

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

NEWSLETTER OF THE UPPER CLUTHA HISTORICAL RECORDS SOCIETY INC.

(Upper Clutha includes Cardrona, Albert Town, Luggate, Queensberry, Tarras, Hawea, Makarora, Wanaka and Lakes Wanaka and Hawea)

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GEORGE HUMPHREY'S STORY BY MARGARET THOMLINSON

In the Spring edition of 'Those Were the Days', 2020 I reported that we had received Ken Humphrey's family albums from his son Allan Humphrey. These gave a fascinating insight into early life in the Makarora Valley. In that report I noted that many photos related to Ken's father, George Humphrey, and his time as a Government Guide hunting Red Deer in the Makarora/Haast valleys in the 1920s.

Last year I was contacted by Kevin Whitelaw of Hamner Springs. He had known Ken, had hunted deer in the Makarora area with Dave Osmer and was hoping to look at Ken's photos. We were able to share the hunting photos with him and found out that he had previously written two articles on hunting in the Makarora area, one on George Humphrey and another on hunting guides from Hawea, including Donald Bell, Con Hodgkinson, the Muir brothers Jim (known as the Prince of Guides), Regie and Ronnie, and Jim Buckley. Kevin kindly gave us copies of both for our archives and these are available for anyone with an interest in the Makarora community, or in the glory days of hunting, to access. I have used excerpts (*items in italics*) in the following article.

George Humphrey's story epitomises the strength and endurance needed to survive and prosper in such isolated areas in the early days of the 20th century. He was born *'on 22nd October 1892, at the Young River where it enters the Makarora. His father cut timber from the valley and operated a sawmill at Sawmill Flat; his parents raised a family of 11 and never saw a doctor.'*

On leaving school George worked at the Makarora Flax Mill.



Flax Mill workers.

This closed in 1920 and George began a life-long involvement in farming, working as a shepherd first on Black Forest Station in the Lindis Pass area and then on Mount Albert and Makarora Stations. After this *'George and his brother-in-law took up the ownership of the family sawmill. Now the hard yakka really started, when timber felled in the Young Valley was dragged across the river and milled at the plant. It was then dried and prepared for rafting down the, often fickle, Makarora River to the head of Lake Wanaka'*.



Rafting Timber

Red deer were often sighted in the area – and some no doubt shot despite *'the shooting of deer during this period being strictly seasonal and licensed'*. Acclimatisation societies had been set up in the late 1800s to import and release deer. Later they issued hunting licences, and organised hunts.

Red Deer in the South Island came from English and Scottish game parks, where they had been bred for their large antlers. They produced trophy heads with large, symmetrical antlers. A herd liberated in the Rakaia River valley in 1897, spread from there into Westland. An Otago herd was liberated near Palmerston in 1871 and spread into the nearby ranges.

George's interest in deer hunting was kindled in 1912 after seeing the first deer shot in the Makarora area by Jack Faulks.

In 1922 George had a license for his home patch when tempted by a powerful stag on the other side of a flooded Makarora River. After three days waiting he was able to cross and stalk the stag *'where it held its position in the beech. The shot was close and George stood over a massive animal with antlers that would make any stalker happy'*. It was a 20 pointer measuring 38 1/4 inch in both length and in spread; it went 332 3/8 on the Douglas Score - a New Zealand scoring system that puts emphasis on symmetry and "typical" head shape and structure.

This head was later mounted and taken to England by Major (Bob) Wilson and Jack Faulks. There it was exhibited in the New Zealand Display at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 and then again in Dunedin at the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in 1925/26.

It was after this that George *'set up as a guide for wealthy locals and overseas visitors --. He was blessed with physical strength, excellent stalking skills and extensive background knowledge. A popular figure, he became widely respected and highly rated among his contemporaries.'*

The first from overseas was Englishman John Cobald who had met Major Wilson at the Wembley Exhibition and arrived with him for the 1925 season. Cobald was *'an experienced Scottish deerstalker---. He was a cousin of Lord Kitchener and successful businessman and farmer.'* George, with the help of Rex Dunning of 'Makarora Accommodation House', set up camp in the Wills Valley from where, Cobald, having an injured leg *'they hunted the sun-drenched flats and terraces'* with little success. Luck came when they managed to get onto the tussock slopes of Mt Brewster. They had luck again on the Will's flats and again up the Young Valley after a few days' relaxation at 'Makarora House'. When Cobald left he mentioned to Major Wilson that his shares in Europe had appreciated by £60,000 while he had been in New Zealand.

