One Hundred Years of Farming in Waikoikoi.

Written by George A Simmers as background information for the chapter of the same title in "A Rich Harvest", the 1980 Centennial publication of the Waikoikoi District.

It has proved to be a very humbling experience to look back one hundred years and see something of those hardy people who came to the 'Koi' to start a new life on 200-acre blocks of bare tussock, and to realise something of their courage and strength of character.

"To look at the rock from which we were hewn". The Bible.

There had been the runholders before them, but it was these first Deferred Payment Settlers who were vitally interested in establishing a school and other community amenities and who supplied most of the pupils for the former. In-fact there was no school at all till two and a half years after they came.

The first settlement consisted of sections from parts of two runs – the Waikoikoi segment of 'Glenkenich' held under Grazing Licence by Captain FW McKenzie, and those parts of 'Merino Downs' held by Mr Hugh McIntyre, and which he had not already made freehold.

The conditions of Deferred Payments were –
1) Payments had to be made half yearly for ten years.
2) No more than 200 acres for each settler.
3) Each settler had to make a permanent residence on his section.

We are fortunate that the 'Tapanui Courier' was then a flourishing newspaper which soon had a 'Koi' correspondent – believed to be Mr W Lavender. He went to very commendable lengths to report all happenings in the community. It is from copies of the 'Courier' kept in the Hocken Library that a great deal of the following material comes.

Buying the Sections.

A certain number were sold in the Freehold Sector of the sale, obviously with the purpose of enabling the Runholders to consolidate in smaller but viable properties.

But for the Deferred Payment Sections, the procedure was – you put your name down for the Section or alternative Sections you were interested in, then attended their auction.

At the land sale of Sections (Secs) in BLK IX, Glenkenich SD held in Tapanui in Jan 1877, J Sheed bought his Sec 27 for the upset price of 3/-per acre for all Secs. WJ Stark paid 6/2 for Sec 33, and P Scott 3/- for Sec 36.

These were the only Sections in BLK IX that had not already been freeholded by Mr McIntyre. Secs 22, 23, and 25 were offered earlier that day in the Freehold Sector of the sale. These were close to his homestead so, in this case, as in that of other Sections vital to him, he had to buy them.

At the next sale of Sections held in Tapanui on May 30, 1877, the hall was packed – as the 'Courier' puts it "filled to excess". This time it was BLK X. There were up to 15 applicants for some Sections, and at the auction some extremely high prices prevailed. For instance, Sec

39 being 57 acres wet and mostly flood-prone land, between the winding 'Koi' creek and the road to Pomahaka, with 12 applicants, reached 18/- an acre. This being the approximate equivalent of 9 pounds an acre Freehold. It was knocked down to a S Whitty, but it is possible he had second thoughts after the sale and backed out. There were some time delays in registering titles, but this shows that Robert Weir described as a shoemaker, as being the first owner. It would be him who built the homestead and planted the trees alongside the Black Bridge. He apparently carried on with his trade, operating out of a well - appointed workshop on Sec. 39, and later prospered from shifts to Merino Downs and finally Hokonui. The next owners would not live there. They were Dr. JB McKenzie of Wellington, and FW McKenzie, described as manager of 'Glenkenich', who bought Sec 39 in 1895. They also purchased Sec 7 of 461 acres across the 'Koi' Creek and sold the lot to William Cooper in 1904.

Other prices recorded in the Deferred Payment Sector were –
14/- by A Tunn for the centre Sec 37 of 'Mt Annan', - with 13 applicants.
10/6 by Agnes Black for Sec 32 – 12 applicants.
10/- by James McCall for Sec. 36 – 7 applicants. This being the lowest section of 'Mt Annan' with the deepest gully in it. Other prices that day range from 5/2 for Sec. 23, paid by Jackson (this is the steep broken section later held by J MacNee and now in more modern times, part of Graham Davie's property), to 8/10 paid by Robert Simmers for Sec. 31. There was no bid for Section 15 – steep land now also part of Graham Davie's farm.

Although under the Deferred Payment System no capital outlay for the land was required, it was necessary to build some sort of house, provide food and clothing for the family, a team of horses and enough chaff for at least a year. Other barest essentials included a plough, a set of harrows, a cow, fencing materials, horse covers, plus there would be little actual income from the farm for a couple of years. Some partly overcome this by contract ploughing or cropping on the runs, or road work. Quite a few of the early settlers got into financial difficulties, causing widespread forced sales across the district.

A change was made to the Deferred Payment Terms, and the period for payment extended to fifteen years.

Some settlers threw up their farms. These were then resold, and some were able to buy them back for the (comparatively) absurd price of 1/6 per acre. Others who had made considerable improvements, such as buildings, cultivation, and fencing, were afraid to do so lest they were outbid, and lose their homes.

It is called "liquidity problems" today, but at that time one prominent farmer was short of ready cash. He had a railway truck of oats to sell but, so that he could be sure to get cash payment for it instead of just being used to bring down his firms account, he arranged with one of his neighbours that it should go forward in his name. After a few weeks when nothing more was heard, he approached the neighbour, and got the answer "what oats"? That was the very sticky end of that.

The records of the Lands and Deeds Department of that time make rather dismal reading with the “Exercise of Power of Sale under Mortgage No…….” appearing on several Titles, and not just confine to Deferred Payment Settlers.

From 1872 onwards, so they could consolidate their holdings and before the impending influx of speculators and settlers, the runholders had to participate in the bidding. The whole area had been surveyed into sections, and they were put in the awkward situation of being forced to bid for each section individually, even those which lay at their backdoors. However, the ‘bigger’ people ran into difficulties as well. They had extremely heavy stock losses during the big snow and floods of 1878, and at the same time rabbits multiplied disastrously, while prices for wool, meat, and grain, remained at low levels. This certainly affected the runholder as well as the small farmers, as far as securing stock replacements were concerned. There was ‘no way’ losses could be offset immediately, even if they were able to buy them. It is understood that Merino Downs Station shore 20000 sheep in its heyday before the snow and only a fraction after it.

So for some of the runholders, the beautiful dream of a large Estate similar for example to ‘Longbeach’ in Canterbury or those which may have existed in Great Britain, was turned into a ghastly nightmare.

A factor in forcing up land prices in 1877 was the operation of speculators such as William James Mudie Larnach of ‘Larnach’s Castle’, and Henry Driver, Manager of NZ Loan and Mercantile Co. When they came together originally, he was head auctioneer, and initially in 1874 bought 2990 acres of BLK VIII. Waipahi SD. Driver subsequently sold half to Larnach and from then on, they worked mainly in partnership. At the May 30, 1877, land sale in Tapanui, they bought 2000 acres BLK X. Glenkenich SD. Then in another land sale on July 30, 1877, they bought section by section 4320 acres being practically all BLK IX. Waipahi SD, at sometimes 2 ½ times the upset price. This meant that in addition to the 2990 acres above, they had bought the whole of what became the ‘Conical Hill Station’. In 1879 they sold this to Watson Shennan of ‘Puketoi’ for 50600 pounds, slightly more than they paid for it, and probably clinching the deal before the big snow of 1878. As well as their influence to inflate the land market in this way, it was their intervention in the sale of Deferred Payment sections that was less ethical and more damaging as far as the DP Settlers were concerned. It is impossible to know how many sections they bid on, but in the January 1877 sale of BLK IX Glenkenich SD, Larnach bought on his own Sec. 42, a long triangular piece on the western side of ‘Springvale’ and ‘Stoneyburn’. It seems probable he also bid - or he may have been taking refreshments - and missed out on Sec. 41 (bought by James Burnett) because he did buy Sec. 40, (‘The Camp’) at the same sale.

In the 1877 May Sale of Sections in BLK X Glenkenich SD, Sec. 38 was bought by a W Morton, and Sec. 37 with 13 applicants, was by Andrew Tunn for 14/- per acre – inflated price for bare land at that altitude. Apparently these two men were ‘dummies’ for Henry Driver and this deception was meant more for local consumption, as both Sections were immediately registered in Henry Drivers name, and what is more, the house for Tunn (who was Driver’s coachman) was built across the boundary of the two sections, to comply with the residential requirements for both, thus successfully breaching all three of the Deferred Payment

conditions. Henry Driver probably had a premonition of what this land would look like in a hundred years and knew good land when he saw it. These two sections today make up the best part of 'Mt Annan'. It is also surprising that Driver received immediate title, because the Deferred Payment Settlers, did not get theirs until the land was freeholded 15 years later. For some reason Driver sold it to Larnach in 1879 after the 1878 snow, which would have surely been very deep at that altitude. Larnach leased it to John Johnston, who bought it in 1898 and sold it to Donald Forbes in 1901. It was finally bought by David McCall 1919.

