners, the Tancred brothers. Harper placed two of his sons, Charles and George, on the run as managers. For a time another son, Henry, who as archdeacon was responsible for a vast parish embracing much of the Selwyn District's inland plains as well as Ellesmere, lived on Malvern Hills with his brothers. Harper senior sold the run in 1866. After a succession of other owners, it was subdivided into two properties, Malvern Hills and Glendore.[2]

Malvern Hills sitting room. Drawing by Henry Harper, 1858.
Source: Te Ara; UC/MBL/1670, Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.

High Peak, which had Snowdon and The Point (see Chapter 5) on its western boundary and extended back towards the Big Ben Range, was another of the hill country runs in the Lady Barker and Rockwood Ranges. The run was first taken up in 1853. The following year it came into the hands of a notable early Canterbury settler, J. Cracroft Wilson, who leased it on to others. For a brief period the lessees of High Peak were Frederick Broome and his partner H. P. Hill of Steventon, which shared a boundary with High Peak. In the 1860s Broome and his partner ran a five-wire fence along the boundary. Lengths of the fence, though derelict, survived into the early 21st century. It may have been the first wire fence in the Canterbury hill country. In 1878 a new homestead was built on High Peak using concrete, although its wooden predecessor survived until the 1960s. The concrete homestead is still extant, but the addition of a second storey in 1985 and further enlargements in the early 21st century have altered its character almost beyond recognition.

In 1881 High Peak was bought by Duncan Rutherford and four years later came into the hands of his brother George, who already owned Dalethorpe. In 1889 George Rutherford freeholded much of Dalethorpe and High Peak from the Midland Railway Company. Both large properties were entirely freehold by 1912. After World War II part of High Peak was bought by the government for rehabilitation farms for returned servicemen. One of the resulting new properties was Thurso. What was left of High Peak finally passed out of the hands of members of the Rutherford family in 1973, although none of the family had ever lived on the station. In 1989 the already much-reduced High Peak property was divided into two – Quartz Hill and High Peak – to give two brothers their own farms.[3]

The history of the Rockwood run, which adjoined High Peak, was closely linked with the history of The Point, which is discussed in Chapter 5. The first parts of Rockwood were taken up as a leasehold run in 1852; by 1854 it was nearly 5,000 hectares in extent. Between 1862 and 1878 Rockwood was owned by Henry Phillips, who also held The Point. After Phillips sold Rockwood, part of it became a separate freehold farm before the end of the 19th century. In 1903 the run had been

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[2] Acland, pp. 78-80.
[3] Acland, pp. 229-30; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 139-41, 149.

reduced to around 800 hectares and 'being chiefly rough country' was devoted almost entirely to sheep. Before World War I the remaining leasehold was cut up into several small grazing runs which also eventually became freehold farms. In 1973, almost 100 years after Rockwood was separated from The Point in 1878, the two smaller properties which still carried the names of the original runs were again farmed together.[4]

Harvesting at Rockwood, *Weekly Press* 2 July 1913. Source: Selwyn Kete.

Unlike most areas of the inland plains, the hill country was less suitable for smaller mixed farms and many of the properties into which the original runs were divided remained large, in the order of 500 to 650 hectares. One smaller property, the Tara Ghur estate, once part of the larger Glendore run, had only 45 hectares of level agricultural land. The other 300 hectares of the farm were hill country suitable only for grazing. Because much of the area was farmed less intensively, the only farm service settlement which developed along the road between the Selwyn River bridge at Whitecliffs and Windwhistle was Glenroy, which never qualified as even a township.[5]

The Wairiri valley, between Whitecliffs and Glenroy, which had been part of the Malvern Hills run, remained swampy, despite individual drainage schemes, until the 1930s. In the early years of the Great Depression (1931-32) unemployed men were put to work clearing and cutting drains. In 1948 a Catchment Board scheme further improved drainage in the valley, but it needed further improvement as late as the 1970s.[6]

In the latter years of World War II, around 1944, explosive storehouses were built on Department of Defence land in the Wairiri valley. The storehouses were rectangular buildings with hipped roofs and pilasters on all sides. They were designed to direct any accidental blast in an individual storehouse upwards, away from the other storehouses. Once built, the storehouses were permanently guarded. In February 1945 a fire and explosion damaged the facility but fourteen of the individual storehouses have survived to become some of the most interesting military relics in the Selwyn District.[7]

Coal and minerals in the Malvern Hills

Coal was first discovered in the bed of the Selwyn River, near where Glentunnel was later located, in 1851. Coal was also discovered at about the same time close to the Rakaia River (see Chapter 5).

Early reports of the mineral wealth of the Malvern Hills were glowing and rather over-optimistic. There were hopes in the 1850s and 1860s that with its coal, clay and other minerals the Malvern Hills 'might eventually become a great manufacturing centre'. But only coal and clay were ever mined to any extent, and because the coal occurred in isolated patches found in broken country, only a few coalmines lasted any length of time or produced significant quantities of coal. Only one significant pottery works had a long life. Nevertheless, mining and the potteries gave the Malvern Hills a history distinct from that of any other part of the Selwyn District.[8]

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[4] Acland, pp. 204-05; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 754-58; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 161-87.
[5] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 754-56.
[6] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 272-73.
[7] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 216.
[8] Maffey, p. 356.

Between 1854 (when proper mining as opposed to fossicking began on the Steventon run) and 1973 (when the last major underground mine closed) there were around 80 mines in the Malvern Hills. They extended from near Coalgate through the Glentunnel and South Malvern districts to Whitecliffs and to the south-west of Whitecliffs on the land of the Steventon, High Peak and Rockwood runs. Many were short-lived because the seams they were opened to work were limited in area and sometimes thin. Two mines – Homebush and Klondyke – between them produced around half of the estimated total output from the mines, mostly of brown lignite, of around 1.4 million tons.[9]

On Saturday a Meeting was held at the Land Office, on the subject of bringing into use the Coal lately discovered in the Malvern Hills. A Committee was appointed to arrange for the formation of a Company, to carry this object into effect.

Lyttelton Times, 20 March 1852, p. 5.

Drays were sent up from Christchurch for coal from 1852, though no proper mines were operating by then. The initial attempt to mine coal on the Steventon run which began in 1854 was short-lived. In 1855 coal was discovered in the Hawkins River near Little Racecourse Hill, later Sheffield. The earliest significant Malvern Hills coalmines were near Sheffield and Springfield. (The histories of these two townships are discussed in Chapter 3.) Both those towns were later eclipsed as centres of coalmining and pottery-making by Coalgate, Glentunnel, South Malvern and Whitecliffs.[10]

The first 'coal sections' near Little Racecourse Hill were bought in 1857-58. By 1857 there was a well-worn coal track running the short distance from the Hawkins to Sheffield. Two further small coal mines were opened nearby in the early 1860s. John Jebson's Malvern Collieries on the Hawkins, which opened in 1862, reinforced Sheffield's early importance in the Malvern Hills coal industry. In the 1860s Jebson took over other coal leases and opened up new seams. Jebson's Malvern Collieries operated from its Sheffield base until 1881. Another of the early Sheffield mines was worked until 1900.

Though they were small, and some were short-lived, the Sheffield mines were the first of the Malvern Hills coalmines to provide coal in any quantity to the growing city of Christchurch. In the 1860s the coal was carted to Christchurch by dray over the rudimentary roads of that decade. The first 'coal track' from Little Racecourse Hill to the city, which followed more or less the line of the Old West Coast Road, was superseded by a tramway reserve which ran from Sheffield to Kirwee. (Confusingly, the present Coaltrack Road runs from Coalgate to Norwood on the southern railway, which reached the Selwyn River in 1867 and is quite separate from the original coal track from Sheffield to Christchurch.) Though the road on the reserve from Sheffield to Kirwee is still called Tramway Road, no tramway was built along it. Coal mining resumed on a small scale near Sheffield from the early 1930s into the early 1950s.

MALVERN COAL.
—
NO MORE COMPLAINTS.
—
I HAVE made arrangements for a constant supply of the best Coal yet mined at the Malvern Hills.
Prices at my Coal, Firewood, and Drain-pipe Yard, Tuam street :—

Per cwt	...	...	... 1s 6d
Per ton	...	...	... 27s
Per truck load	...	...	24s 6d

Delivered to any part of the town at 30s per ton.
3343   JOSEPH B. SHEATH.

Globe, 17 July 1876, p. 4. Source: PapersPast.

In 1861 the provincial geologist, Julius Haast, discovered seams of coal in the Kowai River and on the Benmore run and a Kowai Coal Company was formed to work them, but its operations ceased after a short time. Haast made more discoveries of coal in the Malvern Hills in the 1860s but when he addressed a meeting in 1868, called by those agitating for a railway or tramway between the coalfields and Christchurch, he was discouraging about the prospects of the area as a centre for coal production.

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[9] Maffey, pp. 353-54, 365-66.
[10] Popple, pp. 70-81; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 27-29.

Two years after Haast had poured cold water on the prospects of the coalmining industry in the area, the Homebush seam was discovered in Surveyors Gully by Haast and James McIraith, who was then managing the Homebush run. The discovery prompted Haast to change his mind and support the building of a railway. His October 1871 report on the Malvern Hills coalfields, after he had made further investigations in 1870-71, was more optimistic than the view he expressed in 1868.

The discovery of the Homebush seam also gave a significant boost to coal mining in the area. In 1866 Haast had identified at least 12 mines or workings in the Malvern Hills but output was still limited; it was not until the 1870s, after coal was discovered in Surveyors Gully, that coal was mined in any quantity.

Once coal had been discovered in Surveyors Gully, the land with the seams on it was quickly freeholded. The Homebush coalmine, opened in March 1872, proved the longest lived of the Malvern Hills coalmines. When it closed down in 1938 it had been worked continuously for 66 years and produced more than 365,000 tons of coal.

Access to the Homebush mine was impeded by the owner of land that lay between the mine and the mouth of the gully. James McIlraith's solution was to drive a 300-metre tunnel through a spur to by-pass the land of the uncooperative neighbour. The tunnel was completed before the end of 1874 and the tramway which used it opened in October 1875. (The tunnel gave the nearby township of Glentunnel its name.) With the completion of the tramway in the same year that the branch line to Whitecliffs was built (see below) output from the mine increased. After the Deans family acquired the land of the neighbour in 1883 the tramway was realigned to avoid the tunnel. The tramway remained in use for many years to bring coal and clay down to Glentunnel. A steam locomotive, replacing horses, was put on the tramway in 1907. Use of the tramway continued after the Homebush coalmine closed in 1938 to bring clay down to the pottery works in Glentunnel, but most of the line was lifted in 1942.[11]

The 1870s also saw the Steventon, Hartley and Wallsend mines opened. Of these only the Hartley mine lasted any length of time, until around 1900. The Wallsend Colliery, near South Malvern, operated only from 1876 to 1879. The Steventon mine had closed by 1879 but was worked again in the 1920s and 1930s and production continued in a limited way until 1955.

The 1870s and 1880s were years of peak production from the mines – from Jebson's Malvern Collieries near Sheffield, from the Whitecliffs and St Helens collieries near South Malvern, and from the Homebush and other mines in Surveyors Gully. But competition from better quality West Coast coal (then being shipped by sea around to Lyttelton) and the disappointing quantities of coal in the broken Malvern Hills seams led to a decline in production. Much of the output from even the most productive mine – Homebush – was used locally, at the pottery works in Glentunnel (see below) rather than sent to markets in Christchurch or beyond.

A new coal field at Coalgate, 1903. Source: Selwyn Kete.

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[11] Maffey, pp. 29-30, 65-66, 68, 124, 127-28, 130-31, 134,142-43, 146, 151, 154, 168; Popple, pp. 70-81; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 27-29.

The Bush Gully coal seam was found in 1900 and production from it began soon afterwards. By the end of the first decade of the 20th century only the Homebush, Bush Gully and St Helens mines were still producing. The Bush Gully mine was worked for two brief periods, during World War I and from the mid-1920s. It was finally exhausted in 1937.

The last of the main Malvern Hills mines to close was the Klondyke, also in Bush Gully, which opened in 1929. It was modernised in 1954-55 and later again hydro-mining was introduced. When the Klondyke closed in 1973 it had been the only significant mine still operating since the mid-1950s. Its total output was around 300,000 tons. Small mines in Bush Gully were worked while the Klondyke Mine was still open, but none outlasted it. In 1975 new workings further up Bush Gully were opened. In 1986 underground mining ceased at these workings but small-scale open-cast recovery of coal continued.[12]

The Whitecliffs branch railway

Pressure for a branch railway to the coalfields developed in the 1860s. Whether the line should be built to Kowai Pass (as Springfield was then known) or South Malvern was warmly debated. Coal was then being mined at both places. The discovery of coal in Surveyors Gully in 1870 increased pressure for the railway and swung the decision in favour of South Malvern and Whitecliffs rather than Kowai Pass.[13]

The railway from Rolleston reached Darfield in 1874 and Sheffield later in the same year. Those arguing for a line along the southern edge of the Malvern Hills, from Darfield through Coalgate, Glentunnel and South Malvern to Whitecliffs were successful in getting that line built before the line was extended from Sheffield to Springfield. The line was opened to Whitecliffs on 3 November 1875, five years before what eventually became the main line to the West Coast reached Springfield (1880).

Former engine shed, Whitecliffs, c. 1875. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

With expectations still high that the mineral riches of the Malvern Hills and of the country on towards Lake Coleridge would support industrial development, plans were made to have the railway line cross the Selwyn River at Whitecliffs and carry on up through Wairiri valley to, in the minds of the most optimistic, eventually reach Lake Coleridge. When the Selwyn was bridged at Whitecliffs in 1884 the structure was built to 'railway standards', but the line never progressed beyond Whitecliffs and remained a short branch line for its entire life. Any thought of the line being extended beyond Whitecliffs was effectively dead by the early 20th century. The line between Darfield and Whitecliffs closed in 1962, at a time when many branch lines throughout the country were also being closed down. [14]

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[12] Maffey, pp. 214-25, 168, 285-309, 311-15; Popple, pp. 70-81.
[13] Maffey, pp. 30-31, 73; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 27-29;
[14] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 211-13.

The townships and settlements

Rural Canterbury is generally thinly populated and its towns and townships are relatively far apart. The towns on the southern side of the Malvern Hills – from east to west they are Coalgate, Glentunnel, South Malvern and Whitecliffs – are unusually close together. The reason is that they all, unlike most rural towns and townships, came into existence not simply as farm service centres, like the great majority of Canterbury settlements, but also as centres of industry. They all began as settlements close to coalmines or as places where separate companies built brick and pottery works.

Coalgate

The coalmines in the hills near Coalgate, particularly the Klondyke mine in Bush Gully, lasted longer than any others in the Malvern Hills. Coalgate (as its name suggests) came into existence as a place where coal could be sent by rail to Christchurch once the Whitecliffs branch line, opened in 1875, had been built. But by the early 20th century Coalgate was as much farm service as coalmining town. Originally called 'Selwyn Bluff' it became Coalgate in 1876, the year in which a township was laid out.[15]

The original survey plan of 1876 had some 300 sections, but the town never grew to anywhere near that size, though into the early 21st century there remained a substantial number of residences of different ages in Coalgate.

About 1879 the South Malvern road board built its first office in Coalgate. After the board built a second office near the Homebush school, the first was converted into a residence in 1913. The second office was also later converted to a dwelling.[16]

The Bluff hotel was built around 1876, when the township was still young. The opening of sale yards and a public dip at Coalgate in 1898 was an indication of the growing importance of farming relative to mining in the area. In most Selwyn District rural towns with saleyards local sales were discontinued once the freezing companies started to buy stock directly from the farmers, but the Coalgate yards (like those at Sheffield) were used into at least the early 1950s for annual ewe fairs and sales have continued at Coalgate into 2018.[17]


BLUFF HOTEL.
Bluff Hotel, Coalgate. *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, p. 749. Source: NZETC.

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[15] Popple, p. 45.
[16] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 144, 231, 318-19.
[17] Popple, pp. 132-33.

When the Malvern Mounted Rifles were formed in 1900, a rifle range was built on Deans' family land near where the road, which is now state highway 72, crosses the Hawkins River. In 1911 the Malvern Mounted Rifles became C Squadron of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.[18]
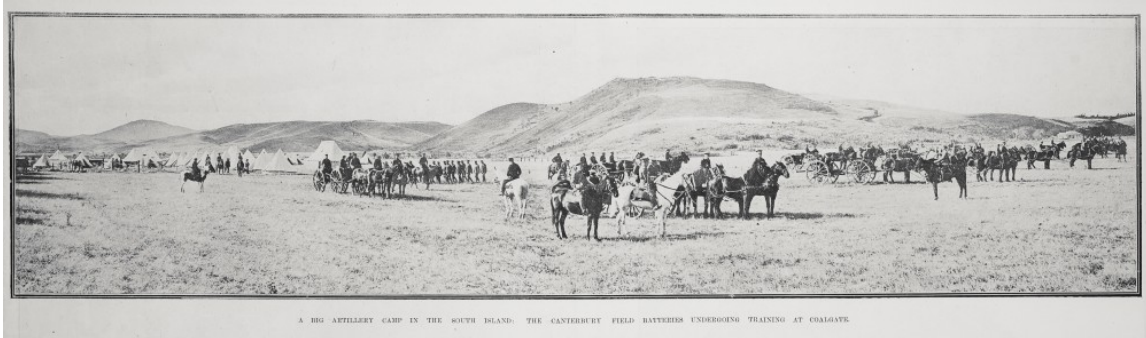
'A big artillery camp in the South Island: the Canterbury field batteries undergoing training at Coalgate' *Auckland Weekly News* 11 April 1912, p. 12. Source: AWNS-19120411-12-1, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

In 1903 the Coalgate township had, besides its hotel and sale yards, a blacksmith's shop, a general store and a police station. The post and telegraph office was in the railway station.[19]

For about ten years, from 1910 to 1920, Coalgate was a busy place. Its railway station was the nearest to the site of the Lake Coleridge power station so the town became the assembly and storage point for construction materials for the project, which were brought to Coalgate by rail and sent on to Lake Coleridge by, mostly, traction engine.[20]

'Traction engines at Coalgate railway station', 29 October 1913. Source: 1/1-008122-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

A Catholic church, St Theresa's, designed by the Luttrell brothers, opened at Coalgate on 4 February 1911. A last mass was held in the church at Christmas 2006 and in 2009 the building was sold for removal. It now stands at Racecourse Hill.[21]

With the Glentunnel school little more than three kilometres away the Coalgate school had a brief existence as a side school. It was opened probably in June 1893 then closed, less than a decade later, in 1901. A school was opened at Homebush in 1902 after the Coalgate side school closed. Coalgate also had a lodge building.[22]

The closure of the railway in 1962 led to decline in Coalgate. The hotel built in the 1870s was damaged by fire in the late 1960s, but the town retained a tavern. The local general stores closed or changed in nature. In 1968 a Nelson firm, Lime and Marble Limited, built a plant at Coalgate to process and store bentonite clay. After additions to the plant in 1976 there were complaints about the noise it generated.[23]

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[18] Popple, p. 164.
[19] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 748-50.
[20] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 318-19.
[21] Popple, pp. 148-49; Hanrahan, p. 76
[22] Popple, pp. 155-56.
[23] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 275, 318-19.

