



the Duntroon DIGGER

Established 2005

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Next issue: 7th October. Please send your contributions to us at duntroondigger@gmail.com by 1st October. See 'Digger dates' for this year on the last page of this issue.

Duntroon 150th Anniversary Plans

25 and 26th of October

There is nothing like a deadline to galvanise members of a community into action. It is not that the Duntroon community lacks motivated persons, but the dates of the 25th and 26th of October have surely added an extra incentive to maintain the momentum.

Market Day, Saturday the 25th

Plans for Saturday, October 25th, will include a market in the centre of the township. This will feature local handcrafts and provide a showcase of the special features of Duntroon.

The Heritage Trail and The Sexton's Shed

The Duntroon Heritage Trail will be unveiled on market day. Visitors will be able to travel around the village while listening to a commentary. The Duntroon Sexton's Shed is part of the heritage trail, and visitors will have the opportunity to view the shed upgrade for themselves. A special feature of this event will be the participation of a horse-drawn vehicle.

Service at Saint Martin's Church, Sunday morning of the 26th of October.

Sunday, October 26th, will begin with a service at Saint Martin's Church. The service will be held to bring people together in remembrance of the bequest made by Emma Campbell in 1900, which enabled the construction of our beautiful little architectural landmark.

Tree Planting and Cake Cutting Ceremonies

To commemorate the day, a tree will be planted on the village green. This ceremony will conclude with refreshments at the Duntroon Hall and the cutting of a special cake.

The Duntroon Gaol and Village Green

The Duntroon Gaol has also received some special attention. Once again, our skilled and generous volunteers have come to the rescue. Owen King and Lloyd Grafton were the dynamic duo who removed a cell window in need of repair from the building on Saturday, July 19th. Plans are afoot to have the building painted soon, too.

On the village green, the pioneer couple are slated for some cleaning. By the time Labour Weekend is upon us, the village will be sparkling.

More detailed information will be provided in the next Digger.

New Image



Date: Tue, Jul 29, 2025 at 12:06pm
Subject: Media Release - Waitaki District Council adopts new strategy and brand to build stronger community connections.

At today's meeting of Waitaki District Council, the new communications and engagement strategy and council brand were approved by the mayor and councillors.

The new brand was developed in-house, and will be launched

in stages across council's digital platforms. **Note:** for further information please visit the Waitaki District Council website www.waitaki.govt.nz

Sexton's Shed

As reported by Anne Phillips-Vira in the June/July edition of the Digger, the upgrade of the sexton's shed has been proceeding nicely.

The structural repairs have been done and now the furniture has been installed.

A table was made specifically for the shed. Owen King made the tabletop, and Steve Smith turned the table legs. Then Owen put the parts together. The wood used was milled from macrocarpa



trees in the Hakataramea Pass over twenty years ago and donated to the cause. The grain of the trees gives the table character. However, a table without chairs is just a ledge. So, Steve Smith took it upon himself to purchase a couple of old unloved chairs and reupholstered them. They suit the scene perfectly. Atop the table is a beautiful wooden vase turned by Steve out of almond wood. He even provided the red roses to finish the look.

Along the eastern wall is a newly made form. This was created by another generous local craftsman, Richard White. The timber used this time was oak which was donated by Lloyd Grafton. It is amazing what skill and imagination can create from an old bed end.

The finishing touches are yet to be added to the interior. Richard has cleaned and polished a pick and shovel that Anne sourced from a second-hand shop. These are to be hung on the wall.

Two notice boards are to be installed along with maps showing the origins of some of Duntroon's pioneer families and cemetery plans. Anne has researched many of these families and this information will be made available in the shed. Now, visitors will have somewhere to sit and study.

We look forward to introducing the public to the new, improved sexton's shed at the 150th celebration on the 26th of October. This piece of Duntroon's history is to be part of the Heritage Trail, which will be unveiled that day.



DUNTROON HOTEL

**We are looking for staff
for the upcoming cycle season.**

BAR & FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER

Someone with a cheery disposition to run our friendly bar & café/ restaurant. Bar managers certificate required. Assistance may be given to obtain one, would require two years hospitality experience.

CHEF / COOK

Must be able to manage kitchen unsupervised & create own menus.

CASUAL POSITIONS

for kitchen, front of house & house keeping.

ENQUIRIES BY EMAIL TO:

dhduntroonhotel@gmail.com

Or phone 021 0232 9873

Whalan Lodge Trust Committee needs new members

In September the Whalan Lodge Trust is holding their AGM. This year a number of trustees are retiring after having served for many years on this committee and we are looking at recruiting some new members.