The next year George guided Captain Stephen Mallett, his daughter Molly and her friend Miss Norton-Francis. They spent the season hunting in the Burke River area, the Howe Valley while the ladies rested in Makarora and the Wilkin and Siberia Valleys from a camp at Kerin Forks, set up by Rex Dunning and Donald Bell who shared the guiding. It was a successful season with Molly gaining *'the distinction of taking one of the finest stags shot that year.'*

Guiding provided income that *'helped Humphrey purchase the Poole family farm near the head of Lake Wanaka in 1926'*. 1927 was an eventful year too as he sold out of the sawmill and married Miss Elma Falconer in Christchurch. Together they raised five children on their farm, adding 300 acres to the farm in 1930.



The Humphrey farm and home, Makarora

'Although now a runholder Humphrey continued to advise and guide deerstalkers whenever his services were required.'

This included guiding British dignitary Colonel George Strutt and his wife in the Landsborough Valley for six weeks of the 1928 season. After successfully hunting the top end of the valley George and the Colonel were eventually forced to retreat when heavy rain arrived. It was a fast trip out to the rest of the party at base camp with one bad moment when the Colonel 'froze' at a difficult crossing. George was able to coax him over with the aid of a shot of whiskey and a stout pole. The whole party waited out the storm at base camp then, when it cleared, George started out for Makarora with the Colonel and his wife.

Later that day they returned unexpectedly to camp after a near disaster when George decided to take a lower route out as the Colonel was too weak to tackle the higher one. *'When Strutt was crossing a nasty gut he feebly grasped a fragile tree which pulled away, causing him to tumble into the swollen river. Mrs Strutt, who was some years younger than her husband, didn't hesitate in jumping into the water to rescue the Colonel.'* They were both now caught in a *'vicious eddy beneath the vertical slimy bluff.'* George was able to grab a lengthy pole and, shedding his gear slid down to a narrow perch from where he could reach Mrs Strutt with the pole and pull her out. He had her climb onto his shoulders from where he could push her up to safety before repeating the process with the Colonel. When they reached camp Colonel Strutt *'shattered and exhausted, sought the whisky and raised the bottle as a toast to Humphrey.'* Strutt's pack was retrieved some months later and in 1932 his gun was found buried in the sand and returned to him.



During the late 1920s many people lost their jobs because of the depression and the Public Works Department employed men to improve the bridle track to Makarora. In 1928 George started a butchery business to feed the workers, alongside his farm work. He continued this business when the Haast track was worked on – by now with a lorry.

In 1929 George was tempted by the roar of a stag at the mouth of the Craigie Burn Valley on the lower slopes of Mt Gilbert even though he did not have a license for that area. He and his wife stalked and shot the magnificent, 18 point stag whose antlers measured 43 ½ in length, 42 5/8 spread and had a Douglas score of 326 1/8. They returned home after dark as the Ranger, Eric James, was *'a fair man but a stickler for the law'* and *'George drafted his license application that same night and set about boiling the head clean.'* When dry it was stashed under a bed. Unfortunately, it was found by their fox terrier who brought the jaw out in its mouth when the ranger's wife was visiting. Mrs Humphrey *'swiftly ushered foxy and its delight outside --- commenting that the dog had no business bringing smelly sheep bones into the house.'*

The golden days of hunting were nearly over as, after their numbers grew hugely and they became a pest, deer came under government control in 1930 and deer culling began.

This was the year that Lord and Lady Latymer made their first hunting trip to Makarora and employed George as their guide for several weeks in the Landsborough Valley. I noted this trip in the 1920 Spring Newsletter. This trip was so successful that Lord Latymer gave George his 6.5 Mannlicher rifle in appreciation.

The Latymers were to return two more times. In 1933, with their daughter, they returned to the Landsborough where Lord Latymer was unimpressed with the *'results of the work undertaken by the Government deer shooters.'* They spent the last two weeks in the Wilkin. On their last trip in 1936 they had successful trip hunting in the Albert Burn valley.

'George Humphrey lived through the once only period of our hunting history'. He continued his enjoyment of hunting, later with his son Ken, and farming his land. In 1955 he sold the farm and retired. George passed away on 31 January 1962 at Balclutha Hospital, in his 70th year.