The railway station at Coalgate, moved there from Addington in the first decade of the 20th century, became the headquarters of the local fire brigade in 1969. When a new fire station was built in 1980, the old station was demolished.[24]

Glentunnel

Glentunnel owed its development into 'a considerable township' to the opening in the 1870s of the Homebush coal mine and the brick works, which used clay also found in the area. Both mine and brick works offered employment for men living in Glentunnel. At the turn of the 20th century, the mine employed around 25 men and the brick and pottery works another 15. For 15 years after the brick works opened, bricks were the only thing produced, but in 1886 agricultural drainage pipes were added to the output, and two years later the manufacture of terra cotta wares and pottery began. In that year the works became known as the Glentunnel Brick, Tile, Terra cotta and Pottery Works, though domestic pottery was apparently produced for only a short time.

By 1903 the works were housed in a substantial brick building. There were also two drying sheds, two machine sheds and two kilns, with capacities of 16,000 and 24,000 bricks. In 1913 a new company, the Homebush Brick and Coal Company, was formed because members of the Deans family who had been active in running the coal mine and pottery works wished to concentrate on farming and turn management of the coal and pottery industries over to others. The works survived a slump in demand for pipes during World War I and by the end of 1918 were back in full production. In 1923 the Deans, who had retained ownership of the business after turning its management over to others, sold the pottery to a consortium led by a South Otago firm, McSkimming and Son Ltd. Sanitary pipes and agricultural field pipes became the mainstays of the works, although some brick production continued. The works were partly converted to electricity in 1925 but continued to use coal to fire the kilns. The works' tall chimney remained a local landmark for many years and Homebush bricks were used widely throughout Canterbury. After a business take-over in 1981 the works were finally closed on 31 October 1983, after 111 years of production. The site was subsequently cleared of almost all its buildings.
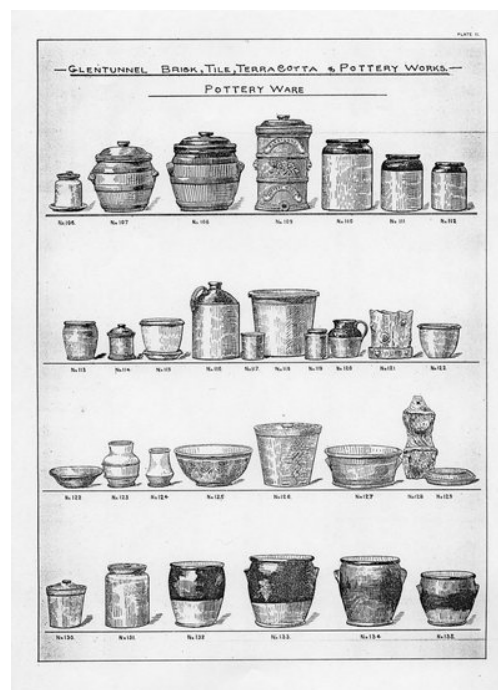
Glentunnel Pottery Works Catalogue, p. 16 [undated]. Source: Selwyn Kete

The reminders of Glentunnel's industrial past include a brick stable for pit ponies and tramway horses, an explosives shed and cottages built for workers in the coal mine and pottery and brick works. The number of brick buildings and structures in the area are also reminders of the brick and pottery works. They include road culverts, the Glentunnel library, the Homebush woolshed and other farm buildings. Some of the surviving older cottages and houses in Glentunnel are associated with workers at the coal mines and pottery works.

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[24] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 376-78.

The only other industry in Glentunnel was a flax mill, near the bridge over the Selwyn River, which processed flax cut in the nearby Wairiri valley. The mill was of minor importance compared with the coal mines and brick and pottery works.

The township was laid out by the Deans family after they had opened the Homebush coal mine and Glentunnel brick works. With the coal mine in production and the pottery works in operation, Glentunnel started to develop in the 1870s into the principal township on the southern side of the Malvern Hills. Although it owed its origins to the coal mine and pottery works Glentunnel, like Coalgate, also served the farming areas around it.

The school at Glentunnel, opened on 16 February 1879, was the first public building in the township. By 1903 there was a two-storey headmaster's residence by the school and the roll stood at 90. By the end of the century, the Glentunnel school was the principal school for the area between Sheffield and Windwhistle, which were by then the nearest schools to the Glentunnel school. There were also, by the 1880s, places of business in Glentunnel like groceries and butcher's shops, a hotel, a bakery, a smithy and a saddlery.

The 1870s also saw a domain of around 60 hectares created at Glentunnel. It served as a sports ground from the time it was first set aside; in 1903 Glentunnel had a sports committee and cricket and football clubs. The domain also provided space for a golf course, opened in 1970, and, in 1988, for a campground.

The Glentunnel library, built in 1887-88, was designed by notable Christchurch architect Samuel Hurst Seager. It replaced a library at the school which had opened earlier in the 1880s.[25] St Luke's Anglican Church, designed by C. J. Mountfort, opened at Glentunnel in 1904 but was badly damaged by fire and subsequently moved to a Whitecliffs property. By the turn of the 20th century in the large Malvern Anglican parish there were already churches at Sheffield, Springfield and Hororata. The Presbyterian church, St Andrew's, was built in 1914-15. The Baptists moved a redundant church (1878) from Kirwee to Glentunnel in 1936.[26] A privately-owned hall was built in Glentunnel in the 1880s. The first public hall opened in 1921; it was rebuilt in 1932 after a fire.

Detail of brickwork, Glentunnel Library. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

In 1903 Selwyn County Council inaugurated a domestic water supply to Glentunnel, which also served Whitecliffs and Coalgate. The intake for the race was on the Selwyn River in the vicinity of Flagpole Road. It was not superseded by a piped supply until 1978.[27]

[25] http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1790
[26] *Press* 12 October 1914, p. 5.
[27] Maffey, pp. 85, 105, 108, 114, 117, 123, 327-47, 354, 356; Popple, pp. 81-83, 142-44, 155; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 243, 314-17; *Cyclopedia*, p. 753-54, 764.

South Malvern

South Malvern was laid out in 1872, the same year as Glentunnel. An ambitious plan saw 360 lots created but although there were some sales of land between 1873 and 1880, most of the sections were never taken up or built on. The arrival of the railway in 1875 stimulated some growth in the township, but development tended to occur at nearby Whitecliffs, the terminus of the line, rather than at South Malvern.

In 1876 Ford and Ogden started making bricks and pottery at South Malvern. The Wallsend colliery near South Malvern opened in the same year, but it was worked only until 1879. After Ford's bankruptcy in 1886 the partnership was dissolved but the pottery continued in business. A Christchurch businessman, Henry Wigram, bought the Ford and Ogden pottery in 1899. The works were then bought by the Christchurch Brick Company in 1903. Nine years later, in 1912, the company closed the works down, after 36 years operation. The mining of fireclay in the South Malvern area for works in Christchurch continued after the South Malvern pottery closed. The works were demolished in 1919.
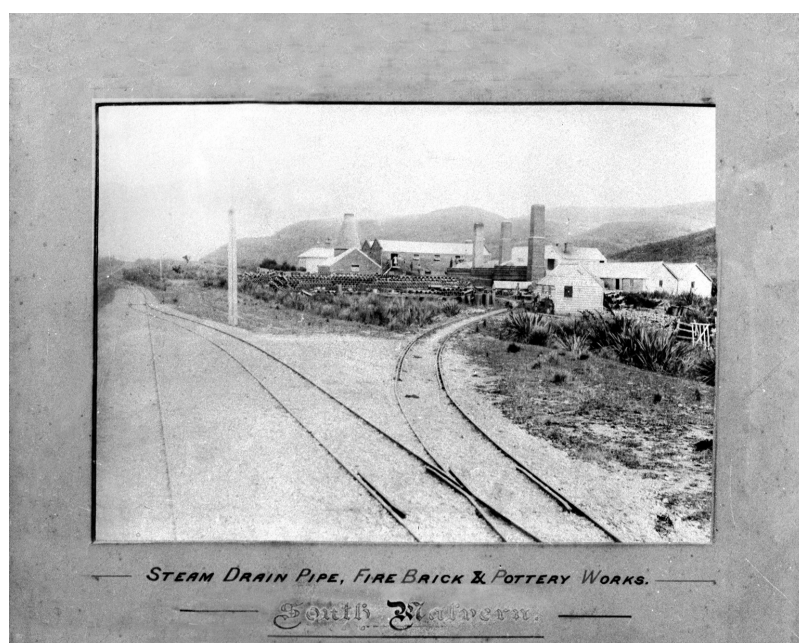
South Malvern Pottery. Source: Selwyn Kete.

As a result of the opening of the Ford and Ogden works South Malvern gained, in the second half of the 1870s, a store and boarding house. By the early 1880s South Malvern also had a hotel, hall, store and blacksmith shop. Around 30 workers were living in the township. The population of the village was large enough for the South Malvern school to open in 1883. The building was designed by the Christchurch architect T. S. Lambert. After it closed in 1960 the school was taken over by Christchurch's Branston Intermediate as a base for field trips. This use ended in c.2014, but the building remained.[28]

The South Malvern township, with Glentunnel a short distance in one direction and Whitecliffs a short distance in the other, did not advance to any extent after the closure of its pottery works, although its retained its school and its railway station. Most business activity, however, took place in the other settlements. The village became so small that confusion sometimes arose because the name South Malvern was used also for the whole district that lay on the southern side of the Malvern Hills from Sheffield to Whitecliffs. The South Malvern cemetery, for example, is located well away from the South Malvern settlement, on the Coalgate side of Glentunnel.

Whitecliffs

The several coalmines in the Whitecliffs area – Steventon, Brockley, South Malvern and St Helens – were among the earliest in the Malvern Hills. The first significant mine near Whitecliffs, Hart's colliery, opened in 1869. Some of the mines had ceased production by the end of the 19th century, though the Brockley and Steventon mines were worked intermittently until well into the 20th century.

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[28] Maffey, pp. 42-47, 85, 181-202; Popple, pp. 81-83, 89, 156.

Brick making at Whitecliffs began in 1872, based, as at Glentunnel, on local deposits of clay and a nearby coalmine. The venture was short-lived. In 1879 the Condliffe brothers opened a pottery works in the former brick works buildings, but in 1886 these new works were also closed down after operating only a few years.

Mining and pottery ventures near Whitecliffs were mostly intermittent and not long-lasting. A village which eclipsed nearby South Malvern developed at Whitecliffs only because it was the terminus of the branch railway from Darfield. That status meant that Whitecliffs, soon after the railway was opened in 1875, had the business establishments typical of all early Selwyn District townships – stores, a hotel, a bakery and a blacksmith. Although it owed its existence to being the terminus of the railway and, to a lesser extent, to the nearby coal mines and the brick and pottery works, Whitecliffs also, like Glentunnel and Coalgate, became a farm service centre.

Whitecliffs was also the natural centre for further coal mines up the Wairiri valley which operated intermittently, some for longer periods than others, from the 1870s through the first half of the 20th century. The mines included the Brockley mine, which was the only place in the Malvern Hills where anthracite coal, as opposed to lignite, was mined. The other mines which sent their coal to, primarily, the Whitecliffs station yard, were Wairiri (1896-98), Clearview (1920-35 & 1938-47), Hartley (1875-1900), Whitecliffs (1880-98) and St Helens (1883-1929).

A Baptist church, which opened in Whitecliffs as early as 1874, blew down just a few years later. A new church, finished in 1879, promptly took its place. By 1903 the township also had a Wesleyan church. Whitecliffs children made the short journey to South Malvern for their schooling. By 1903 Whitecliffs also had a library and a post and telegraph office. Subsequently, Whitecliffs remained smaller than Glentunnel, but in the second half of the 20th century it became famous for some years as the venue for a music festival run by a notable country singer, John Hore Grenell, who bought a property near the village.[29]

Whitecliffs Music Festival ticket, 1987. Source: Pinterest.

The hill country around Whitecliffs also saw the small-scale exploitation of other mineral resources. Marble was quarried for building stone on the High Peak Road, beyond Whitecliffs, between 1876 and 1880. The quarry was near a saddle on the road known as Quartz Hill. Limestone and marble from the same area as the quarry were burnt in a kiln near the Whitecliffs Railway Station for a few years between 1876 and around 1880. Another kiln for burning lime was built in the Selwyn gorge, behind Flagpole, in 1878. A second kiln in the gorge built in 1896 by the Christchurch potter, Luke Adams, was used until around 1915. It survives within a forestry block.

The presence of copper in the area behind Flagpole was noted as early as 1852. When this deposit of copper and manganese was 'discovered' again in 1884 an attempt was made to mine it. One small drive in the area may date from 1884-85. Intermittent attempts to exploit the resource were made in the later 1880s and 1890s, some by the grandly named Selwyn Copper and Manganese Mining Company, but there was never serious production from it.

From 1917 until 1990 sand was mined from a deposit some three kilometres from the Whitecliffs station which had first been identified by Haast. The compacted yellow and white Whitecliffs sands were less pure than the sands found at Mount Somers so were never used for glass-making but were suitable for use in foundries and for building. The sand mine finally closed when foundries ceased using sand for moulding. Slips in the quarries brought down by the 2010 earthquake covered some entrances to tunnels used to extract the sand before open quarrying began, but a few are still visible on the cliff face at the site of the quarry.[30]

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[29] Popple, p. 147; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 313-14; *Cyclopedia*, p. 758; Maffey, pp. 156-78.
[30] Maffey, pp. 203-13, 226-58, 263-84, 348-52.

Russells Flat

On the Dalethorpe side of the Malvern Hills a small settlement called Russells Flat developed to serve the farms that were established on the better land of the Dalethorpe run. In 1903, 'embosomed in one of the valleys formed by the winding Malvern Hills', Russells Flat had a public school and a Methodist church. The school opened in January 1874 and reached its peak roll of 51 in 1891. The church opened in April 1894. Its eventual fate is unknown. Although it was a settlement which primarily served the farms surrounding it, a different future was envisaged for Russells Flat in 1903: 'coal in the surrounding hills only awaits capital to become an important and flourishing industry'. But the settlement never gained an industrial base of any sort. It remained a small, farm service settlement. The school closed in 1949 but still stands on Pig Saddle Road.[31]

Former Russells Flat School, 1874. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

Glenroy

Coalgate, Glentunnel, South Malvern and Whitecliffs were hybrid settlements – they owed their existence and prosperity for many years to the extraction and processing of minerals from the Malvern Hills but were also farm service centres. By contrast Glenroy, like Windwhistle (see also Chapter 5), owed its origins and survival almost entirely to the farms and stations in the hills surrounding it.

In 1903 Glenroy was at the centre of holdings which were mostly 'moderate' in size, between 160 and 500 hectares. Glenroy School opened on 6 May 1889 with 33 first-day pupils. The post office opened in the same year in a room added on to a private home. In the 1890s a mail coach ran regularly from Glentunnel through Glenroy and Windwhistle all the way to Lake Coleridge. After World War I a memorial hall was built (c.1925). The post office was closed down by the mid-1920s but the school lasted long enough to celebrate its 80th jubilee in 1969. The Glenroy war memorial is a landmark at the point where the highway crosses a low saddle as it exits from the Wairiri valley.[32]

Glenroy Community Hall. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

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[31] *Cyclopedia*, p. 769; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 337.
[32] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 757-58; Dennis, pp. 117-26.

Chapter 5

The Pastoral High Country

Introduction

A few of the leasehold runs on the 'front ranges' on the western edge of the Canterbury Plains remained large, partly leasehold, properties well into the 20th century. Deeper into the mountains – the true high country of great ranges, intermontane basins and wide, formerly glaciated valleys – the large leasehold runs taken up in the 1850s and 1860s remained more or less intact and mostly leasehold until tenure review in the late 20th and early 21st centuries altered the legal status of some high-country land in the Selwyn District. The large, leased high country runs were the survivors of the sort of holdings which were typical of the whole of rural Canterbury in the mid-19th century. The line between the pastoral high country and the mountains of the backbone of the Southern Alps separates land which was taken up under pastoral leases and the 'barren' mountain country which remained unoccupied Crown land. The mountains which lay beyond the boundaries of the runs are discussed in Chapter 6.[1]

Exploration

As early as January 1849 Charles Torlesse climbed onto the range which was later named after him and looked into the Castle Hill basin and across part of the upper Waimakariri country. After this ascent Torlesse headed south and from a hill on the north side of the Rakaia River was the first European to see Lake Coleridge.

European exploration of the upper reaches of the Waimakariri above its gorge began with a journey made in 1857 by Joseph Pearson, who held the Burnt Hill run on the plains north of the Waimakariri River. In February of that year, after gaining a view of the Waimakariri valley from the Torlesse Range, Pearson made his way with a companion up the gorge past Staircase Creek and across the Broken River. He explored the basins and valleys between the front ranges and the main ranges of the Southern Alps, discovering the 'sheep country' of Craigieburn, Grasmere, Mount White and Castle Hill. Pearson lit fires, as sheep men of those years were accustomed to doing, which were seen from Christchurch. The map he drew of the country he explored alerted people looking for land to the good 'sheep country' in the upper Waimakariri.[2]

The following year, 1858, Charles Torlesse climbed to the crest of the Puketeraki Range from Lees Valley inland from Oxford in North Canterbury and looked across the Waimakariri country. Shortly afterwards he went up the west branch of the Kowai River, crossed the Lyndon Saddle (later Porters Pass) and followed the Porter River down to the Broken River. He carried on over Iona Pass (now the Craigieburn cutting) to Moana Rua (Lake Pearson) and then went on further up the Waimakariri (how far is not certain). Torlesse also went some distance up the Poulter River, a major tributary from the north of the Waimakariri.[3]

The Rakaia River above its gorge was explored earlier than the upper Waimakariri. After Torlesse had glimpsed Lake Coleridge in 1849, Mark Stoddart became the first European to enter the upper reaches of the Rakaia. Stoddart held the run which became Sir John Hall's Terrace Station. In 1851, Stoddart and a companion went up the Rakaia valley as far as Lake Coleridge and camped on its shore.

In 1861 the writer Samuel Butler, in Canterbury to make his fortune, after taking up land in the Rangitata valley, climbed to the top of the range between the Rangitata and Rakaia valleys and saw Whitcombe Pass on the opposite side of the Rakaia. He shortly afterwards rode up the Rakaia and reached the summit of the pass. The first European crossing of the pass, by Henry Whitcombe and Jakob Lauper, ended in July 1863 with Whitcombe's death at the mouth of the Teremakau River on the West Coast.

In 1865, with the hunt on to find a route for a road to link Canterbury and Westland, John Browning, with two companions, went up the Wilberforce River, the Rakaia's main tributary on its northern side, from the Glenthorne run and crossed the pass which now bears his name into the head of the Arahura River. The following month with another companion, he crossed the pass again and followed the Arahura down to the coast and so to Hokitika.

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[1] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 9.
[2] Logan, pp. 27, 82.
[3] Logan, pp. 28-30.