The Arrival of the Deferred Payment Settlers.

For some families their relocation, in some instances from a considerable distance e.g., on the Taieri, Palmerston and even Kakanui just south of Oamaru, was a major logistical exercise. This was the start of a completely new life. A fine example is contained in the reminiscences of James Simmers, youngest son of early settlers Robert & Elizabeth Simmers and written in 1959 at the age of 90.

As a young lad of eleven he came from Kakanui with his father and mother, plus three brothers and two sisters in a covered eight horse wagon. The body of this extended a foot out over the wheels, and with a felt lined tilt gave space six feet wide and eleven feet long in which the four boys and the driver slept on top of the sacks of chaff required for the horses. His father, mother and sisters stayed in hotels at approximately 20-mile intervals at Hampden, Palmerston, Waikouaiti, Waitati and Dunedin. While the wagon carried on its journey to Stirling, it is thought the rest of the family stayed in Dunedin buying essential supplies and equipment (e.g., two unassembled ploughs, and harrows). Before the railway bridge was finished over the Clutha River in 1878, Stirling was the end of the railway line, and it is assumed the family caught up with the wagon there.

The wagon stopped for the night at approximately twenty-mile intervals, and there was no formed road after Wairuna. It became just the wagon and dray tracks of the Old Lake Road which passed round the foot of Conical Hill, then westwards up towards the Landslip, over the saddle at the head of the Glenshee Valley, and eventually to Lake Wakatipu. Heavily loaded James mentions getting stuck for the night due to heavy rain, on the Waipahi side of the Landslip. The driver (McCallum) and at least one of the boys walked on to Pat Scott's. (He was already in residence, having bought his Section in the January 1877 sale).

Robert had spent a few days after purchasing his Section at the May 1877 sale, putting up the sod walls of their temporary home before returning to Kakanui. He then had to sell both the herd of cows and the dairy farm, purchase everything needed for the shift including eight draft horses, harness etc. It would be at least September before the family of two daughters, four sons plus the teamster, got under way. It wasn't exactly summer either because daughter Jane could remember snow lying on the ground as they had their last breakfast before descending into the Glenshee Valley.

One of the deciding reasons for coming south was that the dairy farm relied mainly on a dam and roof water for its permanent water supply. There had been a particularly bad drought that year. Obviously, there were permanent creeks on the 'Koi' place, and there was a very good spring within a few chains of where the first sod house was built.

One of their first tasks on arrival was to dig a cutting through the high clay bank below where the school grounds are now situated, make a ford through the Koi creek so they could get to Tapanui. There was a sawmill and stores there. They would require timber and iron for the roof of the sod house and supplies. Apart from the odd matagouri bush, there was no firewood about, so they probably took back some good black pine. Initially the presence of a seam of lignite coal on the property, had not been discovered. They would also need at least enough posts and wire to make a paddock on which to run the horses and a cow. A keg of salted butter brought from Kakanui, soon went rancid, so two of the boys walked over to Wairuna to collect a cow purchased on the way through.

The sod house would have no 'mod cons' – hot and cold water. The floor covering was rushes - you wouldn't need to sweep it. The baking of bread was done in a camp oven with a heavy cast iron lid, on which hot black pine cinders and later coal was heaped to heat the top of the loaf. Even when bakers bread became available, the Simmers family still preferred the home-made loaf, if they could get it. Cooking was done in pots suspended with wire hooks from a bar.

A ploughman, Bob Hammel, was employed for a while, so a total of nine people would have to be catered for and live in those two rooms. The boys and the man probably slept in the wagon when it was at home. After the ploughing on the home farm was done, the two four horse teams went out contract ploughing. In 1877 – 78 this was done at 'Wantwood', Greenvale, Otama and Conical Hill, and would continue right through the summer. At that time the longer the fallow under tussock the better – twelve months, if possible, unless topdressing was an option.

1878 – 79 Robert engaged in road contract work at Pomahaka, Crookston and Kelso. The wagon went with the teams during this work, so apparently on these occasions the boys would sleep in a tent. Their first full year doing this work was in 1878 – the year of the great snow.

James writes that two to three feet of snow fell with drifts up to forty feet in the gullies. He describes how he was sent with a message to the ploughing camp and forced to stay there for a fortnight. There was of course no school for him to worry about – it hadn't been built but probably would have been closed anyway. He and his oldest brother George just stayed there and fed the horses. Probably comfortable enough with the wagon to sleep in and cook at. Those in the two roomed sod house back on the farm, did have an iron roof, but un-sarked was barely satisfactory, in fact not as good as a thatched roof.

Robert Simmers had been a carpenter back in Tarves, Scotland, and did not do much team-work with the horses. Initially he would dig down banks and dig out rocks etc. in front of the plough. Quite probably a stable for the horses was built first, even before a proper home. It did have a loft for the boys to sleep in, between the rafters, and just above the horses' heads. The loft was still there in 1950, when the stable was demolished, and lined with Otago Witness pictures. The stable floor initially consisted of flat rocks fitted together – not too easily cleaned and impossible to keep odour free. Not before the Spring of 1878 did Robert commence building a permanent homestead. It was as plain a style as possible, with

minimum eaves, and similar in many respects to farmhouses in Scotland except they would be built of stone, and several hundred years old. When it was being demolished many years later, it was noticeable that the studs were not only checked into the top and bottom plates but were neatly mortised right through them – quite a job. Also, the modern system of putting down the floor before erecting the studs was used. Although there was bound to be rain on the flooring before the roof went on, there were no humps, hollows, or cracks in the floor. The house also had solid concrete foundations.

Developing the Land

An article in the Tapanui Courier on 24 May 1887, featured 'Ardwell Farm', owned by Mr John Sheed (in modern times Geoff Lietze), highlighting how the development of these farms was tackled. The Courier reported that it was indeed a model farm, with the only limiting factor being the quality of the roads (tracks) which surrounded it.

In less than five years, the entire two hundred acres had been ploughed out of tussock, fallowed for a year – or if possible, followed by turnips, then a crop of wheat. After a crop of oats, the land was sown in permanent grass – ryegrass, cocksfoot, timothy, white and red clover. The wheat yields averaged forty bushels / acre, and Sutherland's oats fifty bushels.

The Courier went on to say –
"A tidy homestead and well-established garden with vegetables, small fruits and fruit trees, shelter trees coming away well, good gates, neat fences, workmanlike sheaf stacks and a good class of stock bespeak the farmer. It reminds those who have seen it of AH Whyte's property, undoubtedly the best in the Tapanui District".

Sheed believed in deep ploughing and intended to lime all his property. Further-more he considered that with mixed farming a man could do well on 200 acres. He did however start off on the right foot by buying his farm at the more reasonably priced 1877 January Land Sale, for the upset price of 3/- per acre. He also sold a house in Lawrence before coming to the Koi indicating that he may have struck colour at Gabriel's Gully. Most likely however, his successful farming was due to hard work enabling him to buy two more sections at the dispersal of the Merino Downs properties, giving him a total of 430 acres. He sold the lot in 1897 for the very reasonable price of 2200 pounds, being less than most settlers paid for bare tussock at the 1877 May land sale. Unfortunately for the next owner it was sold in 1900 'Under Powers of Sale' by his mortgagors. The home block of 199 acres sold for the ridiculously low price of 800 pounds 4/- per acre, however given the low prices received for farm produce at this time, it is not difficult to understand why.

In the Courier dated 11th March 1895 prices quoted were as follows –
Oats 1/7 per bushel, Wheat 3/6 per bushel.
Freezing buyers were operating at 2 ½ d per lb for lamb. Wethers up to 8/- per head. Prime bullocks 9 pounds / head. While Capt. McKenzie had pure bred Romney rams for sale at 2 pounds each. The report pointed out that frozen mutton and lamb are now bringing less than a few years earlier due to little enthusiasm being shown by protective European buyers.