It used to be that a representative from each Waitaki Valley township was on the trust and it would be great if that could happen again. Meetings are held each month.

If anybody is interested or would like to find out more about joining this committee or even attending a meeting, please email the secretary (Judy Croft), at secretary@whalanlodge.co.nz

Free Business/Services List

The Digger Team is reaching out to local businesses and service people for contact details in an effort to make your services known to the local community. If you would like to be included in our list for publication in 'The Digger', please contact us at duntroondigger@gmail.com
Our first listings are shown below as examples (2 lines maximum)

Silage (grass or maize), baleage, barley grain. Can deliver. Phone Errol Wells 0274 570 700

Flying Pig Cafe Winter hours: Wed-Fri: 7.30am-3pm Sat/Sun: 8am-3pm. Ph 021 0862 0428
flyingpigcafe.co.nz

Pat's Thai Cooking Class

Duntroon Hall, Saturday 6pm, 16th August. Cost \$25 p.p.

Parttarawadee Thorgseema, Duntroon's resident Thai chef will demonstrate the preparation of two popular Thai dishes and a shared meal will follow.

Bookings essential Phone Gill 0212301452 Please confirm by August 13th.

Duntroon Photography Group News

The Duntroon Photography Group has enjoyed a couple of outings together during the past two winter months.

The group went to Timaru on the 5th of July and wandered along the Saltwater Creek Walkway honing their skills while trying to capture clear images of the local fauna and flora. The sky was overcast which created a challenge for lighting subjects.

On the 27th of July the group headed south to Dunedin. First stop was Tūhura Otago Museum and in order of importance, a coffee at the cafe. Then, it was on to study the exhibits in this year's Tūhura Otago Museum Photography Competition. It proved to be an enlightening and inspiring exercise to view what other photographers can achieve. The judging of thousands of entries would not have been an easy task. Then, it was upstairs to view 'The World of Butterflies' exhibition. What a shock to the system on a frosty morning; twenty-eight degrees in a rain forest! The camera lens steamed up pretty fast and people took their jackets off soon after. The butterflies were multi coloured and flitted about testing the reflexes of the camera operators. One species in particular proved elusive; it was a blue butterfly.

The group had a lot of fun and agreed that the exhibition was worth the time. With or without a camera, viewing the fish and giant spiders, along with small birds kept everyone busy.

The next stop was the Lan Yuan Dunedin Chinese Garden in central Dunedin. Even in the depth of winter there was still something to get the cameras clicking.

The day concluded with another coffee chat and then home to upload photos and edit/discard the shots that did not work.



Group photo was taken at the Chinese Garden

The group meets every third Thursday of the month at Richard and Janice White's home. They have kindly adapted a studio room into a comfortable viewing area, complete with a large screen.

Everyone is welcome to join the group for outings. Contact Richard White at 022 071 1081. Check out the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/506073851641203/>

Historic Duntroon: The Orkney Islands Connection and the Three James'

by Anne Phillips-Vira

Over the past few months, I have found myself embarking on a bit of a historic journey. It began with an interest in tidying up the Duntroon Cemetery, strange as that may seem. With permission from the Waitaki District Council, I began clearing broken glass and rubbish, pulling weeds, and sweeping graves in block 5 along the fence line. In the process, I found myself wondering about the people who are buried there and what happened to their families. Little did I know then that some of the settlers on that side of the cemetery are in my DNA.

It struck me that several of the people in block 5 were from Orkney Island families and that most were from the Birsay area (located in the north-western corner of Orkney's main island). It is common knowledge in our family that my great-grandfather was born in Birsay and that my three times great-grandfather married Janet Taylor of Cumloquoy farm (National Records of Scotland, 1843, p.101). I started to do some digging, and the connections began to unravel ...