After his 1861 appointment as Canterbury's provincial geologist, Julius von Haast led scientific parties into many parts of the Southern Alps. In early 1865 he crossed Arthur's and Porters Passes on an extended trip to the West Coast. He returned to the Waimakariri valley in 1867, reaching the small glaciers at the head of the White River. In between his 1865 and 1867 visits to the headwaters of the Waimakariri, in late 1865 and early 1866, von Haast travelled up the Wilberforce and Mathias Rivers (the major tributaries of the Rakaia on its northern side), to the head of the Rakaia valley itself and through the Lake Coleridge basin. On this journey he discovered the deposit of anthracite coal in the Acheron valley. Haast's report on his investigations of the upper Rakaia country in 1865-66 included a topographical map which confirmed that by then the headwaters of the valley had been well explored.[4]

The road through the Waimakariri high country

A bridle track was formed across Porters Pass by the Canterbury Provincial Government in 1858-59. Before the West Coast gold rushes, which began in 1864, the Provincial Government, with contributions from the runholders, extended this 'road' into the Waimakariri high country across the Castle Hill basin and on as far as Moana Rua (Lake Pearson) in 1861 and the Goldney Saddle in 1862. The road gave access to the first runs taken up in the area (see below). When Edward Dobson senior made his way to the headwaters of the Waimakariri when possible routes for a road to the West Coast were being investigated, he followed this road past the Thomas's homestead at the foot of Porters Pass on the Kowai River side, followed the road over the pass which went up the southern side of the spur leading up to the pass and carried on across the Castle Hill basin and down the Craigieburn cutting to the runs near Moana Rua (Lake Pearson) and the lower Cass River.[5]

Through the winter of 1865 the track to Moana Rua (Lake Pearson) was upgraded to a road for coaches. The road followed the original track up the southern side of the spur leading up to Porters Pass. In 1871 a new road, with easier gradients, was built up the northern side of the spur, joining the old road just below the summit of the pass. The original formation on the south side of the spur can still be followed. In the Castle Hill basin, the line of the coach road of 1865 also deviated from the line of the present highway between the Porter River and the Castle Hill station and at Parapet Rock. Portions of the original road, notably around the base of Parapet Rock, can still be seen.

'Cobb & Co's coach crossing the Waimakariri during a flood', engraving after a drawing by Thomas Samuel Cousins for *The Illustrated New Zealand Herald* 1875. Source: MNZ-0643-1/4-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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[4] Britten, pp. 18, 66-72; Burrows, chs 4-6.
[5] Logan, pp. 33, 38, 43; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 322.

Once the road was opened, several local runholders built accommodation houses at different points along it, hoping to profit from the passing traffic. On the plains, early accommodation houses were sometimes the nucleus around which a township later grew. But in the high country, although some of the accommodation houses lasted several years or even decades, no permanent settlements ever developed between Springfield and Bealey. Towns were surveyed at Bealey and at Moana Rua, but though a settlement of sorts developed at Bealey (see Chapter 6), even that was never more than a hamlet. The town contemplated at Moana Rua never eventuated.

The run homesteads, accommodation houses and road men's huts were the only buildings in the high country for many decades. The staging posts of Cobb and Co., which ran the coach service between Christchurch and Hokitika, were usually at the accommodation houses. At the foot of Porters Pass was an accommodation house known as Riddle's Inn; it lasted from 1865 until, probably, only 1871. On the far side of the pass there was a staging post at a place called The Springs, close to the original Porter homestead (see below).

On Castle Hill the Enys brothers built a hotel in 1871 using local limestone. W. J. Cloudesley added a second storey to the hotel a decade later, increasing the number of beds to around a dozen. In the Grasmere basin, Joseph Hawdon built a hotel of stone half way between his homestead (where the Flock Hill homestead is now located) and Moana Rua, but after it was gutted by fire it was rebuilt as a manager's residence not a hotel. Another hotel was built on the Grasmere run near the Cass River. After the Upper Waimakariri road district seceded from the Malvern road district in 1871 the new board's office was built near the hotel at Cass. Later the railway station and the huts of railway construction workers, then the houses of railway employees, (all located around a kilometre from the site of the original hotel) made Cass the only approximation of a village between Springfield and Bealey, until the Castle Hill village was developed in the later 20th century. Cass also had, at different times, a store, a blacksmith's shop, a race course and a library.[6]

Castle Hill Hotel, 1879. Source: Te Ara; ½-061303-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

As the railway line towards the West Coast progressed up the Waimakariri River, past Broken River, and on to Arthur's Pass the road between Springfield and Arthur's Pass was steadily used less and less. From 1880 until 1900 coaches ran between Springfield and Kumara. The railway reached Otira in 1900 and Broken River in 1906 (see below). For a few years the coaches ran between Otira and Broken River, but from 1913-14 (when the railway reached Halpin Creek and then Arthur's Pass) until 1923 (when the Otira tunnel opened) coaches ran only over Arthur's Pass (see Chapter 6).

The history of coaching in the pastoral high country (as opposed to coaching in the mountains) ended in 1913. The completion of the coast-to-coast railway line in 1923 coincided with increasing car ownership. Ramps for loading cars onto flat-bed railway wagons at Springfield, Arthur's Pass and Otira allowed motorists to avoid using the road from Springfield to Arthur's Pass and the road over Arthur's Pass itself. In January 1935 only 65 vehicles used the road west of Springfield in one seven-day period. The road remained narrow and rough; photographs confirm accounts of the difficulties of driving over Porters Pass and on through the Castle Hill basin.

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[6] Gillespie, p. 257; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 58-59, 298-99; Logan, p. 65-74; *Cyclopedia*, p. 777.

Car stuck in Rough Creek near Arthur's Pass. *Weekly Press*, 8 May 1924. Source: Kete Selwyn

The government and the Tawera County Council squabbled for years over maintaining the little-used road. The government argued that the railway line provided adequately for the travelling public and that it need not therefore pay for the road. But in April 1924 the new Main Highways Board declared the road a main highway and took over responsibility for its maintenance. After floods damaged the road in the early 1920s, the county council argued that the government should not only maintain the road but improve it. Under a 1926 agreement the county council made some contribution towards upkeep and improvement of the road, but most of the costs were borne by the highways board. Finally, in 1936, the government took responsibility for all maintenance and construction costs of the full length of what was declared a state highway from Christchurch to Kumara.[7]

The railway line through the Waimakariri high country

The railway line from Sheffield to Springfield (see Chapter 3) was opened in 1880. Agitation for the line to be extended through the high country and mountains beyond Springfield began almost at once. In 1882 the East and West Coast Railway League was formed. Two years later its efforts were rewarded by the appointment of a Royal Commission to look into extending the line and, then, by the passage of an Act of Parliament authorising construction of the line. The Midland Railway Company was registered in 1886 and began constructing the line beyond Springfield in 1890.

In the next five years the line was slowly pushed through Kowai Bush to Paterson Stream, where the first of the line's major viaducts was built. In 1895 the government, dissatisfied with the company's progress took over its completed lines and works in progress. The Public Works Department resumed construction of the line at the Springfield end in 1898. Through the Waimakariri Gorge and up the Broken River from its confluence with the Waimakariri, several tunnels and viaducts had to be built. The viaducts included the spectacularly high Staircase viaduct and large viaducts over the Broken River and Slovens Creek.

Once the Broken River viaduct had been completed, a station was built on the far side of the viaduct and a coach road built from the station up the open valley of Slovens Creek to connect with the existing coach road from Christchurch to Hokitika at Cass. After the line opened to Broken River in October 1906 a small settlement grew up around the station. The settlement was a construction camp for the line continuing up the north side of Broken River to where it was joined by Slovens Creek and a transit point where travellers transferred from train to coach for the journey on to Otira.

Once across the viaduct built over Slovens Creek the line turned away from the Broken River into easier country. From the head of Slovens Creek the line descended the famous Cass bank to the Cass station. Trains began running between Christchurch and Cass in 1910. Cass remained the railhead until the Waimakariri was bridged in 1912 and the line was carried on to Halpin Creek, in the mountains proper, beyond the last of the pastoral country.[8]

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[7] D & P, pp. 70-71, 89; Logan, pp. 65-74.

[8] For construction of the railway line from Springfield to Halpin Creek and Arthur's Pass see Logan, pp. 119-31; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 71-72; Gillespie, pp. 136-49, 160.

During the years the railway line was being built from Springfield to Arthur's Pass, the small settlement at Broken River was only one of several temporary construction towns built along the line. Besides the huts and houses which accommodated the workers, and the families of those workers who were married, these settlements generally had a school and store, both of which moved on up the line as construction was pushed forward. The first of these settlements was at Paterson Stream, while the viaduct over the creek was built; the next was on a high terrace above the Waimakariri gorge just before the site of the high Staircase viaduct. Beyond the Broken River settlement there were temporary settlements at Avoca, Cass and near the Mount White road bridge over the Waimakariri. The settlement at the Mount White bridge was where the railway line and the coach road which passed through the Castle Hill and Moana Rua basins met up again, after parting ways at Springfield. Around 1910 the 'township' at the Mount White turn-off had two stores, a police station, a blacksmith's shop, a boarding house, several houses and huts for the single workers.

The evidence on the ground today that these settlements ever existed is scant. At places like the Mount White turn-off where buildings once stood can still be made out, but any other evidence of the evanescent construction village is now below ground. After construction of the line was completed more permanent railway settlements, inhabited by the staff who maintained the line and serviced the steam engines which hauled the trains, were built at Staircase and Cass. There were also stations at Avoca and Craigieburn.

Nothing remains of the railway settlement at Staircase but at Cass there are buildings, including the shelter shed which appears in one of the most famous Canterbury high country paintings, Rita Angus's *Cass* (1936). One legacy of the construction of the railway between Broken River and Cass was that the railway construction road from Cass was declared a county road. Its main long-term use was for access to the 'new' Craigieburn and Avoca runs and the Avoca coal mine. It became known as the Craigieburn Road, although it continued down Slovens Creek to Avoca, close to the Broken River. Along the parallel road and railway line there are still fence lines with concrete posts and distinctive twisted iron droppers which were built at the time the railway was constructed to keep stock off the line.[9]
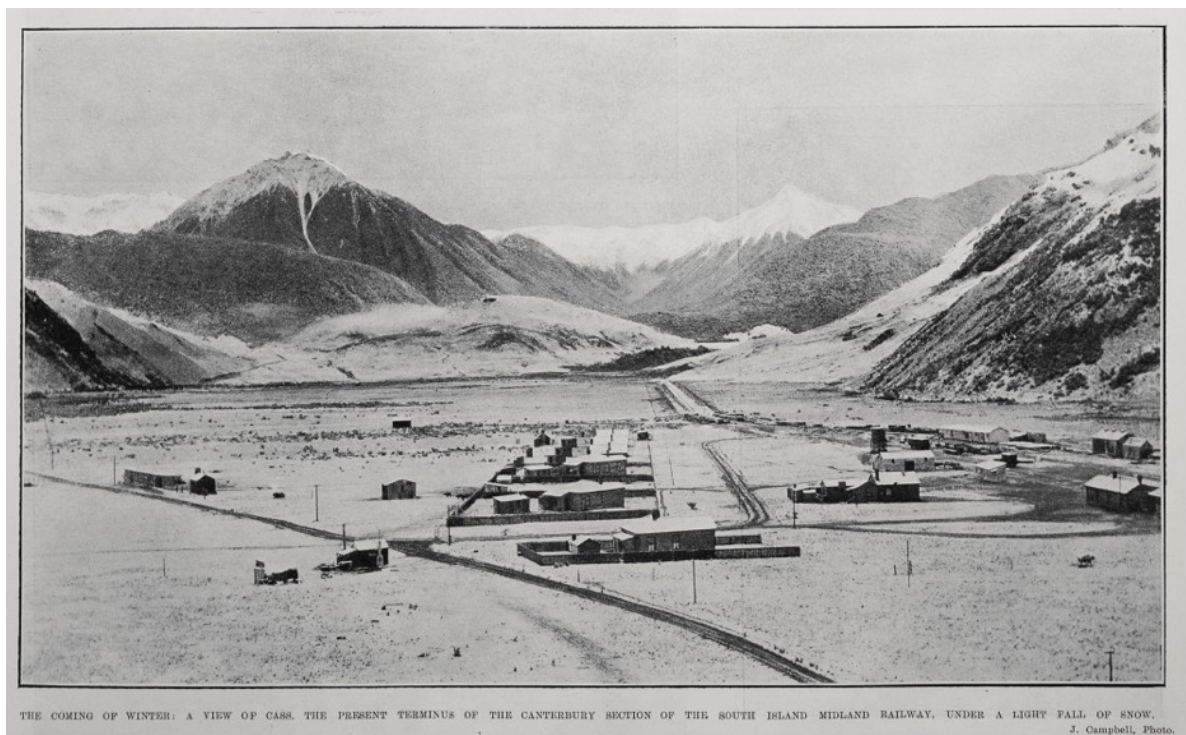
'The coming of winter: A view of Cass' *Auckland Weekly News* 23 May 1912, p. 13.
Source: AWNS-19120523-13-3, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

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[9] Dobbie and Perrin, pp. 71-72; Logan, pp. 119-31; Gillespie, pp. 10, 140.

The high country sheep runs inland from Springfield

Immediately west of Springfield, on the front slopes of the Torlesse and Benmore ranges, several leasehold runs were taken up in the 1850s. These runs included Easdale Nook, Brooksdale and Benmore.

Easdale Nook was subdivided in 1860. This subdivision brought the Mount Torlesse station into existence. After 1868 Mount Torlesse also included the small Patterson's run, on the Waimakariri side of the Kowai Pass settlement. A succession of owners held Mount Torlesse station until 1882 when it came into the possession of a loan and agency company. The station was purchased in 1901 by G. L. Rutherford. In 1903 the station had 10,000 merinos on 4,450 hectares of freehold and 2,225 hectares of leasehold. The homestead on the Little Kowai River, near Kowai Bush, was surrounded by a large area of well-preserved native bush. The run's large shearing shed had ten shearing machines.

Rutherford sold the station in 1904 to Percy Johnson. Johnson had a military background and Mount Torlesse was used for military training from before World War I into the 1960s. In 1926 Johnson moved to Raincliff in South Canterbury and made Mount Torlesse over to his son. The Johnson family has held Mount Torlesse to the present day, with members of successive generations also holding various local government positions. When Percy Johnson first took up Mount Torlesse he built a new homestead, which burned down in 2006.[10]

In 1901 John Milliken, who carted wool from the upper Waimakariri runs, became the owner of Brooksdale. In 1908 Milliken also bought Castle Hill, which shared a boundary with Brooksdale on the inland side of the Torlesse Range. Milliken also became owner of Flock Hill (see below) and moved the original Enys homestead from Castle Hill to Flock Hill before his death in 1920.[11]

The original homestead on the Benmore run was on the line of the old road up the southern side of the spur leading to Porters Pass.[12] Over the pass in the Castle Hill, Moana Rua and Grasmere basins, were the Castle Hill, Avoca, Craigieburn, Grasmere and Cora Lynn runs. The furthest inland of these runs, Cora Lynn, lay mostly on the southern side of the upper Waimakariri valley, and ran up to and beyond the small settlement of Bealey.[13]

Castle Hill. Source: Kete Christchurch.

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[10] *Cyclopedia*, p. 775; Gillespie, pp. 187-204; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 66-67; Logan, pp. 94-95.
[11] Logan, pp. 94-95; Dobbie and Perrin, p. 65.
[12] Logan, pp.94-95.
[13] Logan, pp. 7, 82-84;

The Castle Hill station was first taken up in 1858 by the Porter brothers. The original homestead was close to the Porter River, near where the road to the Porters ski-field now leaves the main highway. In 1864 the run was bought by the Enys brothers, who built a new homestead on a site near the present Castle Hill village. The run was owned by the Enys brothers for about 30 years. In 1903 13,678 hectares of Castle Hill were leasehold and only 350 hectares freehold. The station ran about 6,000 sheep. There were two dwellings on the property in that year. The proprietor was living in a wooden house on an eminence overlooking the hotel, which was where the Enys brothers had their original homestead, and the manager resided in a five-room stone cottage three kilometres away, about where the present small cluster of buildings that make up the Caste Hill station stands. John Milliken of Brooksdale bought Castle Hill in 1908.[14]

The Avoca run was one of the most isolated of the Waimakariri runs. It was on the Broken River, downstream from Castle Hill, on the western side of the Torlesse Range and extended to Staircase Gully on its Waimakariri frontage. A simple homestead built of corrugated iron in 1906, a 30-minute walk from where the Craigieburn road ends near the site of the former Avoca railway station, has been restored by the Department of Conservation for use as a back country tramping hut.[15]

Former Avoca homestead. Source: Department of Conservation.

In 1857, soon after Pearson had made the first recorded European visit to the Waimakariri sheep country, a rich Australian squatter, Joseph Hawdon, took up around 30,000 hectares that included today's Flock Hill, Craigieburn, Grasmere and Riversdale stations. The Craigieburn run was taken up in 1857 and a homestead built where the Flock Hill homestead is now located, on the Craigieburn Stream at the foot of the Craigieburn cutting.

In 1910 the owner of Craigieburn, deciding the new railway was far superior to the neglected road as a way to access the property, moved his homestead from the site by the Craigieburn Stream to a new site close to the railway line in the valley of Slovens Creek, near Lake Hawdon.

In 1873 around 26,000 hectares of Waimakariri sheep country, comprising Grasmere, the original Craigieburn and Avoca runs, were given as an endowment to Canterbury College. The only change for those holding the properties was that they paid their rent to the college rather than to the government.[16]

In 1917 the leasehold farms owned by the college were re-organised. The large Craigieburn run was subdivided into Flock Hill and Craigieburn. Confusingly the name Craigieburn was transferred to the new run. The new Flock Hill run was created from part of the original Craigieburn run and most of the Avoca run. James Milliken, son of John Milliken of Brooksdale, took up Flock Hill. Flock Hill later came into the hands of the Urquhart family, members of which held the run for many years. The leasehold of the 'new' Craigieburn was bought by Walter McAlpine and Joseph Studholme who had held Mount White, Lochinvar and Riversdale since 1910. Grasmere was later added to the vast holding. By 1927 McAlpine held only Craigieburn, having given up Lochinvar in 1920, Grasmere in 1923, and Mount White and Riversdale in 1924.[17]

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[14] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 773-74; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 299; Logan, pp. 84-86.
[15] Logan, p. 93; Selwyn District Council leaflet.
[16] Logan, p. 84.
[17] Logan, pp.86-88

Craigieburn remained in the hands of members of the McAlpine family for a full hundred years until, in May 2017, a bank took the leasehold over from Walter McAlpine's great-grandson and put the property up for sale. The land was still owned by the University of Canterbury.

While Grasmere was owned by Joseph Hawdon, his son Arthur managed the run. Arthur remained on Grasmere until 1876. Four years before he sold the property Arthur Hawdon had the original homestead on Grasmere enclosed in limestone.
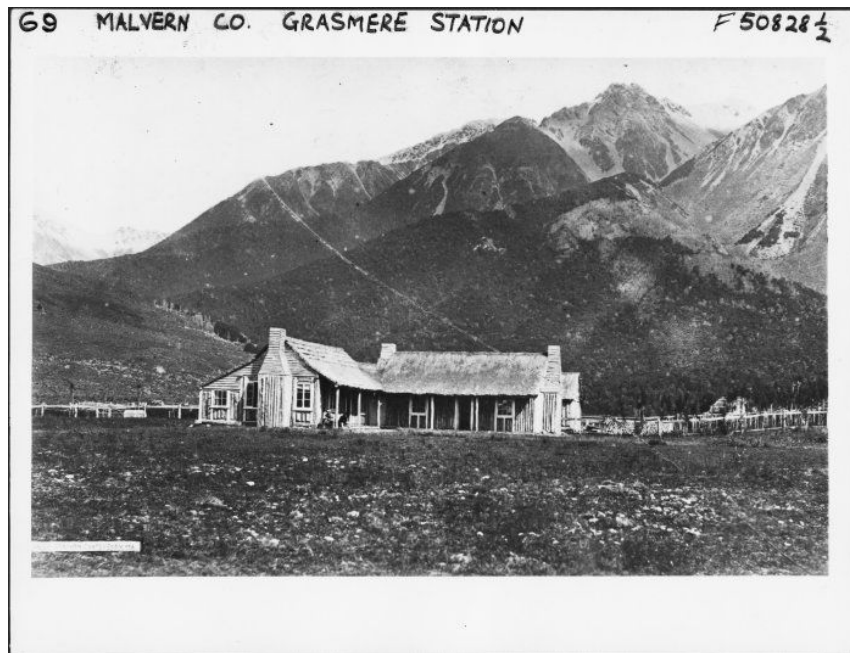
DL Mundy 'Homestead at Grasmere Station, near Cass, Canterbury', 1868.
Source: PAColl-8216, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

In 1903 the run had 5,665 hectares of leasehold land and only 385 hectares of freehold. The owner of the run in that year, S. E. Rutherford, was running 7,000 sheep but also growing about 60 hectares of grain on relatively level country near Lake Grasmere.

