



# the Duntroon DIGGER

Established 2005

June 2026 - July 2026 Edition

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**Next issue:** 4th August. Please send your contributions to us at [duntroondigger@gmail.com](mailto:duntroondigger@gmail.com) by 29th July. See Duntroon Digger Dates 2026 on the last page of this issue.

## The Museum of Vanished World Reopens!

The wait is officially over. Following a major, top-to-bottom transformation, the Museum of the Vanished World is proudly reopening its doors this Tuesday, June 2nd.

The exhibition material that tells the story of our internationally significant fossil collection has been completely reimagined and reflects the most up to date scientific knowledge.

We would like to thank the many dedicated tradespeople and local partners, founders and volunteers, funders, scientists and museum experts who have made this refurbishment possible. We would also like to thank Story Inc, our museum experience team, who have gone above and beyond to make this exhibition refurbishment so impressive. We will miss their day-to-day presence in our community.

Waitaki residents and visitors can now experience the ancient wonders of the Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global Geopark within an enhanced, deeply immersive and interactive setting.



The upgrades do not stop at the front door. Statement Trees and Green by Nature have donated their plants and landscaping expertise to the surrounding grounds.

### Key Dates:

Tuesday June 2nd: Reopening to the public.

August: Formal reopening ceremony (details to follow).

Spring: When the weather warms up there will be a dedicated Waitaki locals' open day with entry by donation

We hope that you will love the changes as much as we do!

## A big thank you to Duntroon Fire Brigade

A big thank you to the Duntroon Fire Brigade for providing such a delicious morning tea for the community following the Anzac service and for offering rides in the fire truck to local people, young and old.

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### A Convoluted Tale Peter K. Ellis

My associations with the Waitaki Valley are mixed.

Back in the 1860s my great great grandfather migrated to New Zealand. He was not a particularly stable man. Census records show that he was listed as a shepherd at Station Peak in the mid-1870s. The next record shows him as a farmer at Otiake.

In 1868 Robert Campbell, of Otekaieke fame, felt pressure to subdivide a portion of his massive holdings. The Campbell family at this time owned over 1/2 million acres of land in the Waitaki Valley and environs.

Campbell named the subdivision Otiake. (The name is a corruption of the Māori Otiaki (meaning a place to watch!). Some of the land purchasers' names are familiar to the area today, for example, Hille, Grant, Simpson and McCone. Others such as my great grandfather are long forgotten. Perhaps deliberately, Campbell wanted to show that small landowners were not capable/profitable farms. Duff Ellis purchased over 206 acres. Others purchased similar or multiple lots of land. Frederick Hille purchased over 860 acres. William G Hille purchased 614 acres and Christian Hille 752 acres (in 3 lots). The Campbell family kept a large swath of the land for themselves (possibly the best). Records also reveal that Duff was declared bankrupt in 1871.

Historically we must remember that this was before the advent of the refrigerated meat trade. This began in the 1880s out of Otago. The Otiake land was marginal. Sheep could be grazed; but their only value was in their wool. Many of the land investors abandoned their holdings. The remains of Duff's hut are still in the valley. Eventually John Grant took over Duff's property.

Down in Duntroon around this time John Newsome was killed when he was thrown from his horse. He left behind a bereft widow and two sons. John was buried in the Duntroon Cemetery. Flora erected a substantial headstone on his grave. In January 1883 she married my great great grandfather at a relatives' house in Kurow.

Duff was an impulsive man. Court records show he was involved in (often drunken) altercations from time to time. Little is known of the marriage. As this was a time before any social security, widows were at the mercy of family and friends. Family records show that Flora and Duff's marriage was unsuccessful. By May of 1883 they had already separated.

In August and October of 1886 Duff was in court charged with being of unsound mind. He was eventually remanded to Seacliff Hospital where he died in August 1877 aged 77. Duff held illusions of grandiosity, proclaiming Seacliff was his estate.