Incidentally, there was a piece in the Courier on Feb. 7th, 1877, stating that the 'white' workers at 'Brooksdale' had been paid off and replaced by Chinese from the goldfields, because they toiled harder for less money and food. It was said, "they could live on the smell of an oily rag."

As an example, which has already been quoted, quite a few of these first settlers came from small farms particularly at Palmerston, on the Taieri and elsewhere. They would, at least, require more horses. Then there were many others who would have to buy a complete team.

With so many intensive land settlements proceeding at this time throughout the South Island this was reflected in an acute demand. To give an idea what this meant, at a stock sale reported in the Courier on January 24th, 1877, good draught horses were quoted as bringing £50 to £60. A later sale in the same year saw them up to £75.

Compare this with the prospective returns in the same sale report for produce, stock, and wool. They were little better than the 1895 quotations given already.

As far as the actual Farming Operations were concerned – some oats were probably grown on the first furrow out of tussock, to have horse feed as soon as possible. It would require a good area as it would probably be a sparse crop.

The usual rotation would be like that of Jas. Sheed already quoted. Initially, and especially after a good fallow, the land would work down easily with ordinary harrows. Turnip seed was scattered on by hand. Later a 'hurdy gurdy' was used. It was strapped in front of you and a handle was turned to spray out the seed. They probably did not use artificial manure for a start, but this was soon available as can be seen from W.R. Quin's ad in the Courier of 1880.

Malden Island Guano £4.15 a ton

Superphosphate £6.10 a ton

He also advertised Lime for sale.

If ridged turnips or swedes were called for, probably to have them bigger and more easily pulled for the cows, ridges were set up beforehand either with a 'swing plough' or 'planet junior'. The seeding gear for this was then like the back half of a two row ridger – a seed box driven by a chain from a cog on the axle between two concave rollers pulled by a horse.

These seeders were not as efficient as the modern version and their ridged turnips would have to be thinned usually with hoes. James Crawford preferred that this should be done by hand on all fours to save injuring or needlessly destroying useful turnips. Thinning turnips by hand was done for many years after the introduction of ridgers. It is still done in Scotland and perhaps still on the Clutha Island.

In the following year the turnip ground would be ploughed. The furrows would be narrow as it was usually four horse teams that were used.

The grain was sown straight on to the furrows out of a bag sheet, stretched loosely on to a kidney shaped frame, hung by straps from the shoulders. The 'comb' of the furrows was then pulled over on to the seed with several strokes of the harrows. The soil, being still reasonably free, meant the task was complete except for the harvest.

It was a good few years before there was even one grain drill in the district. It was owned by Archie Simmers, who did contract sowing with it, using shifts of the farmers horses. He also helped by filling the manure or seed into the box as it was going along. An 18-inch piece was cut off the end of the lid for the driver to sit on while this was being done. Three thousand acres were covered in one season going as far as Wairuna. Forty acres in a day being regularly sown with turnips. The record was fifty, but this was with a ten-foot seventeen coulter drill.

You could not trot the horses with these spoon feed drills, or the seed would be sprayed out too thickly. The contract sowing price was 6d an acre.

3000 acres - £75 – a tough life.

For a start there were no weeds; yarr, sorrel, Canadian thistles and white rooted couch came later, no doubt worse on farms where there had been excessive cropping. Couch was sown on some farms as being the only sort of grass that would 'hold'. It was a fact of life, especially on properties which had been heavily cropped that 2- and 3-year-old grass paddocks had already reverted to Yorkshire fog and sweet vernal. Brown top, imported as Kentucky Blue Grass came on the scene later. Fat hen did not arrive in the 'Koi' till about 1950 although it was in Moa Flat and the Clutha Valley long before that.

Harvest

Quite possibly, the first crop was cut with a scythe and then, for 15 years, at least 'back deliveries' were used. These were really mowers with two seats – one for the driver and the other for the 'tilter'. He, or quite often she, used a foot operated carrier made of light wooden slats which was held up till a sheaf had been collected. It was then dropped back to let the sheaf slide off and immediately brought back up to catch the next one.

The 'tilter' also had a light skew handled rake with which to gather the crop back in much the same way as the reel on a binder or header works. Tying the bands was quite a business. It required five or six men to clear the previous swath before the next round of the back delivery. They were stationed around the paddock and tied the sheaves with what was known as a 'Yankee' band. A handful of the crop was held near the heads in the left hand and split in two while a knot was being formed by twisting the heads. The two halves were then pulled tightly round the sheaf, the ends twisted together and tucked under itself.

So, to do what one man with a reaper and binder could, would require seven or eight men and it is no wonder that having a bunch of able-bodied sons and daughters was desirable.

Turnip seed was another avenue which proved to be profitable on 'Springvale'. They had a good crop of turnips and had bought a mob of sheep to make use of them. However, on account of difficulties with the stock firm, these were 'sold up' on them. So, the turnips were not eaten off and went to seed. The return from this enabled them to buy the sheep back again.

The high labour content in the harvest was the reason why after the school opened in 1880 there were only two weeks holiday at Christmas. A month being taken later at harvest time so that the boys and often the girls could help. Mind you, many of the pupils, whose education had been interrupted for at least three years, would be older than average primary aged child.

Two stories from those involved with harvesting by these young people.

Elizabeth Simmers, who was later to become the wife of James Wallace, Chairman of the Otago Education Board for nearly thirty years, was tilting on the hill at the rear of the Waikoikoi Cemetery. They were going up a particularly steep place, which is now planted in trees, when the stalk of the 'tilters' seat snapped off and she fell what must have been a very long way back down the hill.

The another of the many stories of the old days, told so well by Dave McCall –

As a lad, he had been tilting further up the same gully on what was then Wattie Black's farm and on a very steep slope. Because he was young and the ground was very steep, he was secured to the seat with a belt, so that there would be no risk of him falling off. However, it was so steep that the mower itself tipped up with the buckle of the belt pressed into the ground so that it could not be undone. Wattie, who had been driving, thought the only way to free the lad was with a pocketknife and had his out. Jimmy Scott, his father-in-law who was binding sheaves close by, could not bear to see such waste – "dinna cut the belt mon" he yelled. Fortunately for young Dave's wellbeing and the generations of McCall's to follow, Wattie's common sense prevailed.

An alternative source of casual labour at that time for those not blessed with large numbers of family members old enough, was from swaggers.

In the Courier of March 18th, 1895, there was a letter to the Editor pointing out how reapers and binders that were being imported in large numbers, were a cruelly needless waste of much needed 'overseas exchange' – (and we possibly thought that this was only a modern commodity). He also deplored the fact that this denied thousands of swaggers the few weeks' work which they got binding sheaves behind back deliveries.

These men used to arrive at each centre before the harvest and those that came to the 'Koi' camped on what was known as the 'camping reserve'. This consisted of the two paddocks alongside the Glenshee road running up from the lower 'Koi bridge to Kirk's corner and the triangular one behind them. It was originally reserved as a camping area for farmers and drovers attending stock sales and the three paddocks would no doubt be used by them to hold stock overnight.

If you required harvesters, you rode or drove down to this camp and picked up as many as you required. Never heard if you sent them back if the weather turned wet or on Sunday. Probably not, but this was most certainly not the 'workers world' it is today. The rest of them just stayed put and filled in their time playing cards, smoking or whatever.

Wire binders were available about 1885. They must have been a headache when you were cutting chaff as all the wire had to be kept out.

Until traction engine driven chaffcutters became available, cutting chaff by hand was a job which often had to be done at night after a full day's work. Many replaced the hand operated machine with horsepower. For these, two horses were yoked to each end of a long cross arm and pulled round in a circle, driving through a set of cogs, a shaft which ran underground across the horse track to the chaffcutter. Traction engines did not arrive till 1895 and the portables pulled around with horses, were not all that common.

Twine binders also came out about 1895 and the Tapanui Courier of that year had advertisements for Walter A. Wood binders which presumably were the wire tying type, being quoted at a reduction of £20 from £65 to £45.