Between 1917 and 1923 Grasmere was held by Studholme and McAlpine, who also held other runs in the area. In 1923 Grasmere was bought by Harry Faulkner and a partner who already held Cora Lynn. Three years later they sold both Grasmere and Cora Lynn to David McLeod, an immigrant from Britain who began his high country career on Mount Torlesse, which was owned by family friends, the Johnsons. McLeod stayed on Grasmere until 1970. His son sold the run in 1978.[18]

JD Pascoe, 'Sheep dogs, Grasmere Station near Cass', 1944. Source: ¼-000909-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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[18] *Cyclopedia*, p. 775; Logan, p. 89; Gillespie, pp. 132-34.

Most of Cora Lynn, the highest run in the pastoral country on the south bank of the Waimakariri, lay beyond high, steep bluffs against which the river flowed. The bluffs made access up the river difficult above the Goldney Saddle. The run was taken up by the Goldney brothers in 1860. They built the run's first homestead on the Cass River, which was separated from most of the run by Corner Knob, Mount Horrible and the Waimakariri bluffs. Once the road had been built around the bluffs, the homestead was moved to a site on Broad Stream. Between 1867 and 1889 Cora Lynn was owned by partners who also owned Riversdale. Cora Lynn was run in association with Riversdale, Mount White and Lochinvar until 1907 when it was at last linked with Grasmere under Sealy Rutherford.[19]

Even more remote than Grasmere, Cora Lynn, Craigieburn and Flock Hill were three runs on the north side of the Waimakariri River – Riversdale, Mount White and Lochinvar. The runs have intertwined histories and were eventually brought together into a 20,234 hectare property which took the name Mount White.

At about the same time that Hawdon took up the vast area of land that eventually became four stations, the Minchin brothers took up land between the Poulter and Esk Rivers, which became the nucleus of the Mount White station. The Minchins also took up land further into the mountains which became a separate run, Lochinvar, in 1860. In 1860 the Minchins sold out to T. W. White who built the first Mount White homestead by Lake Letitia. After White failed in 1864, the Minchins took the run over again.

Lochinvar had several early owners but by the late 1860s was owned by the brother of the owner of Mount White and the runs were thereafter effectively run in tandem until Lochinvar was abandoned in 1948. Mount White and Lochinvar were owned by a loan and agency company from 1884 until they were sold in 1902 to F. J. Savill, a member of the British shipping family. Studholme and McAlpine owned the two runs from 1910 to 1917. In 1920 the Turnbull family began its long ownership of the two runs. The author Peter Newton was shepherd, head shepherd and then manager on Mount White. On Lochinvar there was a house up the Nigger Stream and an even earlier house at the junction of the East Poulter and Bull Creek.[20]

The original owner of Riversdale was Hawdon, who also owned the original Craigieburn and Grasmere. Hawdon sold Riversdale in 1867. Its subsequent history, like that of Lochinvar, was intertwined with the history of Mount White, although a separate homestead and woolshed were built on Riversdale on flats near Andrews Stream. The house was occupied until 1937 and survived until it burned later in the 20th century.

Mount White, Lochinvar and Riversdale were on the north side of the Waimakariri and when the first road boards were set up after 1863 the runs were included in the Oxford Road District. The first rough track into Riversdale, Mount White and Lochinvar was formed in the 1860s. It was improved to a dray road in that decade so that wool could be taken out from the runs, over the Waimakariri River to Cass, on the road to the West Coast.

Later in the 1860s the runholders made efforts to have Lochinvar, Mount White and Riversdale included instead in the Malvern road district. After the Upper Waimakariri road district seceded from Malvern in 1871 the runs on the north side of the river eventually succeeded in having their runs included in the Upper Waimakariri district. The building of bridges over the Waimakariri and Poulter Rivers on the road into Mount White in 1883 cemented the inclusion of the Mount White country in the Upper Waimakariri road district, which became Tawera county in 1910. The inclusion of the three runs in Tawera county meant that the area became part of Malvern county and so eventually of the Selwyn District. Both the major bridges on the road into Mount White have been periodically reconstructed or rebuilt.

Although small areas have been cultivated for crops (mostly oats and green feed) on some of the Waimakariri runs and although in the early 21st century part of the Grasmere run was developed to run cows, the runs were from the start, and mostly remain, 'sheep country'. By 1879 there were around 68,000 sheep on the six 'top' Waimakariri runs. The number of sheep reached a peak of around 92,000 in 1895, but then declined to around 45,000 at the outbreak of World War I. The number then remained more or less steady until the 1960s when the catchment board began to encourage the retirement of marginal grazing land.[21]

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[19] Logan, p. 90.
[20] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 65-66, 73-76; Logan, pp. 90-92, 98-99, 114.
[21] Logan, p. 84.

The high country sheep runs inland from Windwhistle

The high country sheep runs on the north bank of the Rakaia River between Windwhistle and Lake Coleridge had easier access from the plains than the runs in the Waimakariri catchment, which lay on the far side of Porters Pass. Two of these runs – Snowdon and The Point – were eventually subdivided into agricultural farms. The country on the northern and southern sides of Lake Coleridge remained primarily pastoral, but the original runs were broken up into smaller units. The 'top' runs on the north side of the Rakaia valley above the Harper and Wilberforce Rivers – Glenthorne, Mount Algidus and Manuka Point – remained true pastoral high country runs until the late 20th century.

The Point was first taken up in 1852 by the Studholme brothers, who already held The Terrace run. It was then held by the Phillips family from 1862 until 1911. Until 1878 The Point was run in association with Rockwood. By 1889 much of The Point had been freeholded by the Phillips family. In 1911 the family sold around 3,240 hectares of the run to the Gerard family, who owned the adjoining run, Snowdon. The 240 hectares of The Point retained by the Phillips family became a separate farm. The homestead built on The Point in 1866 was put back in good repair in the 1950s. The purchase of most of The Point allowed the Gerard family to extend the Snowdon water race (see below) further down country. The Gerards included the land which had been part of The Point in their subdivision of 1912 which created a number of smaller properties. Among the smaller farms established on land which was once part of The Point are Highlands (formerly Windfield), Roundtop, Birchview (formerly Glentui) and Long Spur (formerly Langminnan).[22]

The Point homestead. Source: Heritage NZPT.

Snowdon was first taken up as a separate run, cut off the large Hororata run (see Chapter 3), in 1853-54. In 1866, by then made up of five pastoral licenses and covering 15,000 hectares, the run was bought by William Gerard, who also owned Manuka Point (see below) and Double Hill on the other side of the Rakaia. By 1889 Gerard had freeholded around 4,050 hectares on Snowdon. After William Gerard died in 1893 his son George took over the property. George Gerard installed a water race system, with an intake on the Acheron River, which included flumes, siphons and open races. In the 1930s the Selwyn County Council bought the system and created a water district. The system was eventually piped before being superseded by a new piped scheme that drew water from the Dry Acheron built between 1982 and 1984.

The second homestead built on Snowdon in the late 1800s burned down in January 1928. Its replacement, designed by Roy Lovell-Smith, was occupied later in the same year. The range of station buildings at Snowdon included a post office, a woolshed and a wool scour (on the Acheron).

A 1909 subdivision of Snowdon within the Gerard family saw a separate new property, Bayfields, created. The Fighting Hill and Bryans Hill properties also came into existence through subdivision off Snowdon. In 1946 Snowdon was still a large property; around 2,430 hectares of freehold land. In that year the government bought Bayfields and Fighting Hill, 440 hectares of Snowdon and parts of High Peak (see Chapter 4) and cut the land up for soldier-settlement farms. Around ten new properties were created by these subdivisions. What remained of Snowdon was sold by the Gerard family in 1946, at the time the soldier settlement scheme went ahead.[23]

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[22] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 262; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 161-87.
[23] Britten, p. 93; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 262; West *of Windwhistle*, pp.74 – 136, 199-200.

WG Gerard's Fighting Hill bungalow, Snowdon, 1925. Source: PAN-0050-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Inland from The Point and Snowdon, Acheron Bank was held briefly in 1853-54 by a famous runholding family, the McLeans. The large run lay between Lake Coleridge and the Rakaia River, from the Acheron River to Lake Stream, which flowed from the western end of Lake Coleridge. It was held for only a little longer by another owner before being bought in 1857 by John Oakden who built a homestead near the Acheron River. Oakden freeholded a large area but the land which became Peak Hill and Mount Oakden remained leasehold. In 1878 Oakden sold Acheron Bank to John Murchison.

In 1912 the government took over the lease of part of what had been Acheron Bank and created two new runs, Peak Hill and Mount Oakden. Mount Oakden was bought by Rod Urquhart who had been manager on Mount Algidus. He built a homestead on the property in 1914. Mount Oakden was later owned by Maurice and Elizabeth O'Rorke (from 1923-55).

Peak Hill was bought by Herbert Jessep, who worked the run from down country but built a house, woolshed and other farm buildings on the property using timber and iron bought when the Lake Coleridge power station had been completed. Members of the Jessep family retained the property for more than 70 years. The original homestead on Peak Hill was replaced in 1955-56.

The Lake Coleridge run was taken up in 1855. A house was built on the property in 1864.The run had a succession of owners, including Richard Cotton who held it from 1871 to 1887, until 1890 when it was bought by John Murchison who had owned Acheron Bank from 1878. The author Peter Newton, who was also associated with the Mount White run in the Waimakariri valley (see above) worked on Lake Coleridge in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lake Coleridge remained in the hands of members of the Murchison family for more than a century. 'In-family' subdivisions in 1958 and 1984 created new properties – Coleridge Downs, Ryton and a 'new' Acheron Bank. Ryton was bought at the time of its 1984 subdivision by Mike and Karen Meares of Coalgate Transport. The remnant of the Lake Coleridge run was finally sold out of the Murchison family in 2001. The family had already sold Coleridge Downs in 1993.[24]

Three remote runs lay above Lake Coleridge, across the Harper, Wilberforce or Rakaia Rivers. Crossing the rivers made management of these runs sometimes challenging. All three runs had mountainous unoccupied Crown land on their inland sides.

Glenthorne lies between the Harper and Wilberforce Rivers. It was taken up in 1859 and had various owners until 1902 when it was bought by Janet Murchison, wife of John Murchison who had held the Lake Coleridge run since 1890. After John died in 1904, Janet ran the combined area of Lake Coleridge and Glenthorne with her sons. The run was held by the Murchison family until 1970 when it was bought by Bob and Val Brown.

Peter Newton described Glenthorne as 'steep rugged country – as difficult as any I've been on' which helps explain why (like Mount Algidus and Manuka Point) it has never been subdivided, as happened to other runs in the Coleridge basin which were gentler country and enjoyed easier access. Glenthorne did gain better access after the Harper diversion was constructed in the 1920s, but it was not until the Ryton was bridged in 1948, and then the Harper in 1987, that all its access problems were finally solved. A fire destroyed the homestead in 1962 and a new one was built the following year. A new woolshed followed in 1978. The run was badly affected by the 1994 Arthur's Pass earthquake.

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[24] For Acheron Bank and Lake Coleridge and the various subdivisions of them see *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 34-35, 45-50, 51-59, 60-62, 66-69; Britten, pp. 72-88.
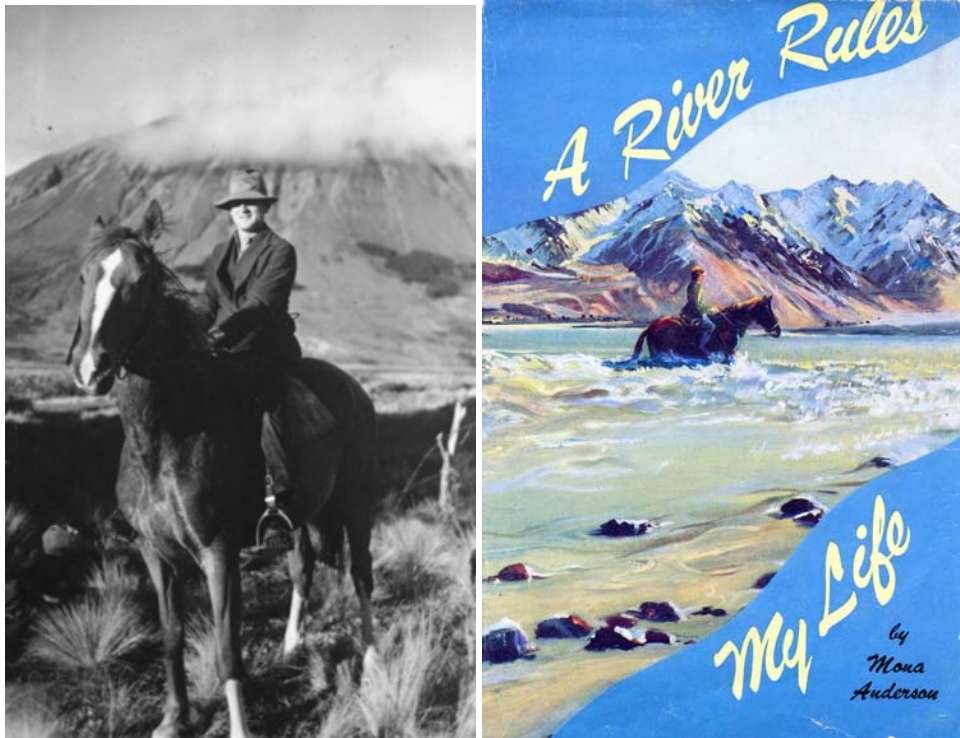
Left] JD Pascoe 'Musterer on Glenthorne Station', December 1936. Source: PA1-o-406-219-4, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Right] Cover of Mona Anderson's *A River Rules My Life* 1963.

Mount Algidus is surrounded on three sides by mountain rivers – the Wilberforce, Mathias and Rakaia. In 1861 William Rolleston, an important figure in Canterbury's political history, bought an aggregation of four small runs which had first been taken up in 1857. In 1865 Rolleston sold the run, which was known initially as Rakaia Forks, to Francis Neave, who held it until 1884. After being owned by several subsequent owners it was bought in 1897 by a daughter of William Gerard. She and her estate held the property for 76 years. One long-serving manager, Rod Urquhart, served until 1912 when he became a runholder in his own right on Mount Oakden. Mona Anderson, the wife of the manager of Mount Algidus from 1936 until 1973, wrote two best-selling books about life on Mount Algidus.

At Mount Algidus Neave replaced Rolleston's original timber and thatch homestead in the 19th century. A third homestead was built in the 20th during Ron Anderson's term as manager, then a fourth in 1980. Since 1973 the run, still in excess of 20,000 hectares has had several owners and seen changes in management, with cattle largely replacing sheep. A new homestead was built in the early 21st century.

Mount Algidus, as one of the Canterbury high country's more extensive runs, has had a greater number of musterers' huts than is usual for high country run. The huts were built up the Wilberforce valley and elsewhere on the station.

An accommodation house built at the junction of the Rakaia and Wilberforce Rivers had a short life. An iron shed was later built at about the same point to store loads of station supplies being taken in to Mount Algidus and wool being taken out. An access road to Mount Algidus was constructed in 1948, but the river that ruled Mona Anderson's life (the Wilberforce) has never been bridged.

Manuka Point, between the Rakaia and Mathias Rivers, is one of the most remote runs of the South Island high country. It was acquired by Joseph Palmer, a prominent Christchurch banker, in 1863. For some years after 1873 it was owned by William Gerard, who also owned the Snowdon run. A homestead and woolshed were built on the property around 1910. Lawrence Walker became manager of the run in 1920, bought it in 1937 and held it until his death in 1973. In the 1930s and 1940s Lawrie Walker and Manuka Point became familiar to the young climbers of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club who were then exploring and making first ascents in the Rakaia mountains. One of the club's members, John Pascoe, took memorable photographs of Walker, the homestead and the run.[25]

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[25] For Glenthorne, Mount Algidus and Manuka Point see Britten, pp. 89-93; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 12-24, 26-30; Dobbie and Perrin, pp. 124, 300-01.

JD Pascoe 'Cart load of wool bales, Manuka Point Station', 1940s. ¼-067520-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Between 1871 and 1911 the Lake Coleridge basin was a self-governing local body area. In 1871 runholders from Snowdon inland to Manuka Point set up a 'breakaway' (from the Rakaia road district) Lake Coleridge road district. In the 1880s the road board built a house for its employee and a meeting room and office on reserve land at Snowdon. The Lake Coleridge road board went out of existence in 1911 when a number of new counties were set up, but its office and meeting room was still standing in the early 21st century.[26]

Windwhistle and the Rakaia gorge

The pastoral runs and stations in the Rakaia valley all lie above a spectacular natural feature. At its gorge, the Rakaia cuts through solid rock between Mount Hutt and the Rockwood Range. The gorge is a dramatic geographical marker of the boundary between the plains and the high country. The tiny township of Windwhistle, on a high terrace above the river on its eastern (Selwyn District) side, developed as small service centre for The Point and Snowdon runs, the farms into which they were subsequently divided, and the runs of the Lake Coleridge basin.

In the early days of European settlement the river and its gorge were significant barriers to travel between North and Mid Canterbury. There was an early accommodation house at the Rakaia gorge, possibly established in 1851. In the mid-1860s Browning Pass was used, though only for a short time, as a route to the West Coast goldfields. The gorge was on this route and at the height of the West Coast gold rushes in 1865-66 a 12-room hotel accommodated those making their way to or from the Coast over Browning Pass. There was also, in the 1860s, a ferry across the river.

In the 1870s an inland railway from Oxford to Temuka was under active consideration. This line would have crossed the Rakaia at the gorge and when bridges were built across the two branches of the river (separated by a small rocky island) in the 1880s they were built, like the Waimakariri gorge bridge between Oxford and Sheffield, to 'railway standards'. The northern, iron, bridge was fabricated in England, taken from shipside to Coalgate by rail and then overland to the gorge (anticipating how the materials for the Lake Coleridge power station were taken to the site of the station 30 years later). The bridge was completed by November 1882. It is of exceptional engineering interest as one of only two survivors, world-wide, of a variant of a Bollman truss bridge. The southern bridge, built of timber, was completed in September 1884. There was periodic squabbling between the Ashburton and Selwyn counties over responsibility for maintaining the bridges, which crossed the county boundary. The southern bridge was replaced by a concrete structure in 1943-46.

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[26] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 91-93.

Rakaia Gorge Bridge, 1930s. Source: Christchurch Libraries.