HISTORY MADE! – THE WINTER OLYMPICS

Not everything that is important to celebrate happened decades ago. History is being made every day and didn't the Wanaka representatives of the New Zealand Team do well?? They did not all win gold but boy, did they do well on the international scene and aren't they all excellent representatives of the Upper Clutha Area? We must be doing something right up here. I even had message from a couple from Austen, Texas, that I last met in 2016, congratulating the area on producing so many wonderful young people. Small world.

Great effort!

MYSTERY CAR

The Mystery Car query in the last newsletter elicited that it was a Dodge from the early 1920s – 1919 at the earliest. The photograph had been captioned as “The First Car to Cross on the Albert Town punt”. There have been claims ranging from 1909 to 1919 for this event but the earliest documented one I have found, was a report in a 1912 newspaper (Timaru Herald and others, 15 Mar 1912). The first known private car in the Upper Clutha is reported to have been purchased by Bill Kingan of Maungawera in March 1912 (Lake County Press 4 Apr 1912).

A RANDOM PHOTO



A colourized photo of Cardrona School 1917

100 YEARS AGO

On 20 February 1922 the Wanaka Fallen Soldiers Memorial was unveiled by Mr J. Horn MP.



And for the farmers:

OTAGO.

The weather experienced in Otago during the week was pleasant if somewhat variable in respect to temperatures, and at times it was a trifle too warm. We want sunny weather, however, if only to hasten the crops along, which are ripening slowly enough. Central Otago way crops are, of course, more advanced than along the coast, where harvesting is just commencing. The grass is holding out well, and all stock are in excellent condition. Quite a stir in lambs, both fat and store sorts, has occurred during the past fortnight, and some districts have been cleaned up. Owners should not sacrifice their ewes. If lambs are worth the money to-day, be sure their mothers must appreciate. In cattle there is some slight inquiry for young sorts. Why? Apparently in sympathy only with lamb movement.

AND NOW A MYSTERY PUB – THE LIVERPOOL ARMS HOTEL

Now you are all a bit young to have entered the premises and imbibed, given that it closed about 1890 and in fact may never have got an accommodation licence! But where was it? The proprietors were Francis (Frank) Ellis Woodhouse and his wife Elizabeth and we know it was situated on the Cromwell-Wanaka Road. It was in the general area of Queensberry and at least one document says “Woodhouse Creek”. That name no longer exists and it appears that the names of creeks in the area changed at whim according to who owned the land. The Woodhouse family appeared to be in residence from about 1888 to 1891/2 before they apparently abandoned the hotel. One theory was that it was situated between Locharburn (Gravelly Gully?) and Kidds Creek/Gully.

There is little written about the Queensberry area history and if you have any ideas/theories, could you please email me (treasurer@uppercluthahistory.org). Any information about the Hotel or Queensberry, will be gratefully received.

PLANS FOR THE YEAR

Apart from trying to catch up it is difficult to formulate any fixed plans for the next 12 months. However, we will keep on doing our best to record and disseminate the history of the Upper Clutha.

We are planning to have the Annual General Meeting on 25 May, all going well, and the Secretary Steve, will send out a formal notice in due course.

Anyone interested in joining our Committee will be warmly welcomed, so please contact one of the existing Committee members if you have any queries. “New blood” is essential to any organization.

The Newsletter will have two new regular sections – Maps and Their Stories and a revamp of Random Photos to show some recent photos the Society has acquired as well as some of the older ones.

We also hope to make some progress on the new slideshow in the Library. The past year has been a difficult one for undertaking research and all going well we can get on with this project and get it up and running. It will replace the slideshow currently being displayed in the Library.

MAPS AND THEIR STORIES

The Society has accumulated a comprehensive collection of maps, with wide ranging types, purposes, scales, and dating back to the simplest of ‘memory’ sketches drawn in 1843 in pencil, by a Maori named Huruhuru. The collection, in addition to both early and more recent

topographical maps, includes examples of Survey and special purpose (Cadastral) maps, which identify not only each parcel of land, but also provides details of its Location, Block, Section numbers, and Area. Over the next few issues of our quarterly Newsletter, it is proposed to look at the collection in some detail, identify these differing types and how they came to be in the Society's possession.