Flora died in Kurow in 1921. She is interred with her first husband John in Duntroon cemetery. Perhaps the large headstone (in the eastern section of the cemetery) was an expense of contention with her second husband.

The current Waitaki Mayor Melanie Tavendale is a descendant of Duff Ellis seven times removed.

It is indeed a tangled tree.

**Sources:**

David Still - unpublished manuscript 1998.

K C McDonald - *White Stone Country*

Waste Land Records, 1882

*Timaru Herald* - Records of the Waimate Resident Magistrate's Court, 1886

**A word of thanks from the editor ...**

There is so much that we don't know about the events of the past in this valley. There is great value in collecting and sharing these stories for future generations. Thank you so much Peter for your contribution. Your story on the Campbells will follow in the next edition.

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## Sky Tower Challenge

Congratulations to the Duntroon Volunteer Fire Brigade team that conquered the Sky Tower Challenge on May 23rd.

This was a magnificent effort by the team. This year the members were Richard Wills (Captain), Sarah Todd, Scott King (the latest Duntroon station officer) and the newest fire fighter Andrew Macinnes.

These dedicated members financed their own travel and accommodation to the event so that they could raise funds for Blood Cancer NZ. The team set a goal of \$5,000 and so far, their generosity of spirit has seen them raise over \$8,000.

It is not too late to support these remarkable members and their fundraising.

Follow the link provided:

[Duntroon Volunteer Fire Brigade - Firefighter Sky Tower Challenge 2026](#)

Karan Lawrence



*Left to right Andrew Macinnes, Richard Wills, Scott Kingan, and Sarah Todd. Photo credit Paige Wills.*

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## Community Garden and Share Shed

The garden is now slowing down for the winter with less to harvest over the next couple of months. However we will still be taking produce to the share-shed as it becomes ready, so please keep checking.

The community garden at school has had the students on white butterfly patrol to reduce

## Community Garden and Share Shed continued...

the population. They have been keeping a careful tally as I have promised 10c per butterfly to go towards the school camps. This has made quite the difference to both enthusiasm and the white butterfly problem. I am very grateful for the school's support.

We have had a great season in the garden spaces and are currently planning for next spring with upgrades to both gardens. I have applied to the Meridian Power Up Community Fund (alongside the DDDA) for funding towards these upgrades. This has been made possible through the money received from donations at the share shed.

Many thanks for supporting our gardens. Also thanks to the locals who have been supplying clean bread bags to the share shed, As much as we don't like using plastic, it does keep the produce fresher. Reusing these bags makes things somewhat more sustainable.

If anyone would like more information regarding what we do and would like to help in any way, please text or call Jan on 027 497 9006. Alternatively, come along on a Tuesday afternoon 1.00 pm to the very south end of Livingstone St. 200m beyond the stock crossing.

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## Duntroon Hall Needs You!

**Are you able to help in any way and give back to your local community?**

**Any students looking for some volunteer hours for Duke of Edinburgh program or similar?**

**Wanting to add to your CV for experience?**

The Duntroon Hall cannot be run alone. Many of the community use it directly and indirectly through their children at school and we would be lost without it.

Most community members have no idea who pays what, with the hall costs, (feel free to give me a call if you'd like to know). It costs a lot just to exist and the hall rate payer contributions do not come close to covering the costs. And many, if not most of the users come from outside the hall rating area.

We need to manage it in a way that it doesn't become unaffordable for both rate-payers and renters. I also have some maintenance work coming up that I need extra help with.

- Cutting back of Old Mans Beard and branches and loading them onto a trailer
- Digging mud/weeds from a drain and loading into wheelbarrows to take away
- Anti moss spraying
- Heat pump filter cleaning
- Cleaning windows
- Some deep cleaning in the back side rooms
- Some minor maintenance & repair jobs. (including minor carpentry work and painting)
- Guttering needs to be cleaned out (requires a cherry picker)

There will be other jobs, but this is what I can think of instantly. Call me if you think you could help in any way; we can organise timing that works for you, and/or I can organise a community working bee on weekend day in the next few weeks.