On the approach to the bridges from the east, the ford on Camping Gully Creek was not bridged until 1970. Prior to that if the ford was impassable the alternative was a steep zig-zag directly up from the northern end of the northern bridge over the Rakaia. (The other bridges on state highway 77 between the Selwyn and the Rakaia were built or replaced between 1967 and 1974.)[27]

An accommodation house was built at Windwhistle by Lake Constance, close to the Camping Gully Stream, in the 1850s. It had a post office, which was on the route by which mail was taken to Snowdon. This accommodation house burned down in 1887 and was not replaced. The Windwhistle garage began as a smithy, which may have been established when the old accommodation house burned down. The garage was replaced in 1977.

The Windwhistle School was not opened, with 15 pupils, until 4 September 1933, in a surplus building brought from Addington in Christchurch. Shelter belts were planted around the school and in the pony paddock in 1937 a beech and a sequoia were planted to mark the coronation of King George VI. In 1946 a school bus was bought to bring pupils in from places like Snowdon after a canvass of the district. When several soldier re-settlement farms were created out of larger properties above the gorge (Bayfields, Snowdon and High Peak) the roll at the Windwhistle school grew. In the early 1950s there was discussion about amalgamating the Windwhistle and Glenroy schools on a new site, but the proposal was not pursued. The school recovered from the loss in 1978 of its form 1 and 2 pupils to Darfield and was given a reprieve from closure when it gained pupils after the closing of the Glenroy and Lake Coleridge schools in the 1990s.[28]

Farming in the high country

The farming of all the high country runs, in both the Waimakariri and Rakaia catchments, was very different from farming on the plains. Although some crops, particularly oats, were grown at places like Castle Hill, Grasmere and Riversdale, the main product of the runs was wool. The common problems of the runholders included getting the wool clip out to markets from rough mountain country and snow storms. The runholders also believed the mountain parrot, the kea, was responsible for sheep deaths and succeeded in having a bounty put on the bird from 1883 to 1971. The bird was not fully protected until 1986.

Rabbits were a perennial problem on most high country runs, particularly in the Lake Coleridge basin. The efforts made to control rabbit numbers – shooting, poisoning and the introduction of diseases – have left nothing tangible. But after the Upper Rakaia rabbit board was established in 1948, a house for the board's inspector was built near the entrance to the Lake Coleridge village.[29]

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[27] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 195-99, 205-08, 300.
[28] *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 169, 188, 190-91, 201-04; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 301.
[29] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 257-96; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 196-98.

Power lines did not reach the more remote high country sheep stations until well into the second half of the 20th century. Some runholders built small hydroelectric stations to supply their properties with electricity. One of the earliest was built by Walter McAlpine of Craigieburn station. On nearby Grasmere David McLeod built a small hydro station on the stream that flowed from Lake Grasmere down towards Cass.[30]

At Birchview, which had been part of The Point but become a separate property in 1913, the owner dug a reservoir in 1924 from which water fell 18 metres to drive a Pelton wheel connected to a generator. The system was expanded in 1950 and remained in use until the 1960s. The lake was also used for swimming, boating and ice-skating.[31]

On a nearby property, Windfield, later renamed Highlands, the owners who took over the property in 1938 installed an aeroplane propeller linked to a car generator to charge four 12-volt batteries to power lights in the homestead. When a gale blew the wind charger away, the family resorted to a small engine to drive the generator until mains power arrived. Ironically, the high-tension powerlines that conveyed power from the Lake Coleridge station to the Addington and Hororata substations crossed the property.

On High Peak station (the history of which is covered in Chapter 4) a small hydro plant, driven by an old wooden waterwheel, was installed in 1939. The system was converted to diesel-power before mains power reached the run.[32]

The runs and other high country properties of the Selwyn District occupy an unusual place in the district's social history. In the absence of any settlements the run homesteads and the buildings surrounding them – not just service buildings like woolsheds and stables but the cottages, bunkhouses and cookhouses in which the run employees lived as individuals or families and led their social lives – were the focus of small, tight, self-sufficient communities. Though both owners and employees came and went through the years the communities centred on the runs displayed a distinctive and long-lasting pattern of economic and social organisation. The interactions among the runs were characterised by a sense of solidarity and mutual assistance in coping with the peculiar difficulties of living in remote locations which were subject to extremes of weather. This was true even of runs which, like those close to the road linking Canterbury with the West Coast, had easier access to 'the outside world' than the more remote runs which lay along or at the ends of long, unsealed roads. The distinctive aspects of high country life are not unique to the Selwyn District but as the location of several of the most notable and remote runs the district has an important place in the history of the South Island's pastoral high country.

JD Pascoe, 'Dinner at Manuka Point Station, 1943'. Source: Te Ara.

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[30] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 286.
[31] *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 185-86, 190-91.
[32] For small power stations on high country runs see *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 143-44, 171.

The Acheron, Snowdon and Avoca coal mines

The history of coal mining in the Selwyn District belongs mainly to the Malvern Hills (see Chapter 4), but three small-scale mining ventures extend that industrial heritage, geographically, into the pastoral high country.

After Haast's 1866 discovery of anthracite coal in the Acheron, runholders in the Lake Coleridge area began mining the deposit. But the amounts mined were small – between 1868 and 1898 only a little more than 500 tons were taken from the Acheron seam. In 1937 the Stuart family of Coalgate opened a mine on the Acheron and began producing anthracite in larger quantities. A flood in 1951 swamped the shaft and swept away bins and machinery but the mine continued in production until 1964. It was worked in its later years by hydraulic sluicing. An attempt to re-open the mine in 1982 was unsuccessful.

Not far from the Acheron mine, a small mine on Snowdon was worked intermittently in the 19th century. Entrances to several tunnels and old equipment can still be seen from the Rakaia Gorge walkway, on what is now the Terrace Downs property.[33]

Coal was also discovered in the 19th century on the inland flanks of the Torlesse Range, not far from the homestead of the Avoca run. Initially coal was mined for local use, at the Castle Hill hotel and on nearby runs. W. J. Cloudesley, who owned the Castle Hill hotel for a time, acquired an interest in what was then called the Broken River coal mine in 1903. Cloudesley (who already owned and worked a coal mine at Springfield) had a lease over a little more than 400 hectares and it was expected that 'practically unlimited coal' equal to celebrated West Coast coals would provide the basis for an 'extensive industry'. Though these expectations proved inflated, a coal mine was opened at Avoca. In 1903 Cloudesley was looking ahead to the completion of the railway up the lower Broken River to its confluence with Slovens Creek which would allow him to send the coal to Christchurch.

Once the Slovens Creek viaduct had been built and the line was completed to Avoca in the early 20th century, mining began in earnest. The Mount Torlesse Collieries were formed in 1915 and took over the lease. In 1918, the year significant production began, nearly 3,000 tons were extracted from the Avoca mine. A tramway was built to carry the coal from the mine to the Avoca station on the Midland railway line. Over the next seven or eight years more than 70,000 tons were mined. In 1920, when 15,770 tons were extracted, the mine employed 58 men, 44 of them underground. A fire in 1924 slowed production down and in 1927 the mine was closed. Evidence of the mine remained in the form of an incline down to Broken River from the mine, the tramway and a ropeway and pieces of locomotives and boilers.[34]

MOUNT TORLESSE COLLIERY.

Many Canterbury people will be pleased to hear that informaion is to hand that the Mount Torlesse Collieries, Limited, has arrived at the producing stage, and that the first coal was loaded into railway trucks at the company's siding, Avoca, on Saturday.

Grey River Argus 22 May 1918 p. 3. Source: PapersPast.

The Lake Coleridge Power Scheme

The amount of energy obtained from the small amounts of coal mined in the high country is dwarfed by the amount of energy generated for more than a century at the Lake Coleridge power station.

Interest was first shown in generating electricity using Canterbury's snow-fed rivers at the very end of the 19th century. Reports were prepared by Arthur Dobson (1899) and Robert Hay (1901) on the possibility of generating electricity using the

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[33] Maffey, p. 365; *West of Windwhistle*, p. 65; Britten, pp. 339-43.
[34] Maffey, pp. 365-66; *Cyclopedia*, p. 772; Logan, p. 93; Gillespie, pp. 138-39.

Waimakariri River, with an intake either just above the gorge bridge or at Browns Rock. At both places there were already intakes for the stock water races that supplied farms on the plains. In 1901 a Christchurch politician who was a fervent advocate of electric power, T. E. Taylor, visited Lake Coleridge with Dobson. Nothing came immediately of the visit, but it was indicative of growing interest in the possibility of generating power at the lake. A 1903 report, produced in the same year that the Water Power Act paved the way for central government to build hydro-electric power schemes, favoured a station at Lake Coleridge over one on the Waimakariri. In 1904 a further study by Hay spelled out in detail how the 165-metre fall from the lake to the floor of the Rakaia valley could be used to generate electricity. The report also anticipated the diversion of the Harper and Wilberforce Rivers into the lake to increase the output of electricity.

The suggestion that a power station be built on the Waimakariri was revived in 1907 but the scheme was rejected two years later, in part because of opposition from the operators of the races which took water for farms from the Waimakariri. A later attempt to revive a scheme for the Waimakariri in 1922, by advocates of a dam at Otarama about 16 kilometres above the gorge bridge, was blocked by the government.

Based on the various investigations and reports of the first decade of the 20th century, the decision was made at the decade's end to proceed with the Lake Coleridge scheme. At the close of 1910 a Public Works Department survey party began work at the lake. The intake, pipelines and power station were built between 1911 and 1914. Materials and equipment were hauled by traction engine from the nearest railway station, Coalgate, to the site of the works. A village for the construction workers was established near the power house and the station was officially opened on 25 November 1914, with regular supplies of power beginning to flow along the transmission lines to a substation in Addington early in the following year. The project was of national significance as the first hydro-electric power station built by the government. The power station building was one of the first large buildings in New Zealand built entirely of reinforced concrete.[35]

Lake Coleridge Powerhouse. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

A fifth generator was installed in the powerhouse in 1920 and through the following decade the scheme was further expanded. 'Duplication' of the power station began in 1924 with improvements at the intake which included building new groynes and deepening the intake itself, the construction of a new and larger tunnel and surge chamber, a new pipeline down the hill, new generators and larger transformers. The tailrace was enlarged. An accident in 1925 when these works were in progress saw three men die in the new tunnel and two men rescued. The expanded station was opened in August 1926. More work in the later 1920s increased the station's capacity to 34,500kW. By 1930 the scheme consisted of two tunnels and surge chambers (1914 and 1926), seven pipelines (the last installed in 1929) and nine turbines and generators.

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[35] Britten, pp. 99-125; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 284-86; Logan, pp. 144-45.

The 1920s also saw the building of the first of three schemes to divert rivers into the lake. The Harper, Acheron and Wilberforce Rivers did not naturally flow into the lake. Turning them from their natural courses so that the water in each flowed into the lake increased the amount of water passing through the power house and thus the station's output of electricity. When the lake fell to a very low level in 1920 work began on the diversion of the Harper River. Flowing in its natural course, the Harper passed close to the western end of the lake just before it flowed into the Wilberforce. The diversion works, with a dam, gates and canal leading to the lake, were begun in February 1921 and completed in 1922. In 1923 a new weir at the outlet to the lake raised its level by nearly a metre which increased the lake's storage capacity. In 1930 critically low lake levels saw the smaller Acheron Stream also diverted into the lake at its eastern end.[36]

Between 1930 and 2000 further work kept the scheme functioning efficiently. In 1937 a new dam and gates were built on the Harper and in 1939 the transmission line to the West Coast via Lake Lyndon and Arthur's Pass was built.[37]

The diversion of the much larger Wilberforce River into the lake was not undertaken until 1977, when larger machinery was available and ways of turning a braided river that sprawled over a wide shingle bed into a canal had been worked out. Wilberforce water began flowing into Lake Coleridge in December of that year. In the 1990s the station was refurbished and strengthened against earthquakes. A Lake Coleridge Working Party worked on establishing a regime for the renewal of the water rights the station needed to continue to operate which also met the wishes and needs of people and groups, including those who used the lake for recreation whose interests conflicted with those of the power station. As part of the government's programme to privatise state assets the station was sold in 1998 for $90.6 million. At the end of the century the station was being run remotely and local staff were down to one at the diversions at the western end of the lake and five in the Lake Coleridge village.[38]

Lake Coleridge power station and settlement in c.1914. Source: 1/1-007270-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The Lake Coleridge and Harper villages

The Lake Coleridge village began its life as a construction camp when the power station was built between 1911 and 1914. The settlement was known originally as Kisselton, after one of the engineers on the project. In 1913 a post office was opened in Kisselton. Since the last quarter of the 19th century postal services had been provided at the Lake Coleridge station. A short-lived post office was opened in 1912 on the Mount Algidus road but after it closed in 1914 all postal services were provided at Kisselton. The name of the post office was changed to Whakamatau (the Maori name for the lake itself) in 1915, then in 1921 changed again to Lake Coleridge. The village has been known as Lake Coleridge since then, though it is not actually on the lake. A new post office opened in 1951.

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[36] Britten, pp. 135-57.
[37] Britten, pp. 159-60, 162-63.
[38] For work on the Coleridge power scheme since 1940 see Britten, chapters 12-15.

The first houses were built in 1911. By 1913 there were eight houses and eight single-men's huts in the village. Shortly afterwards a building with seven bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room and a billiards room was built to provide the single men with a better standard of accommodation and social amenity. In 1934 a new single men's hostel was built. It gained a new wing in 1958. In c.1913 a show home 'Electric Cottage' was built in the village to demonstrate the advantages of using electricity in the home. It subsequently became a private holiday home.

Families were among those who settled in the village while it was still a construction town and a school, built in 1913, opened early in 1914. The school retained the name Kisselton until 1936, the year in which the building was converted to an open-air classroom. The community built a swimming pool at the school in 1941.

As an isolated community of mostly young families and single men, the village created its own lively social and sporting life. A social and sports club formed in 1924 and continued to function until 1982. Billiards, cricket, football, tennis, table tennis, croquet and golf clubs were formed. A tennis court had been laid by 1924 and a pavilion was built by the court four years later. The club survived until 1983. The croquet club, formed in the 1920s, built a pavilion by its green in 1951, but went out of existence in the late 1960s. One of the longest lasting of the sports organisations in the village was the golf club. It was founded in 1924, immediately after a course had been formed. The course was extended in 1956 and new clubhouses opened in 1967 and 1986, but the club finally closed down in 2001.

Local initiative saw a cottage hospital completed in March 1925 and for many years a hospital club helped maintain medical services in the village. The cow club formed in 1914 kept the village supplied with fresh milk until the late 1980s.

A village hall was erected in 1939. A piano was bought and dances at the hall became popular. The hall was also used for church services and Sunday school classes. In 1948 the picture club bought a projector and movies were shown in the hall until 1965. The hall committee met for the last time in 1984 and in 1998 management of the hall and its grounds was transferred to the Selwyn District Council.

Lake Coleridge Social Hall. Source: A Spice, December 2017.

In 1918 the death of a local man, Lawrence McKeown, saw an unusual cemetery established in the village. Instead of his body being taken to the nearest cemetery at Glentunnel, McKeown was buried on land given by the Murchison family. The land was gazetted a cemetery in 1936 and vested in the Selwyn County Council in 1939. For nearly 80 years, McKeown's was the only grave in the cemetery until, in 1995, a child holidaying at Lake Coleridge who was killed in an accident was also buried there.

Trees were first planted at Lake Coleridge, to protect the village from the fierce nor'-west winds which blew down the Rakaia valley, in 1911-12. Plantings continued during and after World War I. In 1930 Harry Hart, a long-serving superintendent of the power station (1923-53), took an interest in the planting of trees and by 1933 had established an arboretum on the edge of the village which matured into a magnificent stand. Memorial gates were built at the entrance to the arboretum in 1989, the year the station celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Improvements at the village continued in the post-war years. A sewage treatment plant was built in 1965. In 1979 a salmon farm based on the 'ocean ranching' system was established at Lake Coleridge. Whiskey Creek was diverted into races to which salmon were expected to return to spawn. The venture was not a success and the company which built the races, South Pacific Salmon Ltd, was wound up in 1983. A successor company, the New Zealand Salmon Company, used the races as a source of eggs and as a hatchery until 1994 but then abandoned them.

At its peak the population of the village topped 100. In 1946 the population of the village was 114, with 31 employed at the power house. From the 1950s the population went into gradual decline. In 1980 the houses in the village, which had always been rented, were offered to staff to purchase. About half the houses in the village became privately owned at that time.

The village survived the reforms of the electricity industry in the 1980s and 1990s but changed in character from a village of power station workers to a holiday village. In the 1990s the power station was modified to run by remote control and local staff were steadily reduced. As power station workers dwindled in numbers the former workers' hostel was bought by a group of families as holiday accommodation and the single men's quarters turned into the Lake Coleridge Lodge. The post office closed in 1988 and the school roll dropped to 13 by 1987. When the school finally closed in 1995 the remaining eight children transferred to the Windwhistle school.

In 1993 14 houses and 18 sections in the village that were still owned by the Electricity Corporation were offered for sale to the public. In 1998 the remaining corporation-owned houses and the redundant school were bought by the American owners of Coleridge Downs, who had purchased the station from the last Murchison family owners at an auction in 1993. In 2004 the school was burnt down and its site subdivided at the same time as a large subdivision on adjoining land went ahead.[39]

One other small settlement owed its origins to the Lake Coleridge power scheme. From the 1920s at the western end of the lake, where it originally drained into the Wilberforce River, staff were stationed to operate the Harper River diversion. While the diversion works were under construction workers lived in tents. A house, with a dining room for single men attached, was built near the diversion works in 1925. Huts were built for single men in the late 1920s. In 1951 a new house was built and a new hostel replaced some of the huts. New one-room huts were built in 1966. When the Wilberforce was first diverted into the lake in the late 1970s, a second house for a married couple was built.
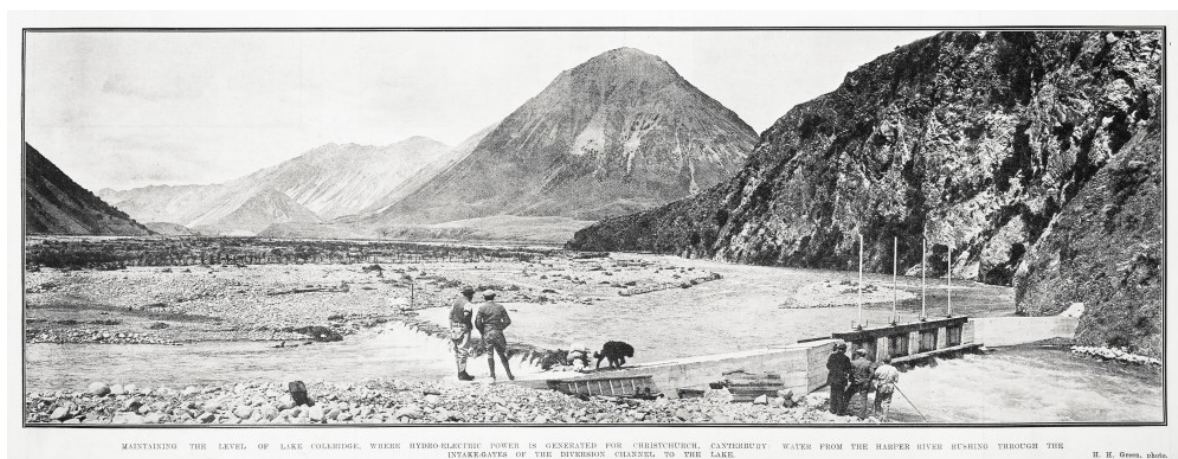
'Maintaining the level of Lake Coleridge … Water from the Harper River rushing through the intake gates of the diversion channel to the lake', *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 February 1924, p. 45. Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

The bridging of the Ryton River on the road into the Harper diversion in 1948 brought more people to the western end of Lake Coleridge for boating and fishing. When one of the houses at the diversion was no longer needed to house electricity department staff it became a holiday home for members of a social club based at the Addington substation. The remaining buildings of the village were bought by the owners of Ryton station and used to support their tourist operation. The fate of the tiny Harper village, when changes in the way the power scheme was run led to the withdrawal of staff, was thus the same as that of the larger and less remote Lake Coleridge village.[40]

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[39] *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 66-69, 192-94; Britten, pp. 132-33, 195-99, 205, 213-27, 230, 232-33, 235, 239, 241-42, 256, 269-94, 296-312, 314-39;
[40] Britten, pp. 347-58.