McCormack and Masset Harris twine binders were being sold very freely that year with twine at 3½d a lb.

One astounding thing about these machines was that a McCormack Deering binder bought in 1936, was almost identical in design to one bought about 1906, and both would still be able to do a good job today, if they were needed.

The 1936 one cost £75 probably little more than the earlier one. Compare this with the inflation in the price of cars or anything else, over the last thirty years.

The sheaves had to be stooked up to dry out for a fortnight, before stacking unless by chance a mill was at hand to thresh out of the stook.

Given the area of crop being grown in the earlier days and the mills being driven then by portable engines, most of it would have to be stacked. For threshing, this was usually in twin 35 X 15 feet stacks, each containing between 1 and 200 four and a half bushel bags of oats. Barely that number for wheat which had to be weighed at exactly 200 lbs. per bag.

It seems that in the district right from the start, threshing was done by mills driven by portable engines. At 'Springvale', there used to be a flail up in the rafters of the old implement shed. It consisted of a longer and a shorter piece of well-worn manuka stick joined together by a piece of raw-hide. It may have been only used for threshing out turnip seed or cocksfoot off the side of the road. However, if it was used for crop, the work requirement would have been a lot greater than forking to a mill! The only item on the subject in the Courier is about two new traction engines coming to the district in 1896.

The portables and mills were pulled from farm to farm, by horses and some organisation was required for this. It would depend on how wet and steep the ground was, but it is unlikely that many 200-acre farmers would have enough horsepower to pull the engine or the mill unless it was flat and dry.

In 1896 when the traction engines became more common, there was trouble among mill owners over 'price cutting' and 'poaching'. These outfits were more mobile and therefore able to cover a much wider field of operations. They could, and quite often did, travel or work at night, to 'cut' another mill out. The outcome was a meeting held at Outram of sixteen mill owners from all over Otago. It fixed charges at 7/6 an hour for traction engines and 6/3 an hour for portables, furthermore any unfair competition was deplored.

It took quite a large crew to man a mill. There would be two 'forkers', who forked on to each end of a stage, made by their leaving a rectangular piece of the stack closest to the mill. The 'turner', who stood on this, and with a shorter fork turned each sheaf into the correct angle and place, for the band cutter on the mill. On the first mills which did not have automatic feeders. it took two men to do this job. How much was threshed in a day, depended largely on these four men - 750 bags was a big day. There were three men in the bag hole, one ringing and ramming, one sewing and the other carrying and stacking the bags. There had to be enough straw pulled round at the start by the 'chaffy' with his horse and plank, to cover the bags with a thick layer at the finish. This man had for his main task, the job of pulling the large amount of chaff from the mill (not a very pleasant one), although with an unfavourable wind, no job on a mill was too comfortable.

Two men built the straw stacks, and some made magnificent jobs of them. With an engine driver and a water joey, that could make up to a dozen men, with two more, if three drays were used to thresh out of the stook.

Quite a handful for the kitchen, especially when – and it did happen sometimes – the mill worked right through the night. In which case further meals were demanded every four hours. Headers and particularly the modern self-propelled 12ft. cut, bulk handling machines, have been a great invention. One man operating one of these, can thresh more in one day compared with 2 reaping and tilting, 6 binding sheaves, 3 up to 5 stacking and 12 on the mill – say 24 men prior to 1895. It would take at least a fortnight for threshing out of the stook and in the case of stacked wheat, which was usually threshed in the Spring, up to six months later.

Contract cropping as a source of income, was undertaken on quite a large scale by some settlers. For instance, James McCall Snr. did quite a lot of this. The tremendous stock losses in the Winter of 1878 and the difficulty encountered securing replacements, probably accounted for much this activity. When the runs leased out land for cropping this would usually be done on the basis of one bag in four to the landholders.

However, in a stock sale report dated January 1879, there was an item recording the sale of oat cropping at £4 an acre. It is hard to believe but it looks as if the successful bid was to pay £4 an acre for the use of the land for one crop. The one in four arrangement with a 64-bushel crop at 2/- a bushel would pay £1.12 an acre. That would be a very good average for the variety of oats and style of sowing used then.

Contract road work was also an early source of cash income. Robert Simmers did road formation and gravelling in Crookston and Kelso and later formed the road down to Pomahaka beside the Koi Creek. Prior to this, all carting to the rail at Waipahi went to the

top of the hill on the Tweedie's Ford Road to Tapanui, and then down the Oyster Creek Road. Waipahi was the only outlet by rail apart from Gore in those early days. The connection from Gore (and the Bluff) was completed in 1877. There was no road from Waikoikoi down through a very swampy area to Pukerau. Pomahaka became the rail head for the 'Koi' after the completion of the Tapanui branch line in 1880.

One section of the road to Pomahaka is still called the 'Chainman's cutting'. The Chinese who were employed to do this work probably did it with wheelbarrows. It is unlikely that they had drays because it was said that on one occasion one of them came up to the 'Koi' store for a bag of rice. He got the 200 lb. bag hoisted on to his shoulders and plodded off into the night on the two-mile journey to his camp.

Sheep Farming

From what has been written so far it would appear that the early settlers, on their 200-acre farms, placed greatest emphasis on cropping. For many of them, it probably did play a most important role. Before the use of lime became general, the carrying capacity of their 200-acre sections was very limited and this still applied even when most of them increased the size of their holdings. Oats evidently proved the most reliable crop. Frosts when it was coming into ear, sometimes ruined the yield from wheat and the strains then in use were later ripening. There was, of course, a much greater demand both here and overseas for oats and chaff. All local cartage was done with horses. The tram cars were pulled by them and so were the gigs, buggies, hansom cabs and coaches in which people were transported when they did not ride.

Porridge was also very much more the family breakfast, than it is now.

However, there were a few of the first settlers, particularly James Crawford and later Charles Chittock, who were first and foremost stock men, and who did not believe in heavy cropping. The pre-eminent position held by the Koi in the world of stock today proves just how right they were. Right from the start there was evidence that it was a district capable of producing top quality wool and in 1878 there was a report in the Courier of Mr. Hugh McIntyre winning overseas awards for Merino wool. This wool would or course be shorn before the great snow of the 1878 winter, and would be competing against top Central Otago, Canterbury, and Australian clips.

Initially the new settlers mainly used Halfbreds, but later Romneys, Border Leicester's, Lincolns and Corriedales all had their devotees. In 1879, F.W. (Captain) McKenzie had pure Romney rams for sale at £2 a head. At that time, W. Fretwell and Ernest McKenzie were prominent breeders; but about 1930, David Robertson Sen. founded the 'Merryvale' stud. Although there were others, it was this stud soon to be run as the Estate of David Robertson under the brothers John, Bill and David which forged ahead to become one of the outstanding stud farms in New Zealand, if not in the world.

One outstanding feature of 'Merryvale' and 'Merrydowns', - the former now under third generation Robertson's, David and Graham, - has seen their almost continuous success for

over half a century against allcomers throughout New Zealand, whether it be in the show ring or stud fair.

In mid-1930 Alex McCall founded the 'Mount Annan' stud, the original stock coming from 'Merryvale'. This is now run by his son Murray. His other son Trevor also has successful Romney and Border Leicester studs at 'Annan Downs', Waikaka Valley

Then their cousins Albert, Jack and Ernest entered the stud field too and have all made their contribution to the improvement of stud stock in the district. Mutton breeds were not used until about 1925. Even then the Border Leicester, a dual-purpose breed, was probably used more with an eye to the Burnside fat wether market than for fat lambs.

The first to use Southdown's, would have been a Mr. Baxter in the old 'Glenkenich' homestead at Pomahaka. At the same time, he also had an ill thrift problem which gave the impression that Southdown's might not be as suitable down south, even if in Canterbury they were a good fat lamb breed.

However, by 1930 they had become well established and good drafts were being obtained 'off the mothers'. There was no talk of 'over fats' then, but later as this became a problem, it resulted in an increase in popularity of a multiplicity of breeds – dark-faced Hampshires, Dorset Downs, South Suffolks and others. These all have their uses and users. Strangely enough, Border Leicesters, which have been about all the time, have swung into prominence again especially when crossed with the Romney. The resulting ewe is capable of a better lambing and milking performance, especially when mated with one of the recognised fat lamb breeds.

