



The DUNTROON DIGGER

February edition 2021

Editor: Lynda Scott Araya

Greetings to all our Duntroon Digger readers,

Well, what an eventful 'summer' it has been with all the flooding and rain! While Western House did not suffer any flood damage as some buildings in Kurow and Duntroon, as well as, of course, the Domain, the water did flood into the paddock next door to us when Kurow Creek breached its banks. TVNZ asked us to take some footage of the floods as well and so John had three seconds of fame talking about the raging wild Kurow Creek!

January was very busy for us although there were fewer cycle tours than usual because of the borders being closed. It is great though to see lots of people visiting the South Island, some for the first time. February is going to be a very busy month as we have a wide range of different bookings, including a big group of women on a tour. We have also welcomed a boarder, Faye. Faye is the new preschool teacher in Kurow and will be joined every second weekend and during holidays by her husband who has a job in Christchurch.

We have had friends staying with us as well and it has been a pleasure taking them to visit Earthquakes, Elephant Rocks, Bortons Pond as well as to Omarama and Twizel. My personal highlight over the holiday period, apart from a few interviews with publishers and the arrival of an anthology in which I am published was going to the blacksmith and making a wonky fire poker! I absolutely LOVED it, even though I was relatively inept. Judy, Colin, and Harry were all so patient and kind and gave me lots of help. The experience reminded me of how important a good teacher or instructor is. I enjoyed it immensely and it was because of the non-judgmental attitude of them when I was trying a new skill and using tools with which I was unfamiliar. I have been recommending it to everyone and showing off my poker to the guests. Today, one of the cyclist guides told me that she now plans to book a lesson for herself and her partner!

Lynda

Deadline for the March issue: February 26th
westernhouse.kurow@gmail.com

0275016534



At the end of the school year in 2020, children at the Duntroon School were learning more about the local history. One student wrote for me:

The valley has mountains on each side. There is a blacksmith on one side. Some rocks look like an elephant. On my graduation day, I had the teachers' autographs on my back.

He had also learned the legend of Mackenzie, the sheep rustler:

I speak to my dog: "Meet me here at 12 sharp. Make sure there are 6184 sheep. If not, you will be dead." I see the dog. I count the sheep. "Good. Here's your pay. Meet me in the same spot tomorrow," I say.

DDDA Next meeting Tuesday 9th February at 19:00 at Vanished World

Duntroon Community Garden

It's been a quite a busy couple of months at the garden from watering daily to wading through floodwaters and now that it has dried out somewhat, we're weeding and mowing madly to keep ahead of the growth.

We are also in the throes of setting up a share space in Duntroon in the small shed beside the gaol where we will deliver excess produce every few days. This is going to be evolving as we need to find out what is going to work best for the community. We want people to have access to locally grown veggies. We also hope to share ways of preserving some of these vegies whether by having classes or leaving recipes and suggestions. Please, if you think that you could help with this community venture in any way, let us know. We are keen for more helpers and have plenty of veggies to share.

We meet at the garden every Wednesday 1-3pm at the southern end of Livingstone Street. For more information email Colin at colin-martin58@hotmail.com or Jan phone 0274979006. We now also have a Facebook group that you can also use for updates or those not on Facebook we have are on Instagram @ourduntrooncommunitygarden

Nicol's Blacksmith

The weekends through the school holidays were very busy with numerous visitors touring the buildings, taking beginner courses and kids have-a-go sessions. We do anticipate things getting very quiet over the next few months and will use the time to create things for the shop and to practise new techniques.

We have some gorgeous new brochures which we will be sending around the country promoting the blacksmith and the other things Duntroon has on offer. If you would like a copy to keep at home for when you have visitors pop into the forge and pick one up from the brochure stand.

We have met some really interesting people through the summer who, while touring the building, share stories of their own connections to blacksmithing, old style engineering, early farming, Duntroon in days gone past and the history of New Zealand in general. Over and over, we hear people say to us, "wow what a treasure!" and "what foresight to rescue the building and restore it." Its recent history is as interesting as its original history and every day when I'm showing people the artifacts, I begin telling the history story from the year 1966 when Nicol Muirden sold it, before I tell the story of early blacksmithing in Duntroon. We are ever grateful for the crazy idea that four local farmers had in 1974. Do come visit one weekend and hear the stories and watch the blacksmiths working like they would have in the late 1800's.

Facebook- Nicol's Blacksmith

Instagram- @nicolsblacksmith

email- nicolsblacksmith@gmail.com

Jan Keeling

January Flooding

While the flooding around Duntroon and, especially, the domain and campground caused a lot of trouble and mess, it could have been worse had it not been for the community and some of the tourists who all worked together to clean up as well as to evacuate those who needed it. Karan Lawrence helped clean up for two full days and other key people who helped were Owen King, Katrina and Daniel Moffat, Steve Smith (the caretaker) who continues to clean up as issues emerge, Colin and Phat, as well as Geoff Keeling whose tractor was shown on TV pulling caravans out of the floods. As I type this, there are still a few issues that need to be sorted and checked and these are mainly regarding electrical checks. Karan Lawrence



Vanished World

On January 25th, Vanished World volunteers were lucky enough to visit the Otago Museum as well as the University of Otago Geology Department as the centre endeavours to strengthen further its ties with the two institutions. The visit, which was organised by Mike Gray and Faye Ormandy, was enjoyed by us all. Firstly, we went to see the Dinosaur rEvolution Secrets of Survival exhibition. This stunning exhibition has giant animated dinosaurs and stunning illustrations that show how colourful these creatures probably were. Based on discoveries from sites in China, the exhibition reveals to us that many dinosaurs actually had feathers. This exhibition finishes in the first week of February and we can all highly recommend it.