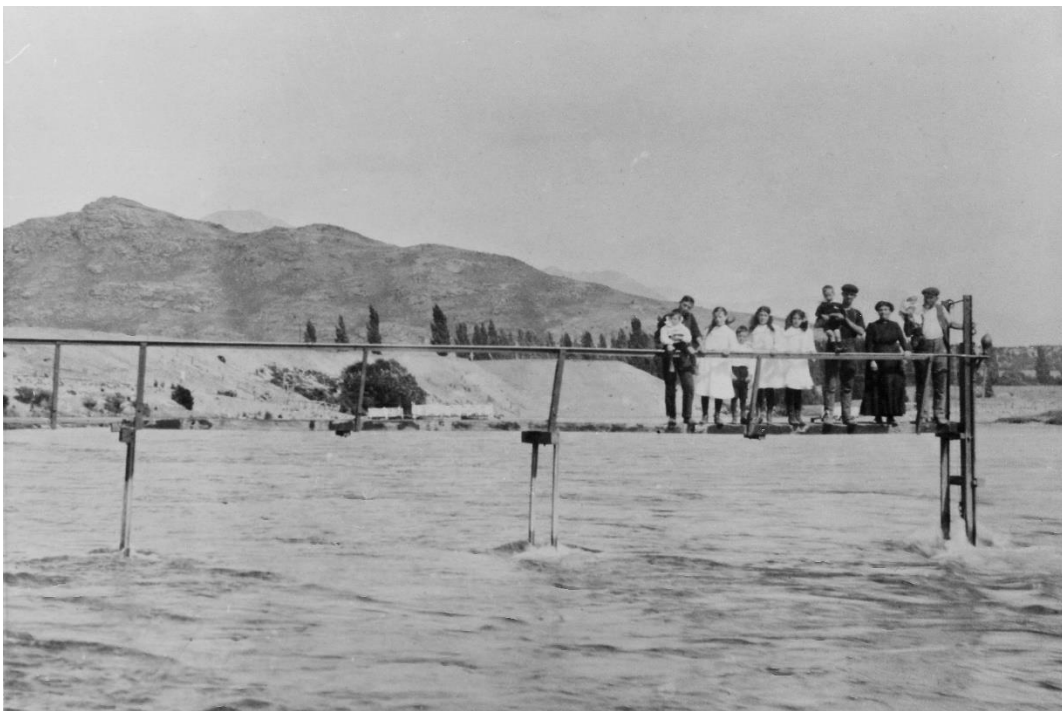
David Simmers – Maps Convenor

JO'S UPDATE

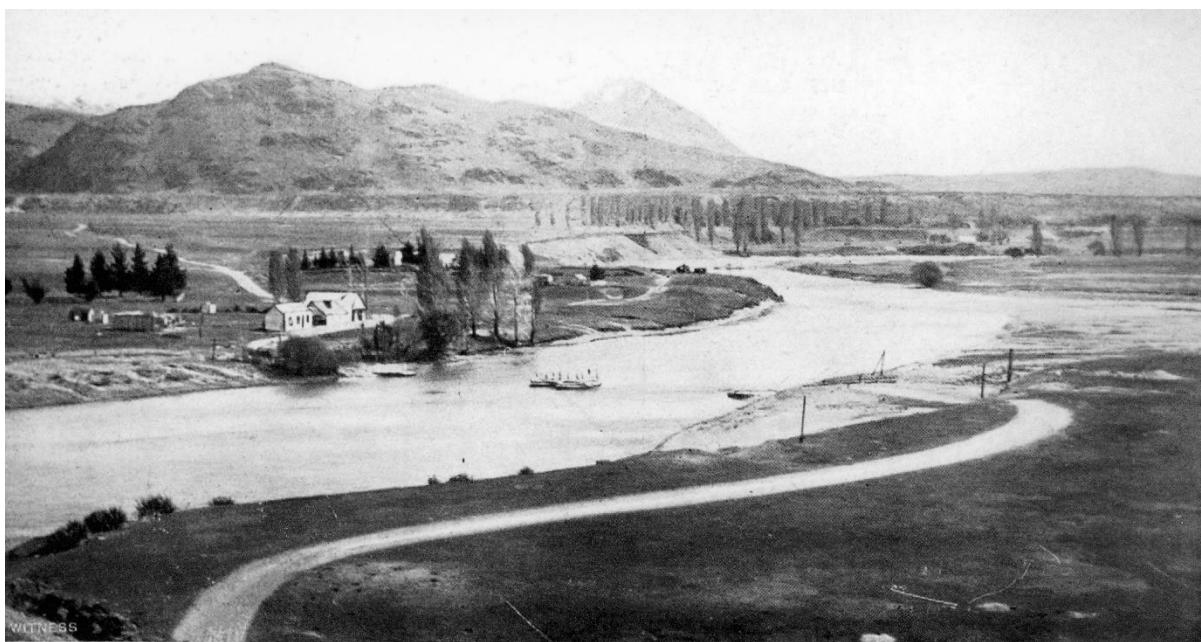
There is a bit of catching up to do with recording the Records Room acquisitions following the lockdowns.