Many hands make light work, and many thanks in advance. Jan Keeling 027 497 9006

# Historic Duntroon: In Memory of "The Local News" Special Edition 1974: Part two

From Anne Phillips-Vira

This month we conclude our revisit of a special edition of an old favourite school newspaper with which many of our readers may be familiar. After around 52 years of storage in the Duntroon School archive cupboard, extracts from this 1974 edition are again in your sights. "The Local News" was introduced by the principal of Duntroon School in the mid-1960s.

## Police Station

The police station in Duntroon was not established until 1914. The house used to belong to a man with a lot of money with a maid and a servant. The servant lived in the south side of the house. The first person to be booked was William Nicholas. He was fined five shilling (which was a lot of money in those days) and was discharged. The officer at that time was Officer Field. The man was found drunk in a public place.

The police station office is 10-15 years old. The officer in the early days had only horse transport so when someone was caught they had to keep him in jail because it was not easy to take him to Oamaru. However sometimes they [held] court cases in Duntroon.

*Michael Simpson, Bill Gilkison*

**Question:** Who was the original owner with "a lot of money ... a maid and a servant"?

## Duntroon Post Office

The Duntroon Post Office used to be Post Office and Railway combined. It was built of wood and iron and contained a public lobby, ladies waiting room, and general offices. There was also a goods shed and cattle loading yards. Two trains used to pass through the station daily, by each of which mails were received and despatched. Mr William McLeod acted as station master and postmaster.

The Duntroon Post Office will be one hundred years old in about seven to nine

years time. The manual exchange was changed over to automatic on the 1st of July 1971. The manual exchange used to work from 7am to 9pm. The Duntroon station master was postmaster until the station shut down. The railway had its own clerk. The manual exchange used to work from 6am to midnight but then in 1966 it changed to a twenty-four-hour service. There was a staff of only four people and a postmaster. The post office hours have been 8.45 to 12.45 since 7th August 1972. The automatic exchange is now over the road from the Post Office. It is beside the old Butchers shop and Mr Tait's shed.

*Robyn Rowland*

**Question:** In what year did the manual exchange hours change from 7am to 9pm to 6am to midnight?



*Duntroon Post Office (n.d.) Photograph c/o Ian Mosely.*

## Garage

Mr Lister bought the garage in 1946. The owners before that were Applebys and The Kurow Motor Company. The first people in the area to have a car were Mr Orr, Mr Rutherford, Mr Menzies. The first person to have a tractor was W.B. Harvey.

*Brent Harvey*

## Duntroon Hotel

The proprietor was James Pringle. This comfortable and popular hostelry contained seventeen rooms, of which nine were comfortable parlours, and there was a large, airy dining room capable of seating twenty-four persons. It had stabling and paddocks which were very convenient for travellers and stock drivers. Mr Pringle, the landlord, was the son of one of the earliest settlers in the district. He was married in 1894, to Miss Sammon [sic], and had two daughters.

*William Huaki*

**Comment:** According to NZ birth, deaths and marriages, James Pringle was born at Otepopo (Herbert) in 1860 and died at Kauru Hill in 1929. He married Bridget Salmon at Duntroon in 1894, and the couple had ten children: Janet, Sarah, John, William, Jane, Agnes, Robert, Francis, George and Adam; eight more than mentioned in William's article.



*Duntroon Hotel, circa 1905, prop. James Pringle. Collection of the Waitaki Archive. Id 105703*



*Right: Mr & Mrs James Pringle, Duntroon. Collection of the Waitaki Archive. Id 105574*

## Duntroon Defence Hall

The Duntroon Hall was originally built in 1902 by the Duntroon Rifle Volunteers with a government subsidy and following the disbandment of the volunteer units their property was vested to the crown under the Defence Amendment Act 1912.