We also visited the Planetarium at the museum where we saw a 3D presentation about the changing landscape of Antarctica from the Permian Age until today. Part of the documentary followed some researchers investigating fossil finds as well as soil sediment in the ice and tundra. I really enjoyed it.

After a delicious lunch, the volunteers broke off into two groups to visit the Southern People exhibition of the University, the Science interactive area and Tropical Forest/Butterfly House and the Geology Department. I chose to go to the Geology Department as, despite walking past the building hundreds of times while a student, I had never visited. Ewan Fordyce, who continues to carry out valuable paleontological research in the area and whose support and passion is instrumental to Vanished World and the wider community, was keen to show us his laboratory. Currently, he and his team are working on a whale skull of a whale which they believe to be new to science. Because of its resemblance to a dinghy when they found it in the rock, they have given it the name 'Dinghy Whale.' If you are in Dunedin, take the time to make a visit to the Geology Department as it is fascinating.



**Vanished World is planning a 20 year anniversary event on Feb 28th.
Phone Mike 434 2565 if you want more information.**



Catching up and Reminiscing

On the 28th of October 2020, and again on the 31st, I visited my hometown of Duntroon. I also spent a few hours in Kurow on the 28th.

What a thrill to be able to actually be there, rather than look “on line”.

On the Wednesday 28th I first checked out the Duntroon Hotel. (The last time I was in there was in late 1996, when we parked up at the domain with our motor home, and I had a few beers and a game of pool. Pat and Vera Tumaru were there, and it was nice to catch up with them.) Although I never got to look upstairs, the renovation work that has been done to the hotel is a credit to all those involved.

The Vanished World amazed me. The work that has gone into that is a world beater. The lovely young lady behind the desk was very obliging and took a photo of myself for me.

Next was the Blacksmith. It was quiet, being a Wednesday, so I started to walk around outside, taking a few photos.

Then I met a man weed eating around the back of the building. Steve, I think. That led to a lengthy and interesting conversation.

Then Jan arrived. Steve had sent a text apparently.

Next was Kurow. It is a lovely small and friendly town. I had a meal at the River Café. Wow! What a meal. I ordered two pieces of Blue Cod with the usual trimmings. Here in Northland, that would be the norm. When the order arrived, I was surprised to see two HUGE fillets, along with chips and salad.

I did justice to the fish, which was delicious, but had to call it a day and leave a lot of the chips. I have made it a point to tell all my friends up here about that meal.

I spent some time in the Museum in Kurow too. It is well set up and full of interesting exhibits.

On Saturday the 31st October, I again headed up to Duntroon. I had a nice lunch at the hotel. A lovely young lady who was tending the bar, took a photo of myself for me, and yes, I did have a beer.

Then I spent some hours at the Blacksmith's. What a time I had. I cannot remember all the names now, but Steve, Jan and Judy were there.

I was able to pass on some information Jan was looking for. I mentioned my older brother Ted had been Stationmaster at Duntroon. This led to Jan driving to Christchurch to interview Ted. He had his 99th birthday on the 11th Dec. 2020.

Whilst at the Blacksmith's, Judith gave me a huge photo of the horse, Steve, Colin, Judith, Harry and John, taken outside at the front of the Blacksmith's. Thank you so much. You people are doing so much to ensure Duntroon, and its history, is shown to the world.

To close this epistle I'll give my details, and also ask for some information. I was born at the "Nevada" nursing home in Oamaru where Countdown now stands, in May of 1938. My parents lived in the railway house, nearest the Duntroon railway station. My father was a railway track worker. As a toddler, I used to take off and head for the Blacksmith's. I loved to play in the dirt in the middle of the area where Mr. Muirden worked.(no Osh them days)

I was christened at St. Martin's church. Our next door neighbour's name was Daly. (Not sure of that spelling) My mother told me that one Sunday at church, during the Lord's prayer, it got to the part "this day our daily bread" when I said out loud "we don't want Daly's bread mum".

In early 1943 my dad was transferred to Oio, as ganger. Oio is between Owhango and Raurimu. I started school at Raurimu in May 1943.

Sadly, my dad died in the Taumarunui hospital in 1944, aged just 48.

We moved back south to Oamaru. I spent many holidays in Kurow and Duntroon, staying with my brother Ted and wife Joyce. They moved from Kurow to Duntroon in 1948.

In 1956, I joined the locomotive branch of the NZ railways. I obtained my steam tickets, and enjoyed my job as a fireman. I fired trains to Kurow many times. At one stage there were two trains per day. There was no Wellington/Picton ferry then, and steel for the hydro works came into Oamaru by ship. One day we pulled into Kurow with an overloaded train, and due to a set of points not being set properly, we derailed. What a mess. All we could do was "drop" the fire and wait for a ride home. My driver's name was Joe Fogarty.

I have been trying to find any information on this mishap. I'd love to know the date for a start, and of course, any photos that may have been taken.

Is there someone out there that can help me with this? I would love to hear from you. All I know is it happened around 1959 to about 1962.

I am looking forward to being in Duntroon again. Hopefully this year. Best wishes to you all.
Ian Mosely.

Brookers Bay,
Whananaki North,
Northland.

09-4338456.

jonhenry865@gmail.com