Dairy

From 1900 onwards there was quite a boom in the dairy industry in New Zealand and factories sprang up all over the country. Pukerau, Tapanui, Kelso, Waikaka and Hina Hina still have their relics. With visions of one at the Koi the status of the lower paddock of the 'Camping Reserve' was changed to that of a 'Dairy Factory Reserve', although of course it was never used for that purpose. All the same, a number of cows were milked on most properties. Butter and cheese was made and sold probably to the two local stores when they were operating, and later to the store cart when it came round each week from Tapanui and Kelso. In 1919, before they purchased what is now 'Merrydowns', Mr. and Mrs. James Robertson and family milked a fine herd of cows on 'Stoneyburn'. They had what was then a model milking shed with the first milking machines in the district. Their milk was delivered daily by a wagonette and pair to the Pukerau cheese factory.

Then in the time of the slumps of 1920 and 1930 butter fat prices held up longer than wool, which in 1930 went as low as 3¾ pence a lb. and fat lambs below 10/-, consequently there was an increase in cows again as a source of ready cash. For a start the cans of cream were taken on the weekly trip to Gore to the factory there. Later two lorries, one from Gore and the other from the Taieri, serviced the district by picking up the cream. Dave McCall had splendid Friesian cows, starting with good stock from Potter's well known Friesian stud at

Pukerau. Most of those who milked cows also kept pigs. Robertson's had quite an extensive piggery - probably fed on whey brought back from the Pukerau Dairy Factory.

Beef cattle have also been an important side of the industry. Breeding them on a cultivated farm with heavy cows running on soft paddocks in the Winter is not so handy, but anyone with a tussock block or run has a very lucrative source of income. The fattening of cattle usually faces very high prices for replacement stock but is still a worthwhile exercise and as well as this, there is the decided benefit of helping to control grazing for sheep. The sight of good fat cattle on a property does also give a great deal of satisfaction.

Railways, Roads and Transport

Before 1877 when the rail link from Gore to Waipahi was completed, Bluff was the only seaport by rail until the last stretch, Clinton to Balclutha, was finished in 1879. Wool which had been the principal source of income for the runs, had to be hauled long distances by bullocks. It is hard to say how they would fare on metalled roads – maybe that is why they were phased out.

In the Courier of January 10th, 1877, there is a strong complaint from bullock drovers that the toll charge for bullocks crossing the Beaumont bridge had been doubled without warning, from 4½d to 9d a head. Bullocks were also used for hauling early threshing mills around.

Since about 1907, the use of only one such team can be recalled. In 1910 Peter Russell used bullocks to pull his house on skids from Glenkenich down to his new farm on the Pomahaka Road. It is difficult to recall how many bullocks were involved, but there would be quite a number in pairs, with heavy wooden yokes held by long bolts. They were stopped for a breather on the road where the present hall is and caused quite a diversion for the school children. At that time the road was gravelled from about two miles up the road to Kelso down to Pomahaka. The skids would certainly not slide easily on gravel and surely must have done some damage to the road's surface.

For the settlers on their small 200-acre sections and on which grain was to be an important part of their activities, rail and road access was vital. The Government had realised this, and astonishing progress was made with the railways. Experienced men were brought out from Germany to help build them. These men worked on the main trunk line, and when that was finished, on the branch lines. The Switzer's line out to Waikaia got this name from the fact that Switzerland was often given as 'country of origin' by many of the men from South Germany.

Quite a few of these German railway workers were settled on small sections in what at one time was known as German Town, east of the Whiterig dairy factory near Gore. They were good workers and some well-known farmers and citizens (including the onetime Mayor of Gore) have been their descendants. It is quite probable that included in their number would be the well-known names of Leitze, Gutschlag, Reink, Hankey, Voigt and Beccard.

Until the road down the Koi creek to Pomahaka was formed, and the Tapanui branch railway was completed in 1880, grain had to be carted up to the top of the hill towards Tapanui and

then down the Oyster Creek Road and on to Waipahi. James Crawford carted his first crop of wheat and oats in a dray by this route, (about 18 miles) for a monetary return that would not be much more than 'pay' for axle grease'. It is no wonder that he became a confirmed and very good stock man. He also carted wheat to the mill at Kuriwao to be ground for flour. He worked in conjunction with Mr. W.J. Stark (his brother-in-law) for a while – one team did the agricultural work on both properties and the other man put up the fences etc.

The siting of the branch railway to West Otago caused some controversy. In the Courier of January 16th 1877, there is a letter to the Editor taking Captain McKenzie to task for changing his mind about the route which this line should take. Initially he had been in favour of Waipahi to Tapanui. Later in public meetings he apparently favoured - "the only line which would satisfy him" - one up Taylors creek from Pukerau, over the dividing 'Saddlebank' and down the Glenshee Valley. Probably from there down to Pomahaka and on up to Kelso, Heriot etc. Then he began canvassing the district for signatures to have the line run up the Waikaka Valley from McNab, (this area had recently been proven to be gold bearing, and on account of this would have population) and across the fertile Glenkenich district to Kelso. A branch line could be built down to Tapanui if necessary. It is difficult to see that this would be of any direct benefit to the good Captain as it would not go near his property, effectively making him appear to be very public-spirited figure. The writer then finished on a rather sarcastic note – "no doubt he would then press for a tunnel through the Blue Mountains to Lawrence"!

Roads

For many years roads were a problem in the district, particularly after the advent of cars. In a letter to the Editor of the Tapanui Courier, dated Jan. 9th 1878, the writer, Robert Simmers stated that - "Five four horse teams have already ploughed 500 acres in Block X. If there was a reasonable prospect of getting produce off these properties, there would be a far greater area". His grievance was that to date one £5 culvert was the total County expenditure, with absolutely no roadworks on the Block. In 1879 he did considerable contract road work with two four horse teams. This included forming the road to Pomahaka. This was also gravelled soon after, - it probably had to be, as some of it was on very wet land.

All the other roads except the one up to the 'Point' corner and to Gow's corner were clay for many years. This of course, included the main Gore Road from Gow's corner to White's Hill. This hill was gravelled about 1914, with gravel taken from a pit beside it. These dirt roads would cut up with the wagons and cars in the Winter, the ruts would be graded in the Spring, and have a tremendous coating of dust in the Summer.

The main road to White's hill was not one of the worst as it followed along the top of the ridge. But it became a real problem the first Winter after it was metalled, with gravel taken from the Hill quarry. This had a very high clay content and after heavy rain finished up (and stayed like that for the rest of the winter) as so much deep gravelly mud with very deep car tracks in it.

During winter, Charles Chittock pulled many cars along this stretch with a horse. He had a set charge and on reflection, he earned every penny of it especially as he lived a good step from the road. If it was late at night, he or his sons would have to get a horse in, harness it up, and pull the car a considerable distance.

The other roads were generally worse being on wetter country. For example, to Kelso and out to Merino Downs were real quagmires.

Mr. W.J. McKenzie became a County Councillor (and a very good one) with the avowed intention of doing something about roading. Who could blame him? he must have endured his access road for fifteen years after he had his first car.

The 'Glenshee' road would also merit 'honourable' mention. Robert Simmers, one of its main users was Councillor for the Glenkenich Riding for some years, but it was not gravelled till well over twenty years after he died. On one occasion his successor and the County Engineer were stuck on it in their car and had to be pulled out with a horse. His comment was "nobody could put gravel on that road, you see it has no bottom and gravel would just go out of sight". This Councillor was a real gentleman, and his name will always be remembered because of his benefaction to the district. He did have one little quirk – he always prided himself in having the best credit balance in his Riding account (the accounts for each district were kept separate in the early years).

It was about nine years after that that anything further apart from the annual grading, was done about this road. Then one Autumn several of the local farmers were employed to build the road up ready for gravelling. This was not put on before the Winter which was just as well. John Roberton had a grand crop of oats that year and carted it to Pomahaka in wet weather. The axles of his wagon were scraping on the mud along this 'built up' stretch. One complaint about it sent to the Clutha Country Council by the Secretary of the Koi Farmers Union, read "this road is now usable for bird traffic only". Several local farmers carted gravel for this stretch the next Summer. Among these were Jack and Tom Spittle who then took the contract to gravel the road from Gow's Corner to Merino Downs. Two full trips a day was quite a solid programme for this job, but most of it was done that way with the furthest trips of over eight miles, at one and a half times the contract rate. They used four horses in the two-cubic yard farm drays – no tips on them – you let the shafts up to get the gravel off. This was shovelled on and later spread with a long-handled shovel. Tom was not much more than a lad. Shovelling gravel was not an easy job particularly if it had been 'set' in the bed you were working on for a few years. Front end loaders and lorries have, of course, put all this in the past.