Recreation in the high country

The transformation of the Lake Coleridge and Harper villages from settlements of power station workers to holiday villages in the later 20th century was a reflection of the increasing popularity of the pastoral high country through the second half of the 20th century as a place for recreation.

The first use of the high country for recreation by significant numbers of people began when the Midland line began to creep west of Springfield in the 1890s. Starting in 1895 excursion trains (there were at least 30 in 1895 alone) took city folk to Paterson Stream and Otarama to walk and explore the country beyond Kowai Bush. As the railway line was extended, excursion trains were run to Staircase, then to Broken River.[41]

Train stopped on the Waimakariri Gorge bridge for passengers to admire the view, 1890s.
Source: PAColl-7581-74, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The Waimakariri Gorge, through which the railway passed, was also the scene of early canoeing and rafting adventures. In 1889 two leading figures in the early history of mountaineering in New Zealand, George Mannering and Marmaduke Dixon, followed the river from Bealey down through the gorge by canoe. It may have been as many as 34 years before the next trip was made down the gorge. In 1923 members of a party investigating the hydro-electric potential of the Waimakariri went through the gorge by boat. In the mid-1920s young members of what became the Canterbury Mountaineering Club attempted to follow the river down through its gorge by raft. One of these raft trips ended in tragedy in 1926 when the founder of the club, Gerard Carrington, and a companion were drowned. In 1933 a new arrival at Arthur's Pass, Oscar Coberger, made it through the gorge with two companions. Subsequently many trips were made by raft and canoe through the gorge. By the late 20th century tourists were regularly being taken through the gorge by jet boat and, starting in 1983, the kayak leg of the Coast to Coast multi-discipline event saw a flotilla of kayaks descend the gorge annually.[42]

Through the 20th century fishing and shooting were also popular pursuits in the pastoral high country of the Selwyn District. Deer released on Manuka Point in 1897 spread within ten years onto Mount Algidus and Glenthorne. More deer were liberated on Snowdon in 1908. Deer also spread into the Waimakariri catchment. Deer numbers increased so rapidly that in 1923 culling began in the Wilberforce and on Manuka Point, by cullers employed first by the acclimatisation society, then by the government. Deer cullers' huts joined musterers' huts as the only buildings in the higher, more remote areas of the high country. Chamois also spread north into the headwaters of the Rakaia and eventually the Waimakariri after they were liberated in 1907 and 1914 at Mount Cook.[43]

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[41] Logan, p. 130; Gillespie, passim.
[42] Logan, pp. 158-63, 180.
[43] Britten, pp. 43-44.

Releases of trout into the rivers and lakes of the Lake Coleridge area began in the late 1860s and continued into the early 20th century. Lake Coleridge itself and smaller lakes like Georgina and Selfe became popular with anglers. Salmon were also released in the later 19th and early 20th centuries into the Rakaia River and into Lake Coleridge and runs up the river became annual in the 20th century. Although the most intensive salmon angling was at the mouth of the Rakaia, they were also caught in the upper reaches of the river and in Lake Coleridge. Salmon and trout were also released into the Waimakariri and the smaller lakes of the Waimakariri high country and drew anglers into the high country. In 1903 it was said of Lake Grasmere that its 'clear waters teem with trout'.[44]

When winters were colder in the early and mid-20th century, ice skating was popular on two high country lakes in the Selwyn District, Ida and Lyndon. Before skating become popular on these lakes in the late 1940s, locals and others skated on a small lake at Windwhistle. After the Windwhistle Winter Sports Club was formed in 1932 it formed small rinks for skating at The Point and Birchview. Ice hockey was also played on the rinks.

Access to Lake Ida improved with the construction of the road to the Harper village and Glenthorne. In the 1940s the lake became popular as a skating rink. In 1948 the Lake Ida Winter Sports Association built a road to the lake from the Harper Road. On one week-end day in July 1950 184 cars and 24 buses used the road. Large crowds – up to 200 or 300 on any one day was commonplace – flocked to the lake through the 1950s and 1960s, to skate, to compete in championships organised by the Windwhistle Winter Sports Club, and to engage in curling. Skating at Lake Ida continued when conditions were right into the 1980s, but thereafter warmer winters meant the lake no longer froze solid enough for skating.

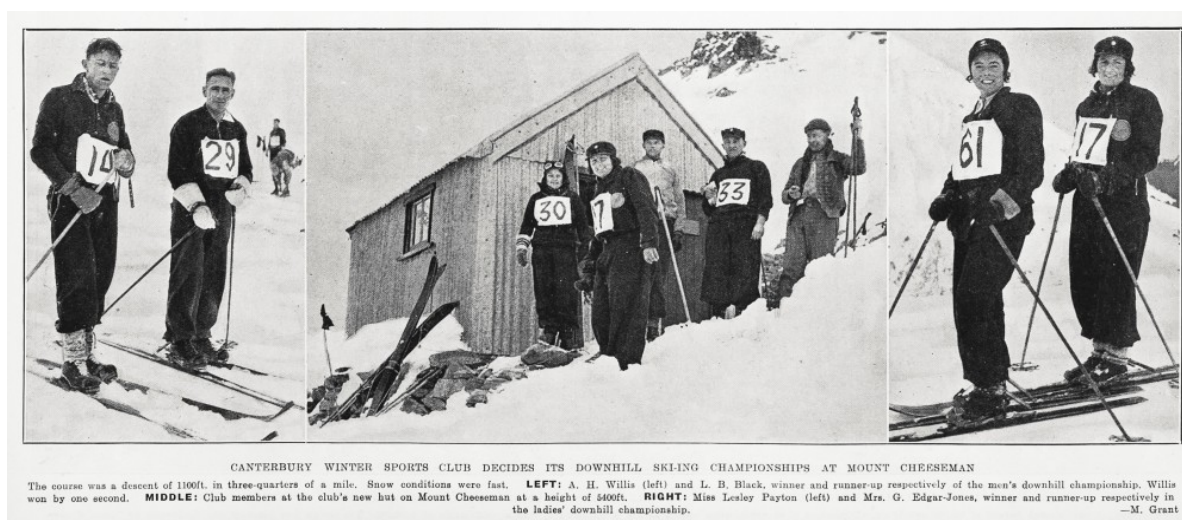Skating at Lake Ida, July 1950. Source: Kete Christchurch.

Lake Lyndon also became as popular for ice skating after World War II, as it was in summer for water-skiing and power-boating. From the early 1960s the Tawera County Council and, after 1967, the Malvern County Council made efforts to provide and improve amenities at the lake as it became increasingly popular for recreation. In 1972, after the first facilities had been built, land at the lake came under council control; the first toilets were built in 1969. An A-frame shelter followed in 1970. The Canterbury Ice-skating Club had a lodge at the lake, but when warmer winters began to reduce the ice cover on the lake and skating became impossible, the club first, in 1971, offered its lodge to the council but then gave it to another winter sports group. In 1975 the lodge came under the control of the Porter Heights ski-field.

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[44] Britten, pp. 32-34; *Cyclopedia*, p. 775.

Up to the 1950s the Coleridge-Lyndon road was used mainly to access the transmission line from Lake Coleridge to the West Coast, which ran past Lake Lyndon. As winter sports traffic in the high country increased, the road came into more general use.[45]

Skiing has proved a longer-lasting winter sports activity in the Selwyn District high country than ice skating. All but two of the district's ski fields are located on the eastern side of the Craigieburn Range and are reached from the West Coast road as it passes through the Castle Hill basin. (One other ski-filed, Mount Olympus, is on the western side of the Craigieburn Range and another, Temple Basin, is located in the mountains of the Arthur's Pass National Park.)

In 1929 the Canterbury Winter Sports Club, formed to promote skiing, ice-skating and tobogganing in the province, decided to establish a ski-field on the Craigieburn Range in the high basins between Mounts Cheeseman and Cockayne. The field became known as Mount Cheeseman. Initially a bottom hut was built below the bush line and a walking track formed up to the basins. The post-war years saw a surge in membership of the club. A middle hut was built in 1947, a rope tow installed and a road formed to the bottom hut. A top lodge was built in 1950 at the foot of the high basins. Subsequent development of the field saw the top lodge expanded and a T-bar and then Poma lift replace the early rope tows. The original bottom hut burned down in 1981 and was replaced by a new forest lodge.

CANTERBURY WINTER SPORTS CLUB DECIDES ITS DOWNHILL SKI-ING CHAMPIONSHIPS AT MOUNT CHEESEMAN
The course was a descent of 1100ft. in three-quarters of a mile. Snow conditions were fast. **LEFT:** A. H. Willis (left) and L. B. Black, winner and runner-up respectively of the men's downhill championship. Willis won by one second. **MIDDLE:** Club members at the club's new hut on Mount Cheeseman at a height of 5400ft. **RIGHT:** Miss Lesley Payton (left) and Mrs. G. Edgar-Jones, winner and runner-up respectively in the ladies' downhill championship.
—M. Grant

'Canterbury Winter Sports Club decides its downhill ski-ing championships at Mount Cheeseman',
Auckland Weekly News, 7 August 1935, p. 44. Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

The Craigieburn Valley Ski Club began life as a subsidiary of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club. On the initiative of several members of the club interested in skiing, a suitable basin was identified at the head of the Craigieburn valley and a walking track up to the basin was formed. In 1948-49 the materials for a hut and then what was needed for a rope tow were carried in. The club split from its parent body in 1953, partly because the Mountaineering Club did not admit women as members. The road up to the hut was built in 1961.

About the same time that members of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club formed what became the independent Craigieburn Valley Ski Club, members of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club formed a winter sports section which eventually became the North Canterbury Ski Club. In 1948 the winter sports section of the recreational club established a base at Lake Lyndon, then in the early 1950s built a road, hut and tow in basins at the head of the Broken River. Members of the club first skied on the field in 1952. By 1953 they had their first tow in operation.

The fourth ski field on the Craigieburn Range with access from the West Coast Road, Porter Heights (later shortened to Porters), was a commercial venture. A company was formed in 1967 to develop a ski field at the head of the Porter River. An agreement between the company, the runholder who leased the land, the Lands and Survey Department and the Catchment Board allowed the development to proceed. An avalanche three weeks after the field opened in 1968 destroyed part of the field's pavilion and its tow, but it recovered to become one of Canterbury's commercial ski-fields, second only to Mount Hutt on the south side of the Rakaia River.

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[45] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 89-90, 123-24; *West of Windwhistle*, p. 38, 205-08; Britten, p. 313.

These ski-fields, accessed from the West Coast Road, are all on the north-eastern side of the Craigieburn Range. The fifth ski-field on the range, Mount Olympus, is on the south-western side. The Windwhistle Winter Sports Club was formed initially, in 1932, to enter a team into the national ski championships which were then being held at Ball Hut in the Aoraki/Mount Cook region. In 1948 the club decided to establish a ski-field in the head of the Ryton valley. A hut was built and by 1952 a rope tow was operating. A second hut, built in 1957, was a memorial to a member of the club, Hugh Richards, who was killed in a blasting accident when the access road was being formed. The Mount Olympus Ski Club was formed to encourage use of the field, which remains the field of the original Windwhistle club.[46]

With the exception of Porter Heights, the ski-fields in the Selwyn District all began their lives as 'club' fields which were developed long before any commercial fields by enthusiastic amateurs in a pioneering, self-help spirit typical of many endeavours in the country as a whole. Although some later became semi-commercial, the club fields are all still run by the clubs which developed them. The development of club fields was an unusual feature of the history of skiing in New Zealand, giving the country an internationally distinctive skiing culture. The Selwyn District, where six club fields were established, has an important place in the history of the sport in New Zealand.

The development of the largest village in the Selwyn District's high country, Castle Hill, was related to the establishment of ski-fields on the Craigieburn Range, which forms the western margin of the Castle Hill basin. In 1903, when the Castle Hill basin was an area of large runs devoted to the extensive grazing of sheep, it was remarked that the basin also had a future as a health and holiday resort: 'the scenery is romantic, and the climate invigorating in a high degree' the Canterbury volume of the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* observed, noting further that the scenery is 'picturesquely mountainous', the climate 'invigorating to a salutary degree' and that angling and shooting of hares and rabbits were possible in the area. The fossil beds and 'caves of interest' in the area were also identified as contributing to the area's appeal as a place for recreation. In 1903 there was already a hotel at Castle Hill (see above), served by a twice-weekly coach service and plans were afoot to form a skating pond. But 70 years passed before the Castle Hill basin came into its own as a centre for recreation with the development of the Castle Hill village, close to the site of the old hotel which had by then long since disappeared.

In the late 1960s, with many New Zealanders better-off, owning more private cars and having more leisure time, interest in the high country as a place for recreation increased. By that time the possibility of residential subdivisions at Castle Hill, Craigieburn, Moana Rua (Lake Pearson) and Cora Lynn was being actively discussed. In November 1969 a report by an influential Christchurch town-planner, Nancy Northcroft, looked at proposals for developments at Bealey Spur, Moana Rua (Lake Pearson), Craigieburn and Castle Hill. (The Lands and Survey Department had already allowed development to begin at Bealey Spur – see Chapter 6.) The report identified the complex issues raised by the various development proposals which included land tenure and the location and form of new settlements in an area of high scenic values.

In 1970 a development company, which had bought freehold land in the Castle Hill area, put forward ambitious plans for an alpine village and tourist resort on its land. A town of up to 2,000 dwellings and a population of 10,000, served by an airport was envisaged. When the county council held hearings on the proposal there were objections. An alternative site was identified and in 1979, after exchanging land with the runholder, the company put forward a more modest alternative proposal. The town planning hurdles for stage 1 of the development were overcome and 130 sections were put on the market. The first sections were sold in 1983, but the developer went into receivership and the commercial centre which was to have been built never went ahead. By 1989 there were 40 dwellings in the village and though the number of dwellings has increased slowly in subsequent years, Castle Hill village has always remained a cluster of holiday homes, with a few permanent residents, rudimentary community facilities and no commercial activity to speak of.

Castle Hill Village, 2014. Source: castlehill.net.nz

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[46] *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 38, 205-08; Logan, pp. 178-80; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 227-28, 275.

In the second half of the 20th century several Christchurch secondary schools took over or built huts to be used for the recreation and education of their pupils in the high country and mountains of the Selwyn District. One of these huts, St Andrew's College mountain lodge, was built near the Castle Hill village in 1965. It was rebuilt in 2008 and is now known as the Alistair Sidey mountain lodge.

Through the years that the Castle Hill village has slowly grown, the Craigieburn Forest Park (which includes parts of the Harper, Avoca and Wilberforce valleys) has become increasingly popular for tramping and mountain biking. Part of the park was gazetted as state forest in 1898 but the forest park was only created in 1967 and most of the Harper, Avoca and Wilberforce land only added to it between 1979 and 1984.

The Castle Hill village also sits midway between two other increasingly popular reserves; one protects the limestone formations of Castle Hill itself and the other the underground passage and exit cave of Cave Stream on Broken River. Further back down the road towards Christchurch the Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park has also been growing in popularity with walkers and mountain-bike riders.[47]

One other development based on the increasing popularity of the high country for various forms of recreation has gone ahead in the Lake Coleridge basin. In the late 1960s the owners of the Lake Coleridge run were given permission to build a fishing village at the mouth of the Ryton River, where it enters Lake Coleridge. After the Cotton's block of the Lake Coleridge run was separated off as Ryton station in 1984, the new owners, Mike and Karen Meares, started up a tourist operation to supplement the income they were making producing super-fine merino wool. They built accommodation for tourists at the homestead, purchased the Harper village from Electricorp in 1992, and placed the informal camping ground at Ryton Bay, which fishermen had been using for years, on a proper basis.[48]

The Lake Coleridge basin was also the location of one of the high country lodges of Christchurch secondary schools in the Selwyn District. In 1961 Christ's College accepted an offer from the owners to use O'Rorke's hut on Mount Oakden as a base for outdoor education. The hut had been built on the run by Maurice O'Rorke when he took up Mount Oakden after the original Acheron Bank run was divided up. The college added a bunkroom to the hut and began using it to give its pupils experience in the high country. When a master, Gilbert Murray, was killed in a mountaineering accident later in the 1960s a memorial to him was erected nearby. Use of the hut fell away in 1990s but has resumed recently.[49]

One further illustration of the recreational appeal of the high country in the late 20th century was the purchase of the Terrace Downs property, just inland from the Rakaia gorge, in 1990 by a Japanese company which established an upmarket resort and golf course on a site overlooking the river.[50]

The high country in literature and art

A mystique developed about the high country, its runholders and the musterers who brought the sheep in from the high difficult country where they grazed in the summer.

A number of people who lived, worked or visited the Selwyn high country wrote books or created works of art that have given the district a pre-eminent position in the history of high country art and letters. No other primarily rural district in New Zealand has so many connections, of such long-standing, with the creative arts.

The first work in the high country literary tradition of the Selwyn District was Lady Barker's *Station Life in New Zealand,* first published in 1870. Lady Barker lived on the Steventon run (see Chapter 4) for around three years, from 1866 to 1868. Three years after her first book she also published *Station Amusements in New Zealand*. Both books are considered classics for their lively recounting of the detail of colonial life.

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[47] *Cyclopedia*, p. 777; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 275, 279; Logan p. 157.
[48] Dobbie & Perrin, p. 275; *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 60-62.
[49] Britten, pp. 343-46.
[50] *West of Windwhistle*, pp. 210, 212.

Frontispiece from Lady Barker's *Station Life in New Zealand*, 1870. Source: Te Ara; A-256-015, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The tradition was continued in the 20th century by Mona Anderson, David McLeod, Peter Newton and Ted and Grace Porter. Mona Anderson, whose husband managed the Mount Algidus run from 1936 to 1973 wrote *A River Rules My Life* and *The Good Logs of Algidus*. Both books were extremely popular as accounts of living on one of the more remote high country runs. David McLeod, the runholder on Grasmere from 1926 to 1970, wrote, among other titles, *Down from the Tussock Ranges*, *Kingdom in the Hills* and *The Tall Tussock*. The books combined extensive literary learning with love for the Canterbury high country.

Peter Newton worked on several high country runs, including Lake Coleridge and Mount White. His prolific output of books, which began with *Wayleggo* in 1947, did much to foster, or even create, the semi-mythical figure of the high country musterer. Ted and Grace Porter, who were on Manuka Point for several years until 1954 wrote *Under the Nor'west Arch* together after they had moved from Manuka Point to the village at the Harper diversion. The book was published in 1970 just after Ted had been killed in an accident on Lake Coleridge. More recently Christine Fernyhough's *The Road to Castle Hill* (2013) has brought renewed attention to the Selwyn high country and its challenging way of life.