Birthplaces and Namesakes

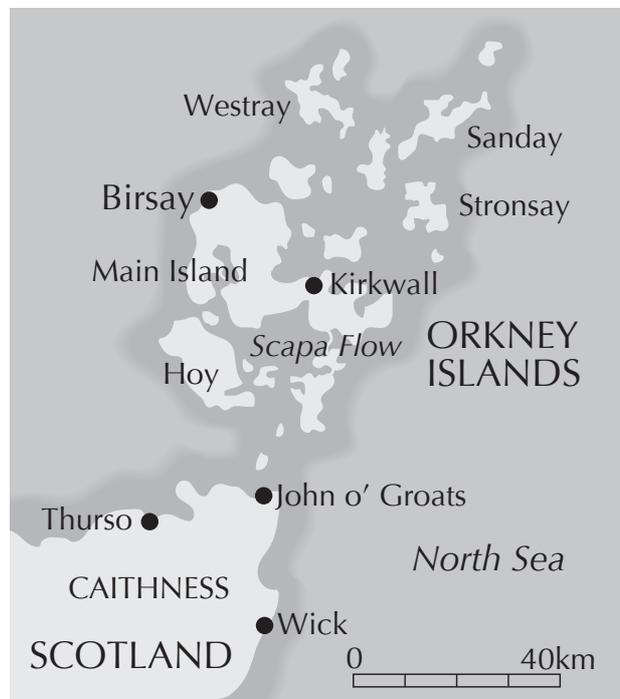
The story begins with James A. Taylor, who was born at Grigdor, (which was probably a farmlet) in the Parish of Birsay. He and his cousin James B. Taylor of Cumloquoy were both born in November, 1849 and subsequently baptised together on February 3, 1850 at St Magnus Church, Birsay (Birsay Parish, 1850, p.64).

No doubt many readers will recognise the church name as the namesake of St Magnus Presbyterian Church, Duntroon; now 'The Holy Oaks' guest house.

Stories from the Duntroon District (correctly) tell of these two Orkney men being cousins. What struck me as interesting is the origin of their middle initials. One story retold by Paton (2024) says that the postman named them James A. and James B. because it was difficult to tell them apart when delivering their mail; they owned neighbouring properties at Kokoamo near Duntroon (Waitaki County Council Rates 1878-1900, 2025).

Another story retold by Beryl Miller of the Oamaru Genealogical Society says that their lawyer designated them with the initials James A. and James B. for the same reason. My research has uncovered another possibility: that their second name initials may have come from family kinship ties. James A. Taylor's mother was Mary Anderson Taylor, while James B. Taylor is listed as James Blaik Taylor, both in Find a Grave (2025) and by Ray Miller, a Scottish/Orkney family historian. Miller (2025) has both men entered in his family tree as James Anderson Taylor and James Blaik Taylor. This information has its origins in Orkney family connections. However, the baptism register in Scotland's People doesn't mention second names for the pair.

Cousin number three, James Phillips, was born in 1847 at Skedje, Birsay, which is located just 2.5 kilometres north of Cumloquoy. I have been unable to locate his birth or baptism details in the Old Parish Registers. Research by Millar (2025) suggests that he was named James Taylor Phillips.



This comes as no surprise since his mother's maiden name was Taylor. A similar pattern applies to his cousin James A. Taylor. Robb (2020) states that in Scottish families, the second son was often named after his maternal grandfather.

Robb also suggests that the original Scottish naming pattern was adopted "as an aid to keeping track of one's ancestors" (p.2). R. Millar (personal communication, June 25, 2025) remarked that while this Scottish naming practice is not strictly adhered to in the Orkney Islands, often after people emigrated, they added a middle name. It's interesting to note in the case of the three James' that none of them has an officially recorded second name, but several of their siblings have second names that relate directly to grandparents and parents. Perhaps there are clues out there yet to be discovered regarding the mystery middle names of the three cousins?

Migration of the Three James'

According to the 'Cyclopedia of New Zealand' (1905), James A. Taylor migrated from Scotland in 1868 aboard the ship 'Helenslee'. An entry in 'Immigrant Debtors' (1872) provides evidence that James was an assisted immigrant who owed the sum of £4 to the Otago Provincial Government to complete payment for his passage (p.19). There is further evidence in Brett (1924) that the 'Helenslee' sailed from Glasgow on May 6, 1868, and arrived at Port Chalmers on August 23, 1868; a passage of 109 days (p. 208).

Three years later, James B. Taylor sailed from Greenock aboard the 'William Davie'. Perhaps the speed of travel had improved between the years of 1868 and 1871, as James B. made it to Dunedin in 21 days less than his cousin. His name appears on the passenger list as a farm labourer from Cumloquoy, Orkney (Denise and Peter, 2008).

I am still searching for evidence to support a family story that great-grandfather, James Phillips, travelled first to Australia with a cousin who 'didn't like the snakes', which then resulted in a detour to New Zealand.