The first gravelling contract done with trucks in the district was the balance of the Glenshee Road. It would be about 1932. Finlayson & Sim from Heriot did the job and employed a gang of men to shovel it on to the lorries. They struck quite a lot of wet weather that Summer and had some trouble spreading it on evenly. But all the same, this spelt the end of most carting on the roads with horses. There was a certain amount of nostalgia about that. Carting grain and wool (and even gravel, although it was probably tougher) were good jobs. Only two loads to put on and off and you were sitting the rest of the time. If it rained you

could usually keep yourself warm and dry. The horses also used to get quite keen on it. Probably much more fun than pulling a set of heavy discs round a paddock with tight chains all day.

There would be a heavy pull sometimes out of a soft paddock or gravel pit but generally on a reasonably level, firm road the wagon or dray ran along relatively easily. The horses had, of course, to be shod for continuous work on gravel roads. The district kept two blacksmiths employed for quite a while. However, no way could horses compete with lorries for convenience or price.

A lot of lime was stacked in the paddock by lorries at 1/- a ton a mile. Frank Townsend carted lime from Willowbank, up past the Koi Cemetery – about 9 miles, for 6/- a ton. This lime (in bags) was tipped off the lorry with a hoist. A difficult a job to disentangle when you went to sow it, also difficult to cover compared with the usual neat stacks. However, it got it there and cheaply (which was important). It also kept the lorries going during the season when there was no stock haulage.

Probably one of the last pieces of bad road left unmetalled was that between the 'Mt. Annan' homestead and 'Belvedere'. Again, this was a flat wetter stretch and there was much annoyance for those traveling along especially if everybody else had a gravel road. The car was often left along at the other end of it – the rest being walked. In 1934 Dave McCall took the Councillor up to inspect it in his car. No doubt, he did this when the deep ruts (which were always there in the Winter) were half full of water. He had the chains on and gave his guest a rough ride through it. Probably gave him something to think about as well. In any case, he gave free labour to help shovel gravel on to the lorries which filled the two main ruts with it. Two rather ingenious V-shaped funnels were fitted to the back of the lorry to guide the gravel into these ruts when the hoist was up. Looking back, the concept of road metalling was quite ridiculous and, in some cases, grossly unfair.

The size, shape and power of lorries have altered tremendously. At first, they had single rear wheels and would carry about 3 tons. There was one solid tyred Vulcan and a Thorneycroft which were reputed to have been used in France in the 1914-1918 War and after that in 1919-20, in the construction of the enlarged Waipori dam. They would take five tons but if the ground was the least bit wet or soft, that was as far as they went. Jack and Tom Spittle had a Chev. truck with which they carted lime for farmers, in addition to doing contract shearing. If it was too wet to shear, that was fine, but in good weather, they often shifted the lime at night after a day's shearing. Other early trucks were Model A Fords, Dodges, Internationals, Commers, Fargos etc. In a way they were all just toys compared with the modern high powered articulated versions.

Bulk handling has cut out a lot of hard work lumping bags of lime and fertilizer. Bulk sowing and aerial topdressing have resulted in a vastly increased production – much more than would have been possible with horses or the long box on a trailer behind a tractor, which replaced them. This called for two men to operate.

Frank Townsend started carting lambs for R. & F. Wallis with a single deck lorry but soon built up to a fleet of double deck trucks. Prior to that all lambs and fat stock were driven to

the rail siding and loaded on to J trucks, 70 lambs or about 54 sheep each. Milk lambs could be ticklish and there were not many heading (eye) dogs about, however most farmers had a handy dog or two to get by. Later Harold Potter, a drafter, engaged Harry Power to collect mobs from various farms and drive them either to Pukerau or right down to Mataura. He travelled with a gig and had good dogs. Charles Chittock also drove at least one large mob all the way to the works. There must have been a lot of others did the same and that is the reason for a very wide road down towards Mataura.

If you bought rams at the Gore Ram Fair, you joined forces with any others bringing rams your way and they came to the 'Koi' on their feet.

Swaggers

There must have been great numbers of these in the early days, and life could not have been wonderful for them, particularly for those who had no purpose in life to look forward to.

Originally, many could have been 'out of luck' gold seekers from Central and it was probably men in this category that were featured in the item in the Courier of February 7th, 1877. It said that all the white harvesters at 'Brooksdale' had been paid off that week and replaced by Chinamen from the goldfields because these worked harder for less pay. Today we sometimes wonder why we must put up with Labour Unions!

In those days harvesters possibly had other jobs for the rest of the season, and there were those 'on the swag' who were genuinely travelling on foot to new jobs. For instance, James Simmers in his reminiscences, mentions how eldest brother George had walked from the 'Koi' to a job a Puketoi in two days – 100 miles. Later he would become for many years Principal of Timaru Boys High School. Those who can be recalled from say 1906 onwards were probably of a different type. Mostly elderly looking men, for whom the swag was a way of life and who were not really interested in work at all. These would come in and ask for a 'shakedown' in the barn for the night. Some slept on chaff with a few blankets while others seemed to make do with a few rags on the bare boards.

They would have dinner at night and breakfast in the morning before moving on. They were almost invariably rather loud speaking and enthusiastic noisy eaters. In the Archie Simmers household, they would always be seated alongside the head of the house and served first. When the latter was asked why he did it that way, the reply was "that man could be Christ himself". It took at least one of his children, George, many years to realise that the reference was to the "inasmuch" of the Gospel. There were quite a few of them and that same child was intrigued one day by a swagger apologising that he had been forced to miss us on his previous round by sickness – well!!

There is one thing – although they were never very pretty characters, there was never any talk of children or anybody else being molested or even any warnings given that they might be. However, there are instances where these later genuine swaggers were prepared to work. One day in 1932 a man walked onto 'Springvale' farm and asked if he could have a job. Jack and George Simmers were about to thresh wheat out of the stook and were

desperately short of men. So they took him on thinking that he would be better than nothing. He was inflicted with 'St. Vitus' dance, and this showed up rather badly when 'smoko' was being taken before starting. He was possibly extra nervous (being among strangers) but he obviously had a problem. When he put his cup up to his mouth there was a possibility that he might pour it into his ear. The mill owner was indignant and ridiculed the idea that a man like that could be any use on a mill – "Can't you see its booze that is wrong with him". But it was a different story when work started. The local lads on the other two drays were not used to the heavy shock heads of wheat, which do not 'bind' as readily as oats, which they were more used to. Loads falling off a dray are not a happy sight to the man forking in the paddock, the farmer, and particularly the mill owner who was paid by the number of bags threshed. As far as our hero was concerned – and he did prove to be one, – whatever was wrong that made his head shake, it did not affect his hands. He almost seemed to be reaching over the side of the load to grab the two heavy sheaves, one in each hand and then ram them into place on the dray. None of them fell off again even on the steeper areas, which immediately became his special sphere of operation. As it happened there was other work for him available on the property, and he was kept on for a while.

In 1942 there was another who came onto 'Springvale' and asked for work, just before lambing. He had only half of one of his feet. It had been amputated as the result of an accident. He too belied appearances by being a completely reliable and conscientious worker and was a tremendous help as 'odd jobs' man right through an extremely satisfactory lambing and lamb marking. There had been a piece in the paper about an army serviceman who had stood on a detonator to avoid going overseas. It was suspected that he could possibly have been that man but in view of his attitude to work and the fact that he was easy to live with, no one had the heart to mention this suspicion or ask questions about the accident. There is every chance that this thought was unjustly maligning the man in any case.