The hall was then leased to the Waitaki Country [sic] Council for use as a public hall for nearly 30 years. The building then being of no further use to the army it was recommended that the Duntroon Hall Committee be given the opportunity of purchasing it. After many letters had passed back and forth between the hall committee and country [sic] council as far as can be found out the hall finally was left Waitaki Council property but administered by Duntroon Hall Committee. The district was canvassed for funds to build on the supper

room, kitchen and ladies room in the 1920s. After the Duntroon School had been burnt in 1940, the Education Board provided a destructor for the supper room so that it could be used as a classroom.

A drop screen hand painted by Mr Morris the chemist served as stage curtains for many years and above the stage was a motto.

The district was again canvassed in 1958 to enable the committee to do major repairs to walls and roof also install sinks and zip in the kitchen and lay a new floor in the main hall. In 1971 it was decided to shift books to the Presbyterian Sunday School and use the room as a men's toilet. Many hours of work were donated by members and people of the district.

Presidents of the Hall Committee have been from 1953 onwards Mr W Cogger, Mr Malcolm Francis, Mr W Rutherford, Mr A Wills and the present one is Mr A Lister. Mr P Tumaru was secretary from 1953 to 1971 and Mrs J Fridd is present secretary. It is very unfortunate but all previous records for the hall seem to be lost so we cannot find out who previous chairmen and secretaries were.

*Michael Simpson, Antony Huaki*



*Number 3 Section Duntroon Rifles 1901  
Collection of the Waitaki Archive. Id 100739*

## The Flour Mill

Early in 1896 Mr A Nicol began to build a flour mill north of Duntroon. A race that can still be seen at Mr Cairns carried the water from the Waitaki River but because of the stoney nature of the ground the water soaked through. So they put down gravel to prevent this happening but this was not successful. They all decided to build a new mill at Ngapara. In that same year Milligan and Bond bought the plant and building and established their mill where "Eclipse" flour has been produced ever since.

*Michael Harvey*

**Comment:** This article seems to suggest that Mr A. Nicol first owned the plant and mill which he then sold on to Milligan and Bond.

There is an advertisement in the Otago Daily Times (Marriages, 1907) which refers to the marriage of Frank Nicol, the eldest son of "Alex. Nicol, Esq., Ngapara" (p.4). A little further 'digging' led me to discovering that he was, by profession, a flour miller in Oamaru and a builder in Ngapara. It seems very likely that this is the same A. Nicol who instigated the flour milling venture in Duntroon.

It's interesting to note that his mother was Isabella Meek whose brother was Thomas Meek of Oamaru flour mill fame. Isabella married John Nicol in Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1856 (National Records of Scotland, 1856) before migrating to Canada. Between 1857 and 1865 she had four children: Alexander, John, Mary Ann and William. Her husband died in 1865 then, in around 1872, she left Canada with her children.

The family settled in the Waitaki District. Alexander died in Titirangi, Auckland in 1941 (Obituary, 1941). Mary Ann and Isabella are both buried in Maheno Cemetery (Find a Grave, 2020). I have yet to discover what happened to John and William. Perhaps one of our readers might know more about Mr A. Nicol and his family.

**Question:** Is there still evidence of the race that was once on Mr Cairns farm in Duntroon?

#### References:

Find a Grave. (2020, June 27). Memorial for Isabella Nicol (1829-1921). Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/211829647/isabella-nicol>

Marriages. (1907, January, 16). *Otago Daily Times*, 4.

National Records of Scotland (1856). "John Meek". Statutory Registers. Marriages, 1856. Parish of Cambusnethan, Lanark. Source: ScotlandsPeople, Cambusnethan 628 / 26, page 15. Retrieved from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) on April 6, 2026.

Obituary. (1941, 18 September). *Auckland Star*, 9.