James must have left his home at Skedge, Birsay, after 1861, as his name appears with those of his parents and siblings on the 1861 census (National Records of Scotland, 1861) but not on the 1871 census. An advertisement for the sale of horses (Fleming & Hedley's Notices, 1878) places him in the Oamaru Historic Precinct area in April 1878, selling "First-class young draught stock" (p.3), one of which was imported from Tasmania. This mention at least implies a connection to Australia. Family photographs, receipts, and stories serve as supporting evidence that he raised and sold draught horses in the Oamaru/Ngapara area.



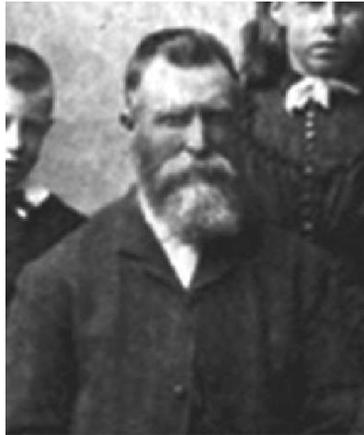
The sailing ship 'William Davie' at Port Chalmers, 1873.

Kinship Ties

It's fascinating to note the strong kinship ties between Orkney Island family members and their patterns of migration, especially among the single men. For example, James B. Taylor's four brothers; Peter, Thomas, John, and Simon, each migrated to New Zealand, and all except Peter settled in North Otago. Peter died tragically of asphyxiation only six weeks after he arrived in Dunedin (Dunedin, 1868). He and Thomas are remembered on a headstone (purchased by James) in the Duntroon Cemetery.



James B. Taylor (Photograph supplied by author)



Mr James A. Taylor (n.d.)



James Phillips (Photograph supplied by author)

Harland (2014) raises the importance of kinship cluster groups in Orcadian migration as they provided both financial and emotional support to migrants. The ties between families were clearly quite strong in the Duntroon District, as several Orkney families were drawn to the area in quite rapid succession.

Land acquisition and labour also appear to have been shared among brothers and their kin in Duntroon and the surrounding district. Names such as Taylor, Phillips, Corrigan, Wilson, Rowland, Yorston, Slater, and Merriman all link back to the Parish of Birsay/Harray on the Orkney mainland.

Other connections to Duntroon are notable in the Oamaru Old Cemetery where brothers, sisters, cousins, sons, and daughters of these families are buried. You might well be wondering if you have any connections to the above names – the chances are high if your family's roots go back to the Duntroon, Ngapara, Maerewhenua, Otekaieke, and/or Kurow areas. We would love to hear your settler stories if you have any knowledge or connections to the above family names.

In the next issue, I will explore what happened to the three James' after settlement and look at some possible reasons for their departure from the islands of Orkney.

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Fire and Emergency New Zealand Peer Support for our Area.

A small rural town like Duntroon is so very fortunate to have an operational fire brigade. The dedication of its members is what makes it happen.

Dedication to the cause is what has inspired Lou Tait to add yet another string to her bow. Already a rural fire fighter and joint secretary and treasurer of the brigade, Lou recently embarked on a two-day training course with the Te Kei (Southern Region) Fire & Emergency peer support team. This was the first course with the FENZ peer support crew that she had attended. Not that the concept of peer support was new at all, because Lou had been a part of and attended the international project called Intentional Peer Support before her enrolment with the fire service.

Lou says, "The peer support crew have a training session once a year where we meet, but we are always doing modules throughout the year. We have quarterly team zoom meetings also. Every FENZ region has a peer support group. The Southern (Te Kei) region has around 20 peer supporters spread from Waitaki through to Invercargill, Te Anau, Queenstown. So, not every brigade has a peer support person." There are another six hours of training to complete her initial FENZ peer support training.

Once qualified, Lou will be the only peer support person in the Duntroon brigade.

Lou explains that "the support crew is not a counselling service, but support for any firefighter, or their family who may need it. Whenever a fire crew/person from our Te Kei get called to an especially tough call out, is experiencing, or has experienced trauma or are going through a tough time in their lives, these guys will pick up the phone to support them or point them in the right direction for appropriate help."

This support is so essential to all those people who attend emergencies and even more so, in a small community such as ours where the likelihood of attending to an incident where the victim is known to members of the brigade is very high.

Peer support is such an invaluable service. Well done to Lou Tait for accepting the role with all the responsibility that goes with it.

Duntroon Digger Dates 2025

Please send your content, such as letters, articles and advertisements, to us by the 'Pre-Digger' Deadline dates shown.

Month	Pre-Digger Deadline	Publishing Date
October	01/10/2025	07/10/2025
December	26/11/2025	02/12/2025

Friday 13 June 2025

So you've found... something?