The last 'professional bludger' came to 'Springvale' in 1938. He had been about for many years and had the title of 'weary Willie'. The farmer and his wife had been away for a few days helping on another property and had just returned. He objected to the meal of cold meat, bread and butter which was the same as everyone else had. Possibly the fact that he had been relegated to the back porch to eat it, got under his skin and he went off in a huff. In any case this was well after the introduction of Social Security and for the sake of these people, we can be thankful to the Government of the day for that.

Fencing

Before stock could be carried, the farms and crops had to be fenced. Regarding this, it has been surprising to see on an old map in the Hocken Library, the mileage of subdivisional fencing which had been erected on the Merino Downs Station before it was broken up.

The sod fences were quite substantial and must have meant a lot of hard work for somebody. The remains of one of these ran alongside the Glenshee Creek – the boundary between Glenkenich and Merino Downs Stations - and was still in existence by 1935. There

were also post and rail fences on three sides of the 200 acre block opposite the homestead and round the home paddocks.

Some of the new Settlers fenced with standards plus the odd post and black wire, but unfortunately, they also planted gorse hedges on top of a low sod fence. To make it stock proof, and until the gorse grew, a low fence of four wires pulled through short three by two black pine posts, was also put on top of it. The first gorse seed imported from Scotland cost 5/- a pound and germination was very poor. For those people later faced with the problem of cutting overgrown hedges, grubbing gorse out from among rocks and from miles of roadsides, it was ten thousand pities it was not a great deal more expensive.

The sod fences on which the gorse was planted were made by digging out a ditch alongside the fence and building a double wall of sods. The space between them was then filled with loose soil out of the bottom of the ditch, and it was along this that the seed was planted.

It may have been a good idea, but it brought further trouble because it made an ideal readymade easily burrowed residential area for rabbits. After 1878, they moved in in their thousands, but more about that later.

Cutting the hedges eventually became quite a problem. Fine if they were cut every year and there is a recollection by George Simmers on 'Springvale' of a 'contract' price of 1/6d a chain for both sides and the top. But let them away for more than two years and it became a major job. After the First World War there were a lot of hedges about, which had not been cut for four or more years. These were tough and practically useless as either a hedge or fence after they were cut, unless netting and barb wire was strung along them. Some were about a chain wide and a big job to pull out with horses. Winding them out with a traction engine was better, also two tractors with a wire rope between them. Bulldozers however made it easy.

If the modern tractor driven hedge cutters had been about sixty years sooner, there possibly would still have been some good gorse hedges, because at their best they made useful shelter. On reflection it is rather surprising that more shelter belts of other trees were not planted sooner.

Hormone sprays have made the control of gorse on roadsides, among rocks etc a lot easier. In inaccessible places such as on large properties, application by aeroplanes and helicopters have also been effective, in at least putting a check to what promised to be a very serious problem.

Although black pine is a very hard wood, it proved to be poor lasting in the ground. Manuka was worse and even jarrah was not all it was cracked up to be. Broadleaf and totara were better, but as these got scarcer there were silver pine posts from the West Coast. The first and best of these were timber which had been in swamps for years and the sapwood had rotted off them leaving a very durable heartwood. Then followed mostly sapwood silver pine – which was little better than *Pinus insignis.* Finally, Glenorchy red beech and Australian hardwood posts had their advocates. About this time concrete posts became popular and have a lot to be said for them. Now we have a tremendous number of

tanalised posts. They can be driven in with a tractor machine, and if they are of a decent size, they are strong and have a better hold of the ground than a concrete post. The next fifty years will tell.

Now we have electric fences – battery and mains – and there certainly are plenty of uses for them.

Rabbits

Rabbits were undoubtedly a problem for many years. Looking at the district now it is hard to believe just how bad they were. They multiplied almost miraculously after the great snow of 1878 and were sometimes given equal blame for the financial difficulties which fell on some of the runholders at that time.

The drier land on the landslip ridge seemed to be more prone to infestation than the wetter country of Merino Downs. In any case there was more good digging sand, under runners, gorse, and tussock for them there. Anywhere rabbits found things to their liking, a continual war had to be waged against them.

Trapping and poisoning took place in the Winter to afford protection to the young turnip seedlings in the summer. Fumigating with carbon monoxide from a charcoal burner was used. Later it was car exhaust fumes, cyanogas and similar gases. Phosphorized pollard was the only poison bait used for long term effect. Then Strychnine on diced swedes, carrots, oats or even jam, sometimes achieved spectacular results. The rabbits had to be baited for several days before hand on a plough furrow or spade scrapes, to achieve this. The big advantage was that the rabbits died mainly on the spot and could be gathered up and skinned.

Many catches running into thousands were reported. There could have been some reservation about this, in so as far as combating the problem was concerned. At any time, but especially later in the Winter, there would be a marked predominance of bucks collected. This, of course, meant that the number was not as significant as it appeared.

The poison 1080 has now superseded strychnine and is the most effective yet. It was developed about the time of the establishment of Rabbit Boards, and possibly had as much to do with the great improvement to the rabbit problem as the Rabbit Board's killer policy itself. Under this policy the sale of rabbit skins and carcases was prohibited, so on this premise many farmers and particularly their rabbiter's, made sure they did not altogether kill the goose that laid the 'golden egg'. Be that as it may, the Boards have done a great job and have given good value for the rates collected. They co-ordinated the work for the whole area, and it was a fact of life that some farmers were not as capable as others at attempting to keep their properties clean.

Rabbiting as an occupation became a 'steppingstone' for many who later became very good farmers. They caught rabbits in the Winter and spent the rest of the year shearing, crutching, harvesting etc to become established. Prices for skins in 1918 were up to about 1/-, but later rose to over 2/6 in the hay day of imitation 'mink coats. In the 1880s they were evidently about three pence. A boiling down works at Woodlands started in 1867, offering

this for all rabbits. This was quite a lot better than the same price for the best skins, which had of course to be cleaned of muscle, milk and fat and stretched on wires to dry. For many years rabbits were hung on rails on the roadside to be picked up by collecting rabbit carts in much the same way as slink lambs are today.

In 1887 Archie Simmers and his brother James took on a rabbiting block on Logans Greenvale Estate alongside the Pomahaka River towards the Leithan. They pitched their tent at the foot of the rising ground and with a hundred traps caught nine thousand rabbits' worth £113 in eleven weeks. During the last week, which was the best one, they caught 1040 (£13). The last day was very wet indeed. James Simmers was on his own at this time and took the bags of rabbits into Kelso and stayed the night there on account of the heavy rain. In the morning Kelso was flooded. He went back to the camp to find that the tent was also under water. He was quite philosophical about it – "Where we had caught the rabbits it was flooded, feet deep, and so we saved some thousands of rabbits from being drowned." This story could have been told by thousands of others. Even as late as 1943 one experienced rabbiter alone was catching up to a thousand a week on Ferndale, and in the Maitland area. Therefore, there is no doubt that the complete elimination of the rabbit has meant a great deal to the country.

Lime

The use of lime proved to be the greatest single means of increasing the carrying capacity of farms in the 'Koi. Why it took so long before it was in general use, is hard to explain.

By 1882 W.R. Quin had large advertisements in the Courier for lime. In 1883 James Sheed, when interviewed by the Courier stated that he intended to lime his whole property. Yet by 1918 many people were still, almost fanatically, opposed to its use – "Lime and lime without manure makes both farm and farmer poor." This was quoted at a Farmers Union Meeting well into the 1920s, although by this time Charles Chittock's farm was noticeably greener much earlier in the Spring. Alex Mitchell was another very successful farmer who had used lime, even before he came to the Koi in 1908.

James Crawford held the anti-opinion right to the end of his very long life. But in his case, it was partly different. He was essentially a stock man and realised that continued cropping was not good. His property was probably in 'better heart' than most. He certainly always had very good sheep even after he used Merino rams, which some people said was a great mistake. He produced excellent wool and very good Down cross fat lambs from his Half-Bred sheep. He probably had less foot trouble than that which caught up with the Corriedale cross breed. Furthermore, the Half-Bred enjoyed quite a run at the time due to the premium being paid for fine wool.

Jack and George Simmers, whose father they knew had been most adamant against the use of lime, finally decided to try some. It was on a young grass paddock which had already been sown out for a month or so. They sowed the lime on top of the grass although they could not take the spreader on to steep faces as the wheels chopped the young grass out. Two years later the marks where the lime sower turned round to go back, could be seen from nearly a mile away as neatly drawn circles of white clover. A truck of fat lambs off it

was sent away to Burnside before Christmas, at good prices – unheard of then but of course is commonplace today.