Charles Enys, one of the early runholders on Castle Hill, was one of the first artists to work in the high country of the Selwyn District. Two of the best-known paintings of the Canterbury high country created in the 20th century depict subjects in the Selwyn District. They are Rita Angus's *Cass'*(1936) and William Sutton's *Dry September* (Bruce Creek, 1949). One of Canterbury's foremost painters of mountain scenes, Grace Butler, also had a long association with Arthur's Pass (see Chapter 6).

Chapter 6

The Mountains

Introduction

The Selwyn District embraces most of the upper catchment of the Waimakariri River and most of the northern half of the Rakaia River catchment. Both these rivers rise among the mountains of the main divide of the Southern Alps. The mountains at the head of the Rakaia River are higher and more heavily glaciated than the mountains at the head of the Waimakariri. The most northern true glaciers in the Southern Alps are found in the Arthur's Pass National Park.

The history of the mountainous areas beyond the last of the pastoral runs is centred mainly on exploration, on the development of transportation links between the Canterbury and the West Coast, and on various forms of mountain recreation – mountaineering, tramping, skiing and ice skating. The creation of the Arthur's Pass National Park is an important chapter in the history of conservation in New Zealand.

Passes leading from the heads of the valleys are of particular historic interest. They include, at the extreme north-western corner of the Selwyn District, Harper Pass (the first pass crossed by a European, Leonard Harper, in 1857), Arthur's Pass (crossed by Arthur Dudley Dobson in 1864, after Maori had informed him of its existence), Browning Pass (at the head of the Wilberforce, 'discovered' by Browning and Griffiths in 1865), and Whitcombe Pass (at the head of the Rakaia, traversed by John Whitcombe and Jakob Lauper in 1863). The Whitcombe Pass also has historic interest because of its associations with Samuel Butler and his book *Erewhon*.

Exploration beyond the runs

By 1860 several runs had already been taken up in the Waimakariri high country explored by Pearson and Torlesse. People searching for more sheep country penetrated the mountain valleys in the headwaters of the Waimakariri but failed to find any further large tracts of land suitable for pastoralism. Parties reached the Walker and Worsley Passes, which today are crossed only by experienced trampers.

Samuel Butler, searching for unoccupied country he could take up as a run, rode up the Waimakariri valley beyond the Bealey confluence in the early 1860s. Looking up the Bealey he noted what looked like a low saddle at its head (which is Arthur's Pass) but he did not ride up the Bealey because the valley did not look promising as sheep country, which proved correct.[1]

In March 1864 a young surveyor, Arthur Dobson, wanted to get horses from Canterbury to the West Coast, where he had a surveying contract. Hoping there might be a shorter, more direct, route across the mountains than the one then in use over Harper Pass, which involved a long detour through North Canterbury and down the Teremakau River, Dobson decided to investigate the headwaters of the Waimakariri. (The northern corner of the Selwyn District touches Harper Pass itself, but none of the route between Christchurch and the Coast via Harper Pass lies within the district.) Accompanying Dobson were his younger brother Edward and a runholder who was hoping to find more sheep country beyond the runs already taken up.

On this expedition Dobson, on two excursions from about where the Arthur's Pass village is today, crossed Arthur's Pass and descended the Otira River to the mouth of its gorge. He decided the pass was not suitable for horses and returned down country, to make the long trek with his horses over Harper Pass.[2]

In 1867 the provincial geologist, Julius von Haast, visited the headwaters of the Waimakariri, going some distance up the White River and up the Upper Waimakariri itself to above its falls.

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[1] Logan, pp. 29-30.
[2] Logan, pp. 30-32.

The road over Arthur's Pass

After Arthur Dobson crossed the pass that bears his name in 1864, little interest was shown in the mountains until gold was discovered on the West Coast later in the same year. This discovery led to the first of the West Coast gold rushes in 1865. People in Canterbury, eager to profit from the discovery of gold in what was then 'West Canterbury', demanded that a road be built linking Christchurch to the West Coast diggings.[3]

In February-March 1865 Arthur Dobson's brother George and several others investigated almost all the passes that led from the various headwaters of the Waimakariri River. George Dobson crossed Arthur's Pass, was the first European to visit Goat Pass which is now familiar to competitors in the Coast-to-Coast race and was also the first European to reach the top of Harman Pass, the first of the passes on the popular Three Pass tramping trip. At the same time others, in the headwaters of the main Waimakariri valley, found Campbell Pass and reached Waimakariri Col. When the so-called 'picnic party', impatient for a route across the Alps to be found, also ventured into the mountains the members of the party rode in coaches beyond where the Bealey River joins the Waimakariri and carried on up the Waimakariri to beyond where today's highway crosses the river.

In George Dobson's report to his father Edward, who was provincial engineer, he stated that of all the passes he had investigated 'Arthur's' was the best of a bad lot. A casual reference to a mountain pass between family members thus gave Arthur's Pass its enduring name. In April 1937, three years after Arthur Dobson's death, 700 people gathered at the top of the pass for the unveiling of a memorial to this distinguished explorer and engineer. The imposing obelisk, designed by Christchurch architect Cecil Wood, is perched dramatically on top of a large glacial erratic boulder close to the summit of the pass.[4]

Dobson Memorial commemorative plaque. Source: A Spice, June 2018.

Construction of the road over Arthur's Pass and down the Otira gorge began almost immediately George Dobson had identified the pass as the one most suitable for a road. In April 1865 a base for the construction of the road was established on Camping Flat, where the Arthur's Pass village later developed. Hundreds of men toiled through the winter of 1865 to build the road through the Bealey gorge, over the pass and on down the Otira gorge.

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[3] Logan, pp. 32-35.
[4] Logan, pp. 36-42.

A major flood on Christmas Day 1865 undid much of the work, including washing away the first bridge over the Bealey River, but by March 1866 the work had been reinstated and on the 15th of the month the first coach from Christchurch arrived in Hokitika.[5]

Today most of the formation of the original coach road up the Bealey and onto the pass has been lost to successive improvements to the road. But short stretches of the original road remain – near Greyneys Shelter in the lower Bealey valley and in the Arthur's Pass village. There are also scant traces of the road through the Bealey gorge, from Daisy Flat to the White Bridge, which was superseded by a road at a higher level a few years after the road first opened because it was subject to damage in floods. There are also a dozen or so original milestones, some made of limestone and others of concrete, at different points along the road through the mountains.

Coach road milestone # 46, Bealey River Bridge, Arthur's Pass National Park, c.1865. Source: A Spice, May 2018.

Another survivor from the early days of the road over Arthur's Pass is a roadman's hut not far the summit of the pass. Jack's Hut is thought to have been originally located, perhaps as early as 1879, at either Rough Creek on the southern edge of the Arthur's Pass village or by Avalanche Creek in the village itself. Around 1909-10 it was shifted to its present location. The hut became known as Jack's Hut because the last roadman to live in it was Jack Kane. Once the Otira tunnel had rendered the road, in a sense, redundant the last roadmen were withdrawn and the hut was bought by Guy and Grace Butler, who had been camping in its vicinity since 1916. (The Butlers' story belongs with the early days of the use of the mountains for recreation, a topic discussed below.)

Jack's Hut, Arthur's Pass National Park. Source: A Spice, June 2018.

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[5] Logan, pp. 43. Also https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/LT18660319.2.7?query=coach%20christchurch%20west%20coast

Coaches continued to ply shorter and shorter stretches of the road for nearly 60 years after the road opened. The service was run from 1873 by Hugh Cassidy (who based himself at Springfield). After 1914, when the railway line from the east reached Arthur's Pass village, the coaches ran only over the pass itself and down the Otira gorge. Cassidy retained the contract for carrying mail over the pass up to 1923 when coaches were ousted from their last preserve. A coach on display in the Visitor Centre of the Arthur's Pass National Park, which was built specially to carry Prime Minister Richard Seddon (served 1893-1906) on his journeys to his home in Kumara, is a reminder of coaching days in the mountains.

'The Canterbury end [of the tunnel] at Bealey Flat: the four o'clock shift going on'. *Weekly Press* 2 December 1914, p. 38.
Source: Christchurch City Libraries.

Once the railway line was completed all the way from Christchurch to Greymouth, the West Coast road from Springfield to the top of Arthur's Pass and beyond was used relatively little and fell into disrepair. Motorists could avoid using all or part of the road between Springfield and Otira by loading their cars onto railway wagons. But a 'ferry' was maintained at Bealey until the Waimakariri was bridged in 1936. The ferry was a flat wagon drawn by horses. Just how little the road was used before the Waimakariri bridge was built was indicated by a tally made in January 1935 which recorded just 65 vehicles passing through Bealey in seven days. It was not until well after the end of World War II, with use of railways declining as more people owned their own cars and trucks took over the hauling of freight, that the road was significantly improved.[6]

The most serious problem with the road, the descent into the Otira gorge via the zig-zag, lay beyond the boundary of the Selwyn District. Once this problem had been solved by the construction of the Otira viaduct, the road through the mountain regions of Selwyn District was also improved and began carrying ever more traffic. In 2016-17, to make the road through the lower Bealey valley usable by larger trucks, the road between the Mingha bluffs and Rough Creek was realigned.[7]

The village at Bealey

The township of Bealey, just to the west of the Cora Lynn run, lies at the boundary between the pastoral high country and the mountains. Sheep were grazed at times further up the Waimakariri valley than the Bealey village, but although the runholders and those who worked for them were among the patrons of the hotel at Bealey the story of the village is part of the story of travelling through the mountains rather than the story of pastoral farming in the high country.

When construction of the road up the Bealey valley and over Arthur's Pass was in progress in 1865 Bealey became a thriving town. The first village was on the northern bank of the Waimakariri, across from the site of the later hotel, at the point later named Klondyke Corner. A store was opened, a policeman stationed there and a hotel built where travellers from west to east stayed the night before crossing the Waimakariri. The village grew to more than 100 residents. Sawmilling provided timber for building and firewood.

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[6] *Cyclopedia*, p. 9; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 89; Popple, pp. 53-56.
[7] Logan, p. 56.

Across the Waimakariri in 1865 was another accommodation house where those travelling east to west also stayed the night before crossing the river the following morning. Soon after the road was opened all the way between Canterbury and Westland, the village at what became Klondyke Corner moved to the sunnier site across the river, where the original accommodation house became the Bealey hotel. [8]

The telegraph from Christchurch reached Bealey in October 1865. (It was completed to Hokitika in March 1866.) Along with the rest of the original village on the north side of the Waimakariri, the telegraph office later migrated across the river to the 'new' Bealey township. The last telegraph office at Bealey closed in 1968.

The original hotel on the south side of the river, built of corrugated iron, was replaced in 1882 by the two-storey Glacier Hotel, run by James O'Malley. The hotel served not only those who were travelling between the West Coast and Canterbury by coach but also holiday-makers, attracted to the area by the scenery and opportunities to shoot and fish. (This early recreational use of the Arthur's Pass mountains is also discussed below.)

Glacier Hotel and carriages, Bealey, c. 1910. Source: ½-037354-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

By the early 20th century the large, two-storey hotel had 25 bedrooms as well as a dining room, sitting rooms and even a ballroom. The bi-weekly coaches between Springfield and the West Coast stopped overnight at the hotel. By that time the coaches could seat 14 and three were sometimes needed for each trip. In 1903 travellers from Christchurch to the Coast took a morning train to Springfield, which they left after lunch, arriving at the Bealey hotel around 7.30 that night.

The hotel flourished as a business for as long as coaches made an overnight stop there. Once the coaches merely passed by (after 1906 the truncated coach trip took just a day from Broken River to Otira, where there were trains on to Greymouth and Hokitika) the hotel started to go into decline. After the railway was opened to Halpin Creek in 1913 and Arthur's Pass in 1914 no coaches at all passed through Bealey and other traffic declined. After a fire in 1917 there was some talk that the licence of the hotel should be transferred to Arthur's Pass, but instead the hotel was rebuilt at Bealey.

Somewhat unusually the hotel was owned for many years by the local body – originally the first Selwyn County Council, then after 1910 the Tawera County Council. The local bodies were also technically the licence holder. When the hotel was destroyed by the fire in 1917, it was Tawera county which eventually reinstated it.

Between 1928 and 1937 the hotel was run by Fred Cochrane. By then use of trains meant there was very little road traffic passing the hotel and guests were limited to the occasional tourist or shooting visitor. Locals from Arthur's Pass and the surrounding runs patronised the bar. Revenue from 'ferrying' cars across the Waimakariri dried up after the bridge was opened in September 1936. The new bridge brought an end to the worry of travellers on the road about fording the river, and to the extraction of what some considered exorbitant fees by Fred Cochrane from those who needed rescuing after refusing to pay his more moderate charges to be taken safely across the river on his horse-drawn wagon.

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[8] Logan, pp. 44, 65-74.

In 1937, just when Cochrane was about to lose the lease, another fire destroyed the hotel again. Cochrane's son died after being badly burned in the blaze. The Tawera County Council sold the licence the following year.[9]

The small building which replaced the hotel after the 1937 fire was built with the help of the runholders, after a local kept the licence active by running a bar in the old post office. When this hotel in turn burned down in 1963 it was not replaced. The licence was finally cancelled in 1969. In the 1980s an entrepreneur built a new hotel on the south bank overlooking the river close to the site of the old hotel but some distance from the holiday village at Bealey Spur (see below).[10]

The railway and the village at Arthur's Pass

Camping Flat, half way up the Bealey valley, between the Waimakariri River and the summit of Arthur's Pass, was briefly a busy place when the road was built over Arthur's Pass in 1865-66. Subsequently, the Bealey village in the Waimakariri valley eclipsed it in importance so long as the coaches between Canterbury and Westland made an overnight stop there.
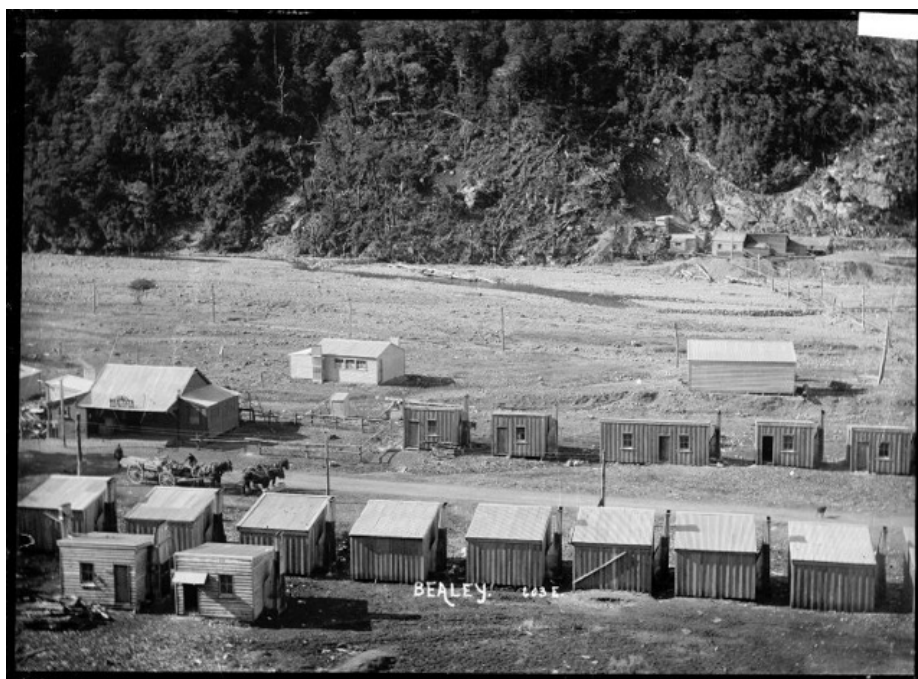
Bealey Flat huts in 1910. Source: ½-000379-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The village at Arthur's Pass started to develop when construction of the Otira tunnel began in 1908. Huts to accommodate those working on the tunnel were built on the flat (called both Bealey Flat and Camping Flat). The tunnellers' huts were very basic structures of corrugated iron with external chimneys. More substantial was the single-men's dining room, which survives along with a few tunnellers' cottages.

A powerhouse was built in 1909, using water from the Punchbowl Creek, to provide electricity for the equipment and machinery being used to drive the tunnel and then, after 1923, to power the locomotives that hauled trains through the tunnel. The powerhouse remained in use until 1929 when a coal-fired plant at Otira began generating the electricity needed to power the locomotives. Concrete foundations, including the pits in which the Pelton wheels sat, remain on the site of the powerhouse and far up the mountainside are the tunnels through which water was brought from Punchbowl Creek above the waterfall to the top of the pipeline that carried the water downhill to the powerhouse. The population of the village had risen to around 300 by 1912 – ten times its permanent population in the early 21st century.

A few other relics of the days when the village was a construction town have survived. A stub of concrete on a small eminence close to the road is more important that its appearance might suggest. It was one of the survey points used to ensure the alignment and level of the tunnel were kept correct as it was dug. When the headings from each end met, they were only 19mm out in alignment and 29mm out in level.

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[9] *Press* 5 March 1938, p. 29.
[10] Popple, p. 56; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 82-89; Logan pp. 62-64, 75-81, 117-18; *Cyclopedia*, pp. 773, 777-78.

The contractor, John McLean and Sons, gave up work on the tunnel in 1912 because it was proving impossible to do the work at a profit. The Public Works Department finished the job. Break-through was achieved in July 1918 and the tunnel was finally opened in August 1923. The bridge over which trains cross the Bealey River just before the tunnel mouth dates from the time the tunnel was constructed. Also remaining from the early days of the railway at Arthur's Pass is a large engine shed near the site of the original Arthur's Pass station. The surviving turntable just beyond the Arthur's Pass station was installed in the 1930s, when the large K class locomotives came into use to haul trains up to Arthur's Pass and back down to Springfield. Between Arthur's Pass and Otira electric locomotives took over hauling trains through the Otira tunnel until the diesel locomotives which replaced steam locomotives on the line between Christchurch and Arthur's Pass in the late 1960s took over hauling the trains through the tunnel as well. Very recently the rusted boilers of old steam locomotives dumped into the Bealey and Waimakariri Rivers to help protect the line from floods have been recovered and are to be put on display in the Arthur's Pass village.[11]

The first Arthur's Pass railway station, c.1900s. Source: ½-040841-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Arthur's Pass became the railhead on 1 July 1914, nine years before the tunnel was opened. From 1914 to 1923 passengers travelling between Christchurch and the West Coast transferred at Arthur's Pass at a station opened in 1914 onto the horse-drawn coaches for the ride over the pass to Otira. In 1923 a new station was built at Arthur's Pass on an island platform with a pedestrian tunnel giving access to the station from the village. The pedestrian subway remains, but the station of 1923 burned down in 1963. Its replacement opened in 1966. The railways department made an effort to design the building to suit its alpine environment on what was already a popular tourist route.

After the opening of the tunnel, the railways remained a strong presence in Arthur's Pass for many years. Two rows of railway houses were built – on what are now School Terrace and Sunshine Terrace. Railway families kept the population of the village up and it was largely because of them that a school opened at Arthur's Pass while it was still a construction village for the tunnel. A new school was built at new location in 1964 and the old school was demolished. Later the children of staff members of the Arthur's Pass National Park (see below) kept numbers at the school up, but it was eventually closed, after the population of the village fell following the departure of railway families.

A shop was opened at Arthur's Pass not long after the tunnel construction village was first established. An early proprietor of the shop, Jack Brake, father of the notable photographer Brian Brake, opened his refreshment rooms at the Pass around 1914. He married the woman who ran the refreshment rooms for him, Jennie Chiplin, the following year. After the tunnel was completed and Arthur's Pass began its transition to holiday village the shop, under Brake and later proprietors, remained in business to serve both the resident railway staff and the holiday makers who came in increasing numbers from the 1920s on (see below).