The Waitaki District rests atop million-year-old limestone and such a wide range of other rocks, in incredible formations, that we're home to the UNESCO Waitaki Whitestone Geopark.

However, that's a lot of history – both from before and after humans arrived in these islands. And occasionally, a member of the community or a visitor will find a reminder of that long, long, time that's underneath our feet.

It could be a fossil, or it could be an archaeological artifact. One is evidence of our incredible natural past, the other of the story of human history in this country.

If you do find a fossil, or an archaeological artifact, and you're not sure what to do, then it might be time to tell someone who knows what to do next. Don't disturb it, take a photograph and then:

- For fossils, contact the Waitaki Museum and Archive – 03 433 0853 or museum@waitaki.govt.nz
- For archaeological finds, contact Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Otago/Southland Office on 03 477 9871 or infodeepsouth@heritage.org.nz
- If you're not sure, you can email Council's Heritage Advisor at mark.smith@waitaki.govt.nz

If you find something, try not to disturb it. If visiting archaeological sites, take your rubbish and memories away with you – leave everything else where it is.

Preserving our natural history, and the history of New Zealand, is something everyone can be involved in.

ENDS

Thursday 23 July 2025

Waitaki Grown: Promising Results from Year One Medicinal Crop Trials

Waitaki Grown is pleased to share early results from the first harvest of the Waitaki Grown medicinal crop trials, including encouraging phytochemical test results from four promising root crops: Astragalus, Baical Skullcap, Liquorice, and Withania.

Waitaki Grown is a collaborative project between Waitaki District Council and farmers to support land use diversification in Waitaki to add resilience and support economic growth of our vital primary sector. The project looks to develop new crops, new products and access new high value markets.

This marks a significant milestone for the Waitaki Grown project, which is exploring the viability of growing high-value medicinal plants in our unique environment. Testing was carried out by one of Australasia's most reputable phytochemical laboratories, with results providing critical insights into the potential of these crops for future commercialisation.

Key Findings from Year 1 Phytochemistry Testing

Astragalus showed strong phytochemical content, with saponin levels (specifically astragalosides) exceeding those in high-quality reference samples. This is particularly exciting given this was a first-year crop and the crop is traditionally grown over a two year cycle

Baical Skullcap also performed well, with 9.22% baicalin - a key bioactive compound - detected in our sample. This is close to the 10.72% benchmark from the reference material and suggests strong potential to cultivate this crop as an annual in Waitaki conditions.

Liquorice returned lower levels of glycyrrhizic acid in its first year, which was expected. The crop typically requires 2 - 3 years to reach peak phytochemical content and yield. These early findings reinforce the need for multi-year cultivation trials.

Withania (Ashwagandha) presented more modest results, with lower withanolide levels compared to benchmarks. However, it remains a viable candidate for local processing due to its ease of cultivation and potential market for lower-grade material.

Council's Business and Enterprise Growth lead, Rebecca Finlay, said:

"These results are a major step forward for Waitaki Grown. We're learning what works here, how to improve crop quality and yields, and which species have the strongest commercial potential growing in our climate. The results for Astragalus and Baical Skullcap are particularly encouraging.

These crops could provide a high-value diversification option for our farming sector. On the back of a challenging growing year where we had major weed problems a positive result like this is the motivation the team needed to continue with this innovative project."

Looking Ahead

The project team is using these findings to refine planting and harvesting strategies in Year Two, with a focus on improving phytochemical content, trialling different growing methods, and evaluating two-year crops next autumn.

The Waitaki Grown project is also exploring future research partnerships, including applications in animal health and soil wellbeing. This reflects a broader vision for integrated land use systems that support environmental and economic sustainability in the district.

Mayor for the Waitaki District, Gary Kircher said: "Projects like Waitaki Grown are about exploring future pathways for farmers and land use in the District. North Otago has some of the best growing soil in the country, and working with our farmers to support land use diversification into medicinal crops as an alternative, high-value option, will ensure we get the best out of it."

Waitaki District Council's Chief Executive, Alex Parmley, said: "Our transformed organisation is all about partnering with our communities to achieve the best results for the Waitaki District. This innovative crop trial is about supporting our farmers in exploring how we can diversify the way we farm in Waitaki, adding resilience to our agricultural sector and ensuring it continues to drive economic growth in our district."

More Information

Community members or potential growers who would like to learn more or get involved in Year Two trials are encouraged to contact the Waitaki Grown team via Waitaki District Council.

ENDS



Dried Baical Skullcap



Viv Ferne and Jae Omnet - freshly harvested roots