Wednesday morning session (9am to 11am) at the Wanaka Library have recommenced. If you do have any queries, please call in or make them via our website. We will work on getting a reply back to you asap.

RECENT PHOTOS ACQUIRED



Templeton family members on their small jetty just below where the Upper Albert Town punt operated (about 1900).



VIEW OF ALBERTTOWN, HAWEA FLAT, AT THE JUNCTION OF THE CLUTHA AND HAWEA RIVERS,
A. Tomlinson, photo. SHOWING THE PUNT CROSSING RIVER.

THANKS

Thanks must be given to the various publications that were the sources of the information in the newsletter. Individuals are too numerous to list but references have been sourced from Paperspast.co.nz, a number of out-of-print publications and the records of the UCHRS.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

The Society has published a small number of books and booklets over the years.

Skirt Tales – 100 Historical Stories of Women from the Upper Clutha Area, Central Otago - \$25. This is the 4th time this book has been reprinted. It is available from the Society, and the Wanaka Library. Postage is \$7-50 if required.

The Sequel – - \$25. A sequel to Skirt Tales. A small number of copies of this book are available from The Society and the Wanaka Library. Postage \$7-50.

125, Look Alive – 125 Years of Schooling in the Wanaka District - \$15.00. Available from the Society or the Wanaka Library. Postage is \$7-00 if required.

The Upper Clutha – 150 Years - \$5. A short history of the Upper Clutha district. Available from the Society or the Wanaka Library. Postage is \$6-50 if required.

Courageous and Free – \$30 -Stories of Upper Clutha WW1 Soldiers and Nurse who died due to war service. This is the second edition. Postage \$7-50.

NZ Post “Bubble Bags” are used to protect the books.

PHOTOS

Copies of the photographs held in our records can be provided either as a digital file or a printed copy.

Costs are:

For individuals:

Digital file: \$10-00

Printed Copy: \$10-00 plus the cost of printing the Photo at Kodak, Wanaka.

For Non-profit Community organizations:

There is generally no fee for digital copies but a donation would be welcome. For printed copies, the Community organization will need to pay for the Kodak Wanaka printing cost.

For Commercial Organizations:

The fee is \$30.00 plus the cost of any printed copy.

Please note that ownership of the image lies with UCHRS and further copying requires our written approval and possibly an additional negotiated fee.

WHO ARE WE?

President: Bruce Foulds

Vice President: Jo Wilton

Secretary: Steve Moss

Treasurer/Editor: Ken Allan

Committee Members: Ken and Margaret Thomlinson, Graham Dickson, David Simmers, Pam Kane, and ex-officio, Ed Taylor.

The Society was established in 1985, Incorporated in 2010, and became a Charity in 2014, to collect and preserve records and images of the history of the Upper Clutha region and make them available to members of the public. The records are held in a special room in the Wanaka Library and a small team of volunteers provides research assistance (appointments are necessary) to members of the public who may be looking for their family history or for persons searching for aspects of NZ history. Copying costs apply.

Please contact a Librarian at the Wanaka Library who will pass on the request or send us an email to admin@uppercluthahistory.org.

The Society is a Registered Charity. Funding is reliant on the assistance of a variety of community funders and individual gifts. Donations are very welcome, as are new members.

Donations may be made to our bank account 03-1739-0012311-00 with the reference – Donation. As we are a Registered Charity, donations over \$5 are tax deductible – please ask for a receipt. Please note that the IRD require donor’s full name and full address

Membership Subscriptions for year ending 31/3/2022 are \$15-00 per person.

Website: <http://www.uppercluthahistory.org/>

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