



The DUNTROON DIGGER

December edition 2019

Editor: Lynda Scott Araya

Greetings to all our Duntroon Digger readers,

Like all of you, we have been busy. We have hosted tourists from Australia, Northern Italy, England, the Netherlands, New Zealand, France and China over the last two weeks. We have had our first lot of trees trimmed right back so it is possible to see our historic water wheel when approaching from Kurow. Some of the trees at the front will be felled between December 11th-13th and this will cause a disruption to traffic, for which we apologise in advance.

We have had two tourism researchers stay with us in preparation for research that they will be carrying out in the area about tourists' spending and its impact. There will also be coverage of tourism activities and the A2O appearing in a German newspaper as there is a German journalist cycling the trail.

We hope that you all enjoy your Christmas and holiday period. The deadline for the first issue of 2020 is January 30th.

Please contact me if you would like to contribute at all to the Duntroon Digger.

Lynda's email for all Duntroon Digger matters is: westernhouse.kurow@gmail.com

AGM

Vanished World Inc AGM

Friends of Vanished World AGM

7pm Thursday December 5th

Blind Foundation Hall

6 Steward Street, Oamaru

Followed by a public presentation at 7.45 pm

Saving the Treasures of Foulden Maar

Daphne Lee – Geology Dept, University of Otago.

Vanished World Fossil Centre – Duntroon

Wanted: A person to work two or more days a week during summer.

For more information contact

Mike Gray: Ph 434 2565 or 021 159 7904

or tokarahi@xtra.co.nz

**Vanished World in association with
the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark**
would like to invite you to a special presentation:

SAVING THE TREASURES OF FOULDEN MAAR

the most important terrestrial fossil site in NZ



**What happens when science and education
collide with mining interests?**

A presentation by Daphne Lee

Geology Department, University of Otago

Otago is home to many of New Zealand's most important
terrestrial and marine fossil sites and many of its
Outstanding Natural Features. How can we protect and
preserve them for future generations?

7.45PM THURSDAY DEC 5

Blind Foundation Hall, 6 Steward Street, Oamaru



Progress at Duntroon Hotel

We are now open 7 days from 10.30am every day. It's great to see the cyclists back again, as well as lots of boats & caravans heading to and from the lakes. Progress on the accommodation upstairs is progressing. The 9 bedrooms and 8 bathrooms are taking shape. There is still a long way to go, and our original hopes of having the accommodation ready by December / January are not going to be met, but it's great to be heading in the right direction. Hopefully soon we will be able to start work on making the exterior look a little more inviting.



More upcoming events...

- 18th December: The Rural Women are holding their annual pot-luck tea and Christmas party at Tokarahi Hall at 6pm. Please bring food to share, a \$10 gift, food bank offering. All welcome.
- Christmas Eve service at St Martin's Church in Duntroon. 8pm. Everyone welcome.
- Sunday 15th December: Community Carol Service with the Waitaki Singers. 7pm Supper to follow.



SAVE THE DATE - Friday 6th December

The Duntroon Hall Committee and DDDA invite everyone from the wider community to a potluck dinner/BBQ at the Duntroon Hall on Friday 6th December from 6pm. Everyone welcome!

Text your neighbours and tell them to come along too so you can catch up with them. Life has become so busy and there is no way we can do everything, so we want to take the organising out of it and you can turn up with some food and enjoy a catch up with people whom you haven't seen in ages. We'll put on a movie after dinner for the kids if there is demand for one.

The DDDA are providing sausages (GF), some non-alcoholic refreshments and tea and coffee.

If you can bring something to share (a salad or a sweet), your cutlery and plates to eat off. (We're reducing the plastic being used) and your choice of liquid refreshments.

Any questions
Jan Keeling 0274979006

At a meeting last month, it was decided to breathe life back into the Saturday Market based in Kurow. It is planned to run from the start of December until February. 10am to Noon.

As part of this, we will dedicate at least one gazebo as a “rent this space” for anyone wanting to sell their used treasures on just one

occasion- five dollars is all we ask. Think of this as a “pop up stall”.

We would love to hear from anyone keen to be part of the Saturday Market in any way.

To book a space or for more information email info@kurow.org.nz

or leave your number with the info centre 4360 950



S&S Property Care also have a ride-on mower



This is an excerpt from Lynley Irving's book

Ladies and Rabbit Men. I have been working with her on the book that she is currently finishing off, which has a chapter on the family which originally owned Western House. I have just proof-read this book for her. She is now going to reprint it. It will be sold from her shop Maudies in Kurow.

I am available for any proof-reading and writing requirements. Ideally, I would like to put together a book based on the oral histories of people of the area and information about the buildings and people's lives. Please contact me if you want to be involved and please let others know who might be interested.