In reality lime was applied much sooner than this, when small heaps of white lime spaced evenly over paddocks could be seen. This was the usual way of spreading what was known as 'shell' lime before it became available as 'ground burnt'. It was not one of the nicest jobs. The stuff came in small hard lumps of hot lime, loose in a truck. You carted it in a dray and shovelled it out in rows of heaps, close enough to make it possible to spread it evenly after it had slaked. This slaking process was caused by moisture from the air and weather combining with the lime, which resulted in a bigger heap and twice the weight of fine dusty lime. This was then spread over the ground as evenly as possible with the aid of long-handled shovels. The dust from this 'shell' lime in its new state was exceedingly caustic and care had to be exercised to avoid it blowing on to the horses, particularly when they were sweating or wet. You soon found that this applied to you as well. If there was any breeze you had to sow across it and turn into it, or the fine lime dust would blow on to the horses and swirl up to your eyes and face. It was hopeless if there was a strong wind or rain. It was not packed in regular rigid bags either. No doubt it was an onerous job filling them at the works. One bag could often have two hundred weights in it, and if the cover of the truck had a leak in it, it could be nearer three. The bags sometimes burst and occasionally the truck caught fire.

There was quite a lot of controversy about the use of carbonate of lime (crushed raw limestone) – "dammed sand" as Charles Chittock described it. However, it was proven effective and much more easily handled. Its lime content was not much more than half of that of the burnt variety and it was not so instantly crushable, but it was not nearly so dear – 10/- against 30/- a ton. Most farmers sowed two tons / acre, or a ton each year a paddock was under cultivation.

The fact that all lime was carted up to 100 miles free on the railway was also in its favour, since two tons were required to do what one ton of burnt would. This concession on the part of the railways showed that authorities were aware of the increased production that would certainly result from the use of any sort of lime. Then, as now, the country desperately needed the extra return from the land.

One particularly noticeable effect of the use of lime was the impact it had on couch and sorrel. Regarding the latter, in November and particularly in Glenkenich there would be patches of brilliant red as far as the eye could see. After these paddocks had been in crop for two years and sown out in grass, the impact of lime was seen to be like a "one shot drench" sheep drench.

Tractors

The transition from horsepower to tractors was not without considerable debate in the district. There was trouble with horses – quite a lot of navel-ill in foals and red worm infestation which was difficult to combat with the remedies available at the time. Prices for

horses rose accordingly.
By 1928 there were a few tractors about. W.J. McKenzie had one and then Chittock's bought a Fordson wheel tractor, while Gows invested in a Caterpillar crawler tractor which was a great success. However, the prejudice was still strong, for example "it stands to reason no man will ever make such a good job with a plough following after him" – "He should be able to put his hand to the plough." Horses soon got used to the plough hitting rocks and would stop almost automatically if one was hit. "You could not hope to have a tractor doing the same."
One farmer who had had trouble with horses decided to buy a crawler tractor, but was dissuaded by an older man, whose opinion he respected greatly. "Don't be a silly lad – those tractors leak oil on the ground all day. "You'll never get the same crops." Strangely enough, a few years later, when the farmer eventually did buy one, the adviser had some contract discing done with it, furthermore the crop of swedes after only one cut with the discs on rather tough old lea ground, was a splendid one.

The last bastion of the six-horse team in the Koi was Graeme Cook. He loved and worked with his horses right up to the time when his long illness took him from them. This was long after all the other farmers had gone the tractor way.

Transport for the Family

A hundred years ago, if more people than the number of hacks available were going to the A&P Show for instance, the dray or wagon was yoked up. One of the original identities told of the excitement of a trip to the Gore Show in a dray, complete with picnic hamper etc. Looking through the Courier files one cannot help realising that in those far off days the very most was made of every form of social activity.

Most people eventually acquired a gig or buggy and there was the odd 'dog cart' about. Of the gigs there were two very fine rubber tyred ones owned by Alex Mitchell and Alex McIntyre. Dr Robertson used to do his rounds with a four wheeled 'Phaeton' and pair, complete with rubber tyres and a hood. Other striking outfits were a splendid pair and buggy which Dave McCall drove for several years after most people had cars. The same applied to Tom Spittle who had a beautiful roan pair for his buggy. Given the state of the roads in Winter, they were probably not disadvantaged very much.
The schoolteacher had to have transport, and the purpose of what was then called the school glebe, was to provide a paddock where a horse or cow could be grazed, if he/she felt like using it. The Minister had to drive over from Tapanui to the Koi – wet or fine – every Sunday, as well as to attend any mid-week meetings. Of course, he was expected to be in contact with his 'flock', especially in their times of both sorrow and of happiness.
When the Gore Cricket team came out to play the Koi, it travelled in what was called a 'drag' which could be hired from the Gore stables.
Jack Black had the first car in the Koi but left the district in 1908. It was a Renault as was that of Alex McKinnon, Manager of Wright Stephenson & Co. who was often to be seen in the district with it. Dr. Robertson also had a very early car. On one occasion he failed to

take the corner at Dick Stark's entrance and finished up out of the car and sitting in a gorse hedge. He also tangled with a train at the foot of the Kelso hill, coming to earth a considerable distance from the point of impact. It is said that he supervised the setting of his own broken leg, without an anaesthetic on this occasion. After this, he still played in the Tapanui tennis team till after he was seventy and had a great interest in all sports particularly racing and rugby. He had another great interest – his patients.

After Jack Black had left the district, there came quite a string of local cars. Alex Mitchell would be the first with his red Buick, and W.J. McKenzie had a single cylinder De Dion. It had the back seats facing lengthwise in the car with the access door out the middle of the rear. This was very convenient as the back seat passengers could easily step out and push when there was trouble getting up hills. The De Dion was soon replaced with a quite powerful Oakland. There were quite a few Model T Fords about. They were good in the mud when fitted with suitable tyres. However, the first Fords had perfectly smooth footwear, hopeless without chains on wet clay roads. Apart from replacing the brass radiator and trimmings with black tin – they called them 'tin lizzies' – the same car was produced for quite a long time, probably eighteen years. They had two forward speeds, cost £180 ($360), and this price did not increase very much till they were replaced in about 1930 by new Beauty Fords and the Model A.

There has been a tremendous improvement and change in cars and their prices since then. Buick sixes at about £500 ($1000) were very good but were gradually replaced by General Motors with Chevrolets at over £100 ($200). There were other big heavy cars Ford V8's, Chrysler's, Oldsmobile's, Studebaker's, Dodge's etc. In 1917 petrol was 17/- a case of four-one-gallon cans (you would just about pay that for the can today) and although it did rise a little, it was not important how much these cars burnt. There are not so many big cars around now with petrol well over ten times that price. But as petrol prices and petrol taxes rose, there came to be a much bigger proportion of cars with smaller, better performance engines such as Austin, Morris, Hillman, Volkswagon etc.

After WW2, the Japanese were looked on as mass producers of mostly shoddy goods. That is not the case now, and there is a real threat of them completely taking over the car market in New Zealand and even in Britain and America, in the same way as they have cleaned out the motorcycle trade. In 1915 it was mostly American Red Indians, Harley Davidsons and Clymos. Then British Triumphs and N.S.A.s put them off the road and now these in turn have completely disappeared in favour of Japanese machines. Cars, trucks, buses, and tractors are also giving ominous signs of heading the same way. Today, the Japanese have added a new dimension to farming in that their motor bikes and 4 wheelers, which have replaced many of the hacks formerly used on the farms by shepherds. It would almost seem a sacrilege to some to suggest that they have even replaced dogs – but they have on some farms (nearly).

The Japanese do not seem to have thought about airliners – but they will. Talking of airliners, you can now go right round the World in one of them in a couple of days, and five hundred others can go with you. Or if it is unable to land at your destination you can do the

last leg of your journey with a helicopter, and it could take an astonishing load there with you as well.

Men now travel to the Moon, a quarter of a million miles away – where could it end? – where will it end? What will the next hundred years bring.