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[11] Logan, pp. 128-31, 131-36.

Recreation in the Arthur's Pass mountains

The scenery in the Arthur's Pass mountains and the opportunities the mountains afforded for recreation were recognised before the end of the 19th century. In 1881 the Upper Waimakariri Road Board paid George O'Malley (not to be confused with James O'Malley who became licensee at the Bealey in 1882) to cut a track from the Bealey hotel up the Waimakariri as far as the glaciers at the head of the White River. Excursions to the glaciers became popular with adventuresome tourists and visitors, who often rode as far as Camp Corner, where the White River joins the Waimakariri, then walked up to view the glaciers and waterfalls of the White valley.

In the early 20th century the Bealey hotel was 'much frequented by tourists and sportsmen' as a 'health and holiday resort'. Shooters were among those who stayed at the hotel, hunting hares, rabbits and goats, with red deer 'shortly to be introduced'. Deer were liberated in the Poulter valley in 1908 and again in 1909. They had spread into the headwaters of the Esk River by 1916 and into the Waimakariri valley by 1923. These deer eventually merged with the herds that had grown from the releases in the Rakaia valley.[12]

Once the railway reached Arthur's Pass in 1914 people began to travel into the mountains for 'rest and recreation'. Large numbers of 'day trippers' took advantage of the excursion trains which the railways department began running to Arthur's Pass to visit the mountains.


'Arthur's Pass Excursion' – Christchurch teenagers returning on the train from a day in Arthur's Pass, July 1958.
Source: Christchurch City Libraries.

In 1920 a Lincoln College agricultural scientist Frederick Hilgendorf and his son Charles, along with other companions, began camping at Camp Corner, at the White River's junction with the Waimakariri. They spent successive Christmas holidays exploring and mapping the area and Charles made a first ascent of Carrington Peak, prominent from Camp Corner. In the summer of 1924-25 a number of young men who were soon to form what became the Canterbury Mountaineering Club also visited the headwaters of the Waimakariri. Among them was Gerard Carrington, who on his return wrote a letter to the *Press* under the pen-name 'Cora Lynn' extolling the area. A direct result was an 'expedition' mounted by the Canterbury Progress League led by Carrington (then just 19 years old) up the Waimakariri over the Easter week-end in 1925. The party returned impressed by the opportunities the mountains offered to promote Canterbury as a holiday destination.

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[12] *Cyclopedia*, pp. 777-78; Logan, pp. 79, 150-52, 176-77.

Carrington was one of the leading lights in the formation of what became the Canterbury Mountaineering Club. At the time he and a companion drowned in 1926 when trying to raft down the Waimakariri gorge, Carrington was actively involved in the young club's first major project, building a hut where the White River flowed into the Waimakariri. After his death club members completed the hut and named it after Carrington. [13]

Skiing began at Arthur's Pass in the 1920s. Guy Butler, who had been visiting Arthur's Pass since the time of World War I, first used skis at Arthur's Pass in 1927. (Two years earlier Butler had converted the former tunneller's social hall and dining room in the settlement into a hostel – see below). This was an important event in the transition of Arthur's Pass from a railway construction and operation township into a centre for mountain recreation. In 1928 Oscar Coberger, an immigrant from Germany, arrived at Arthur's Pass. He brought with him knowledge of and skill in skiing and eventually set up a mountain sports shop in the Pass. The Christchurch Ski Club was formed in the late 1920s and by 1930 had 76 members. Members of the club began skiing at Temple Basin, where the first hut was built in 1933. A ski tow was installed at the field in 1948. When the Christchurch Ski Club built a new hut at Temple Basin in 1952 the Canterbury University Ski Club bought the old hut. A jeep track was formed half-way up to the basin in 1954-55 and a goods lift installed in 1960. A tow was installed in the downhill basin in 1961 and in 1966 the Page memorial shelter was built for day visitors to the ski-field. Although skiers have to walk in to the basin it remained a popular ski-field into the 21st century. [14]
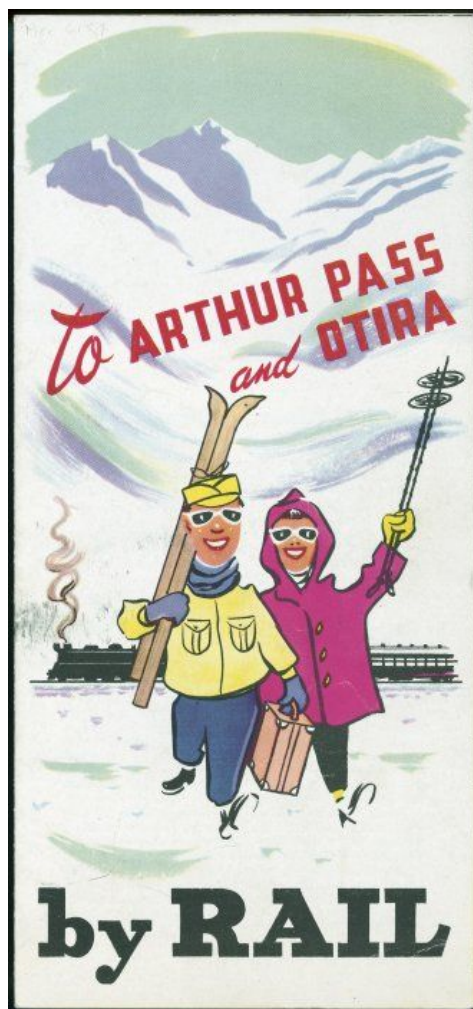
New Zealand Railways Publicity Branch, c. 1950. Source: Eph-A-RAIL-1950-01-front, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Mountaineering in the Arthur's Pass mountains has been popular since the 1920s. One of the first ascents in what became the Arthur's Pass National Park was made as early as 1877, when surveyors examining possible routes for a railway through the alps climbed Mount Campbell at the head of the Waimakariri.

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[13] Logan, pp. 153-54.
[14] Logan, pp. 177-78.

Mountaineering proper began in the Arthur's Pass mountains in 1891 when, in different groups at different times, Marmaduke and Richard Dixon, George Mannering and Arthur P. Harper (all significant names in the history of New Zealand mountaineering) climbed Mount Philistine and the low peak of Mount Rolleston. In 1912 a tunnel engineer and his companion reached the high peak of Rolleston (which had eluded the party which made the first ascent of the low peak because it was hidden in mist). The years 1912-13 also saw first ascents made of Mounts Davie and Murchison, two of the higher peaks at the head of the Waimakariri.

In 1925 a Christchurch Tramping Club was formed which, within a few years, had become the Canterbury Mountaineering Club. Over the next decade members of this club climbed all the significant peaks in the Arthur's Pass National Park and solved the park's last minor geographical puzzles. Easter 1930 saw an 'invasion' of the Waimakariri by members of the club. One of those taking part in this 'invasion' was John Pascoe, a key figure in the history of mountaineering in New Zealand who had made his first major mountain trip the previous year into the Mingha valley.[15]

This explosion of recreational activities in the mountains of the National Park was to a certain extent sparked by the railway to Arthur's Pass which gave trampers, skiers and climbers easy access to the mountains in the days before private ownership of cars was widespread.

The mountains and valleys of Arthur's Pass have a unique place in the history of mountain recreation in New Zealand. No other national park is as close to a large city or used in as many different ways as Arthur's Pass and the Waimakariri, from its headwaters to its mouth, is used more frequently and in a greater variety of ways than any other South Island, or possibly New Zealand, river.[16]

The comfortable interior of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club Hut at Arthur Pass.

The New Zealand Railways Magazine Vol. 14, Issue 4 (July 1, 1939), p. 37. Source: NZ Electronic Text Collection.

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[15] Logan, pp. 164-73.

[16] Logan, p. 7.

The Arthur's Pass village from the 1920s

The development of interest in the Arthur's Pass mountains as a place for recreation and different sports, notably tramping, skiing and mountaineering, explains why, once construction of the tunnel ended, the Arthur's Pass village did not fade away, although its original *raison d'etre* had gone. Some of the tunnellers' cottages were bought as holiday homes. The social hall and single-men's dining room was bought by Guy and Grace Butler in 1925 and enlarged to serve as accommodation for visitors. It served this role for many years until in 1969 it became an outdoor education centre at which children from Canterbury schools were introduced to the mountains.

While some of the people who began frequenting Arthur's Pass for recreation converted tunnellers' huts into baches (the local vernacular for holiday homes), others built their baches from scratch. A precedent had been set in 1911 when Christchurch teacher W. A. Kennedy built his cottage at the southern end of the village, across Rough Creek from the tunnellers' settlement. Guy and Grace Butler, who began camping by Jack's hut when the last roadman was still in residence, both built themselves a cottage in the village and secured the hut itself as a holiday home.

One of the holiday cottages built not long after the village began its transition from construction camp to railway town and holiday village is an important building in New Zealand vernacular mountain architecture. Aniwaniwa (with a view of the Punchbowl waterfall and sometimes of the rainbows that form in the waterfall's spray) was built by a North Canterbury farming family on land leased from the railways in 1926. The stone building evoked Swiss chalets and also resembled the rest houses designed by the Christchurch architect Samuel Hurst Seager for the Port and Banks Peninsula hills at about the same time.

Most of the holiday cottages built at the Pass in the 1920s and subsequently were more humble buildings than Aniwaniwa. As Arthur's Pass steadily became the main place where people living in Christchurch went to climb mountains and to ski more baches were built in the settlement. Some of the baches were little more than huts while others were further examples of the 'New Zealand mountain vernacular' style of Aniwaniwa.

'The Pass' remained the place where most Christchurch residents ventured into the mountains in the years after World War II. Excursion trains continued to run to Arthur's Pass in winter through the 1950s and early 1960s and more and more private baches were built as the Lands and Survey Department, which administered the National Park, released land for that purpose. The country's first purpose-built youth hostel was built in Arthur's Pass in the 1950s. A post-war arrival from Europe, the Swiss national Hans Bohny, settled in the Pass and built The Chalet which he and his wife ran as a successful restaurant for many years. Oscar Coberger's mountain sports gear shop and the general store were the other two main businesses in the village in the decades after World War II. The Cobergers' shop, after Oscar's death, eventually became a restaurant. By the early 21st century the store had also become primarily a café and only incidentally a shop.

In the early 1950s the idea was conceived of building a chapel at Arthur's Pass. It was designed by the Christchurch architect Paul Pascoe, whose brother John had been one of the most energetic of the young Canterbury Mountaineering Club members who swarmed through the National Park in the 1930s, climbing peaks and crossing passes. The non-denominational chapel was dedicated in April 1956 and is now recognised as an important building in the history of modern architecture in New Zealand.

Arthur's Pass Chapel, Arthur's Pass. Source: A Spice, May 2018.

Pascoe also designed a building to serve as a museum and community centre which later became the national park headquarters and visitor centre. This building too is an important example of a modern architecture influenced by vernacular traditions. Though its later enlargement diluted Pascoe's original architectural intentions his design is to be respected when the building undergoes a planned refurbishment.

By the 1970s there were more than 100 cottages in the Arthur's Pass village. The permanent population of the village in 1987 was around 100 but 30 years later it was less than one third of that number. The decline was the result of railways personnel being steadily withdrawn and fewer national park employees living in Arthur's Pass as changes came to the ways national parks were administered and managed in the late 20th century and early years of the 21st.[17]

Arthur's Pass National Park

The first areas of the Arthur's Pass mountains were set aside for preservation (as it was then termed) in 1901. In 1898 the noted botanist Leonard Cockayne visited the Hawdon and Poulter valleys, Lake Minchin and the Worsley and Walker Passes. It was largely on his initiative that these first reserves were created.

In 1928, after the Progress League visit to the headwaters of the Waimakariri, Guy and Grace Butler organised a public meeting to press for the establishment of a national park under the control of a board. In 1928 a Public Reserves, Domains and National Parks Act was passed which came into force on 1 April 1929. The Arthur's Pass National Park Board met for the first time in October 1929. The park was the first in the South Island and the third in New Zealand. It was later greatly extended.

ARTHUR'S PASS NATIONAL PARK.

PROPOSED BOARD OF CONTROL.

The Mayor (Mr J. K. Archer) announced, yesterday that a public meeting will be held on April 3rd to consider the setting up of a Board to control the Arthur's Pass National Park on lines similar to the bodies in existence which control the Tongariro and Mount Egmont National Parks.

The decision that the setting up of such a body is desirable is likely to be followed by the suggestion of the names of gentlemen who would be willing to act on the Board. These will be forwarded to the Government which has the power to set up the Board.

Arrangements have been made for Mr W. A. Kennedy to give a display of lantern slides depicting the region at the public meeting.

Press 24 March 1928, p. 7. Source: PapersPast.

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[17] Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 320-22.

When the park was first set up a part-time ranger, Charlie Warden, was appointed, tracks were formed and the first footbridge over the Bealey River giving access to the Punchbowl waterfall was built. The old O'Malley track up the Waimakariri was re-opened in 1931 and the 'BB' trail which gave access from the Anti-Crow River to the White junction was formed.[18]

After the war, with the passing of a new National Parks Act in 1952 the number of rangers and other park staff increased. More tracks were cut and back-country huts built by the Park Board and Forest Service. Footbridges were built in remote locations to allow trampers and climbers to cross rivers which were dangerous in flood. The park was administered by its own board, under the Lands and Survey Department, until the creation of the Department of Conservation in the late 1980s. Later changes in the way the park was run saw the number of park staff stationed in the Arthur's Pass village reduced which contributed, along with the withdrawal of railways staff, to the drop in the permanent population of the village noted above. But in the first two decades of the 21st century, the number of visitors, both domestic and overseas tourists, increased dramatically. It was partly to cope with these increased visitor numbers that the Department of Conservation constructed a new walking track from the village to the top of the Pass. The track was opened as part of the 2014 commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Arthur Dobson's first European crossing of the pass that bears his name.

Exploration of the Rakaia headwaters

In 1865, after taking part in the investigation of the passes out of the headwaters of the Waimakariri in order to establish if a road could be built over one of them to link Christchurch to the West Coast goldfields, John Browning walked with companions across country from Lake Lyndon, past Lake Coleridge and up the Wilberforce River. In the Wilberforce he met up with two other explorers, Griffiths and Otway, and with them made a reconnaissance of the pass which was later named after him. The pass led from the Wilberforce into the headwaters of the Arahura River.

In June of 1865 Browning returned to the upper Wilberforce to survey a road over the pass. A track was built up to the pass from the Snowdon run. It was used by miners and to take stock from Canterbury to the West Coast, but with the construction of the coach road over Arthur's Pass, completed early in 1866, the track over Browning Pass fell into disuse. In 1873 the route via Browning Pass was still under consideration for a railway between Canterbury and Westland and a line was surveyed as far as the Harper River at the head of Lake Coleridge. But Browning Pass lost out to Arthur's as the route of a railway to the West Coast. On Browning Pass the zig-zag up the lower slopes and the pack track higher up can still be traced and parts of the road formation further down the Wilberforce valley also remain as evidence of the attempt to open up a route over Browning Pass in the 1860s.[19]

Later exploration of the upper Rakaia was undertaken by Whitcombe and Lauper (who were the first Europeans to cross the pass named after Whitcombe), the writer Samuel Butler, from his run in the Rangitata valley and Canterbury's provincial geologist, Julius von Haast, who examined the two great glaciers, the Ramsay and the Lyell, at the valley's head.

Recreation in the Rakaia mountains

The rough roads up the Rakaia valley end on the north bank at Glenthorne and Mount Algidus and on the south bank opposite Manuka Point, far short of the mountains and glaciers at the head of the valley. People wishing to reach the mountains and glaciers faced a long, wearisome trudge up a wide, monotonous valley before they reached their goal. The Rakaia mountains have always been less visited and less used for recreation than the mountains of the Arthur's Pass area, which were far easier to reach from first the road and then the railway line to the West Coast.

In 1903 the passes out of the headwaters of the Rakaia River – Browning Pass at the head of the Wilberforce, Mathias Pass at the head of the Mathias River and Whitcombe Pass at the head of Lauper Creek – were described as able to 'be crossed with safety on foot' but even then, they were not easy or popular tourist routes.[20] Mountaineering and shooting became the main recreational activities undertaken by those visiting the Rakaia mountains.

In the 1930s, after cutting their climbing teeth on the Arthur's Pass mountains, members of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club turned their attention to mountains at the headwaters of the Rakaia. John Pascoe was a leading figure in the exploration of the various headwaters of the Rakaia – the upper Wilberforce, the Mathias and the Rakaia

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[18] Logan, pp. 150-52, 154-56; Dobbie & Perrin, pp. 320-22.
[19] Britten, pp. 71-72; Logan p. 42; Dobbie & Perrin, p. 25.
[20] *Cyclopedia*, p. 9.

itself. The passes and cols leading out of the valleys into Westland were crossed and the peaks climbed. The mountaineering club also undertook some hut building in the head of the Rakaia valley. The Lyell hut, at the head of the main branch of the Rakaia River, is not in the Selwyn District but the Park Morpeth hut, at the head of the Wilberforce became an important stopping-off point on the popular Three Pass trip from the head of the Waimakariri into first the Wilberforce and then, via Browning Pass, into the head of the Arahura.

Subsequently, although they are far less visited than the mountains of Arthur's Pass or, further south, the mountains of the Central Alps and the Mount Cook National Park, the Rakaia mountains have continued to draw some tramping and climbing parties. The mountains have not been given national park status.

Gold in the Wilberforce

The Wilberforce River was the scene of one of just two gold mining endeavours in Canterbury, both of which occurred in the Selwyn District. The two endeavours are related because the fine gold in the beach sands at Taumutu originated in the reefs at the head of the Wilberforce valley.

Gold reefs were located in the Moa Stream tributary of the Wilberforce River in 1870, but it was not until 1883-86 that the reefs were properly prospected and efforts made to win gold from them. Reefs had also been discovered by this time up other tributaries of the Wilberforce. This early phase of goldmining in the Wilberforce saw tracks formed and tunnels dug into the various seams of quartz. The Wilson's Reward reef below Popes Pass and Mount Harman was investigated in the mid-1880s and in 1886-87 the Christchurch Goldmining Company dug a tunnel in towards the reef. Between 1887 and 1889 the company also dug a lower '1100-foot tunnel' which is still extant. Despite the reef's name the rewards were meagre and the effort was abandoned.

Wilberforce miner's hut, c.1900s Source: 1-2-C-027563-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

There was renewed interest in the gold beneath Mount Harman in the first decade of the 20th century. In 1904-05 a Reefton Syndicate dug a further tunnel into the Wilson's Reward reef. A large building associated with these early mining endeavours was buried at some time in the 1920s by scree. What became known as the Dynamite Hut at the top of Browning Pass was built probably around 1905 as a shelter hut during these years of mining activity. It was still just habitable in the 1960s but by the 1990s was a pile of rotting timber and rusting corrugated iron. Goldmining activity up the Wilberforce ceased after 1912 until the years of the Great Depression when relief workers were sent up the valley to see if gold could be recovered. Urquhart's hut was built by one of these depression-era prospecting parties in 1933.[21]

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[21] Keene, passim.

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Author's note:
In the secondary sources on which this Historical Overview is based there are occasional discrepancies regarding details – including dates and locations – which proved difficult to reconcile. The author invites readers to provide corrections if any errors or oversights are detected in the text.