I did some rabbiting up at Awakino Station while I was working there. At night-time the boss's wife would lend me her .22 rifle, and I'd go out shooting them. I bought my own bullets. Mr Chapman would give me thruppence for every pair of ears and on top of that I got to keep the skins and sell them separately myself.

I started rabbiting when I was 7 or 8 years old. I had about five rabbit traps I could set myself. They were old gin-traps. As a kid I used to set traps down at the old river-beds between the two bridges and on all those Islands there. My mate, Ivan Robinson, and I would set traps together. We would do that after school then go back at night-time with the torch to check them. It was what we called 'Sundowning'. We'd collect any rabbits already caught, reset the traps again and then go back in the morning before school to check them again in the daylight. In the holidays we would set on Kurow Hill as well.

We used to skin them, trim and gut them and take their heads and legs off. My father made us a small cart with bike wheels on it that would hitch onto the back of our two-wheeler bike. Mum used to give us a sheet, and we would put the rabbits into that inside the cart and cover them. We would then go around town selling them. It was thruppence for a half grown one and sixpence for a big one. People would eat them in those days. We did that for years and years, right up until I left school. We sold the skins to Joe Dwyer.

As I said, I'd come home from school and get changed, and go straight out rabbiting. One night, I went all the way out to set my traps and came back to the shed at home and low and behold all of my rabbit skins were gone. I had about thirty odd of them in there you see. I wondered where the hell they had gone to. Well, it turned out my mother got my sister to take them all down to the skin buyer Joe Dwyer. He lived just down the road a bit from us. My mother sold them on me because she was just that short of money. I was absolutely gutted and I did say a few things. That was my pocket money. I could buy cigarettes with that you see. I'll never forget it but I did forgive them after a while.

Joe Dwyer never gave us much for the skins really. There was this man who used to live next door to us just up the road a bit – old Bones Cochrane. He said to me: "Look I'll buy your skins off you. I'll give you a blim'n sight more than old Joe would." And he did too. So, he became a good cobbler of mine in those days. He got his money back, because he was rabbiting himself, so just sold my skins with his at the going rate.

AT ASHRIDGE STATION AND IN THE HAKA

In 1941 and 1942, when shearing finished I went rabbiting up at Ashridge Station. Alec Fraser had the place then. I worked up there right through the winter. I would trap until the ground got too hard

with the frosts. They wouldn't go off on hard ground you see. That was when I started poisoning them with carrots and strychnine.

I would have my horse and my pack bags full of carrots draped over the saddle. I fed them for two or three days poison free. I would walk along my line slicing off bits of carrot as I went. Once the rabbits were onto the carrots, then I used poison.

I would use my best carrots from then on. I would slice them into half inch thick pieces. I had sugar boiled in water and used that in a wee tin strapped around my waist plus a knife. I'd put the strychnine powder into my sugar mixture and stir it in. As I was going along, I would spread it thinly onto the half carrot slices, and then just went along my line chipping little slithers off it onto the ground. The poisoned rabbits were then put into heaps and skinned and gutted. I took the head off too in case there was some carrot stuck in its mouth when it died. This was to stop the dogs eating something that would kill them. I would keep my heap where there were a lot of stones. I'd pile up the gut and the heads and the carcasses and bury them under a whole pile of stones. I'd always use the heavy ones so that my carrying dog couldn't shift them and get at the mess.

I would set 120 traps a day back then. I would get up at about 5 am or even before, it would all depend on how light it was. You had to beat the hawks. They would get at your rabbits and ruin their skins and they could be quite cruel about it. Once I even saw a trapped rabbit at Ashridge Station with his whole ribs showing and his heart still beating. The hawk had ripped all of his skin away.

At Ashridge I camped in the cook-shop huts. The rabbits were thick up there in my block. I worked on my own a lot, but there were other guys around. I remember one night I was out late laying strychnine so the guys came out looking for me at about 8 or 9 o'clock. On the way back to our camp site there were dead rabbits everywhere. They were that thick it was incredible. They were literally eating and dying behind me. The next morning. I picked up about 600 to 700 rabbits and skinned about 200. That was a full days' work. So, I did the same procedure the next day as well. It took me a whole week to clean that kill up and I got 1400 rabbits. There weren't so many around for a while after that.

When I was up at the Menzies, at Kinbrace, at the top of the Haka, we would come down to Kurow once a week for supplies. We'd usually come down on the Saturday. The store used to be open then. We'd pick up all our butter and supplies and a bit of meat, though not a lot of that because we had nowhere to store it you see. So, we often used to eat the hind legs of the rabbits. We'd fry them up and eat them like a chop. That was when we were trapping. We wouldn't risk it if we were poisoning.

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ASH FAIGEN'S

RABBIT FACTORY

From the left: Rob
Linwood, Sam
Sheppard, Lawrence
Linwood, Baldy
Fraser.