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## Flying Pig Cafe Winter Arrangements

The Flying Pig Cafe closed on the 27th of May for a break this winter.

Not to panic, "The Buzz", the cafe's mobile coffee van, will be operating beside the cafe from Monday to Friday from 8am till 3pm, phew!!

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## Free Business/Services List

Please contact us at [duntroondigger@gmail.com](mailto:duntroondigger@gmail.com). Please keep your entry to 2 lines maximum.

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**Seed/Seed Mixes:** fodder beet, grass, oats and kale seed. [www.dufffarming.com](http://www.dufffarming.com). [duffs@dufffarm.co.nz](mailto:duffs@dufffarm.co.nz) or call Grant 027 7379518

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**MASSAGE: Therapeutic & Relaxing.** Qualified massage therapist available Tues, Wed & Thurs 10 am - 2 pm. Sat by appt. Papakaio area. \$60 per hour - \$35 per 1/2 hour. Ph Sam (female) 021 701 518

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## Duntroon Digger Dates 2026

Dear Readers: We are providing the following table as a guideline/reminder of Digger dates for 2026. The table below also provides a 'pre-digger' deadline date for those of you who wish to send in content such as advertisements, letters or articles. Please note that we do not advertise items for sale. We suggest that this be done on the Duntroon Facebook page.

We intend to email The Digger on the same date as publication. Hard copies will be distributed by our deliverers as soon as possible after publication.

Month	Pre-Digger Deadline	Publishing Date
August	29/07/2026	04/08/2026
October	29/09/2026	06/10/2026
December	25/11/2026	01/12/2026

Thank you for your ongoing interest in The Digger. We look forward to receiving your news items, comments and letters in the year ahead. Please send to Gill at [duntroondigger@gmail.com](mailto:duntroondigger@gmail.com)

## Duntroon Fire Brigade

Here are a few interesting facts regarding this wonderful service, which is such an asset to the Duntroon community and beyond:

- The brigade has struggled over the years to retain skilled members due to the nature of a farming community and people moving on. At present, however, there are 15 members and the brigade is building a greatly skilled and experienced team.
- The brigade averages approximately 40 call outs a year, which consist of vegetation and structure fires, MVA's and medical events.
- Members have roughly 80-100 skills they are required to stay current and competent in and which are put into scenario based training one night every week.



### **An extra note from the brigade re fire safety for the winter season:**

- Smoke alarms save lives!
  - Remember to check fireplaces regularly
  - Always clean chimneys before the first fire for the season.
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# Mōkihi Waiora Clinics

## Duntroon



Our Rokoā (traditional Māori remedies) and Nurse-led clinics provide **FREE** Hauora services to whānau, delivered by skilled professionals. **Te Hā o Maru**

**Where: Duntroon Hall , 6 Livingstone St, Duntroon**

**Time: 10.30am - 3.30pm**

### **January**

Thurs 29<sup>th</sup>

### **February**

Thurs 12<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 26<sup>th</sup>

### **March**

Thurs 12<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 26<sup>th</sup>

### **April**

Thurs 23<sup>rd</sup> (FLU CLINIC)

### **May**

Thurs 7<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 21<sup>st</sup>

### **June**

Thurs 4<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 18<sup>th</sup>

### **July**

Thurs 2<sup>nd</sup>

Thurs 30<sup>th</sup>

### **August**

Thurs 13<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 27<sup>th</sup>

### **September**

Thurs 10<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 24<sup>th</sup>

### **October**

Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup>

### **November**

Thurs 5<sup>th</sup>

Thurs 19<sup>th</sup>

### **December**

Thurs 3<sup>rd</sup>

Thurs 17<sup>th</sup>


**Everyone Welcome**

**No appointments needed**

Phone: 0800 0800 07

Website: [www.tehaomaru.co.nz](http://www.tehaomaru.co.nz)

Email: [info@tehaomaru.nz](mailto:info@tehaomaru.nz)

 Te Hā o Maru