

KAIWERA DOWNS WIND FARM

TRACKS, TRAILS AND TRADING ROUTES

Back in pre-history, much of this great southern island was forest-covered, filled with birds including the mighty moa.

With the arrival of Polynesians, who hunted and gathered food and extracted stone from the high country, and later European graziers, forests were burned and almost the entire high country was transformed into tussock grasslands and dry scrub.



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE AGES

A NETWORK OF TRAILS

For early people, this region had a network ara tawhito (traditional travel routes) with inland tracks and waterways that connected people as they navigated between coasts, and moved between their inland stone and mahika kai (food) resources.

The many traditional names of landmarks, land forms, rivers and tributaries throughout the Mataura Valley area attest to nearly a thousand years of continuous knowledge and understanding of the area.

The Mataura River and accompanying trails guided early travellers between the pounamu (greenstone) fields of the west and the east and south coastal regions. The area was a significant kāinga mahika kai (food-gathering place) and was renowned for its abundance of kanakana (lamprey) and other seasonal food (eel, native trout, duck, weka). These trails were used by trading and marriage parties, and sometimes warriors seeking utu (revenge) to maintain their mana and control over local resources.

EUROPEANS ARRIVE

The Ngāi Tahu people became familiar with European people early. They had known European sealers and whalers from around 1795, and many Ngāi Tahu women married whalers.

At that time Tutarau was a well known settlement in the Mataura Valley/ Maarua. It was home to notable guide Reko, who was invariably the first point of contact and sole source of hospitality for early European surveyors charged with charting inland Southland and the southern lakes. Reko's ability as a guide and his vast knowledge of the southern landscape was pivotal to the process of colonial exploration, and the accurate mapping of the inland regions of the lower South Island - in anticipation of pending European settlement.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed between representatives of the British Crown and Māori chiefs. The Ngāi Tahu chiefs saw it as a "convenient arrangement between equals". Between 1844 and 1864, Ngāi Tahu signed land sale contracts with the Crown for 34.5 million acres, which amounted to approximately 80% of Te Waipounamu.

Ngāi Tahu signed an agreement to only sell to the Crown, and the Crown agreed to allocate one-tenth of each sale to Ngāi Tahu, with schools and hospitals to be built for community, and ensuring Ngāi Tahu has full access to mahika kai (food gathering). This legal arrangement was breached by the Crown.

Ngāi Tahu fought for redress from the Crown for almost 150 years with protest, petitioning, negotiations and various commissions of enquiry. The Waitangi Tribunal was set up in 1975 to investigate claims that the Treaty

was not being upheld. In 1986, Ngāi Tahu filed a claim. In 1991, the Tribunal said that it "... cannot avoid the conclusion that in acquiring from Ngāi Tahu 34.5 million acres, more than half the land mass of New Zealand, for £14,750 pounds, and leaving them with only 35,757 acres, the Crown acted unconscionably and in repeated breach of the Treaty of Waitangi". The Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act was passed in 1998.

TODAY

This Kaiwera Downs wind farm site is within the rohe of the iwi of Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku, who has a long history and relationship with this place. Hokonui Rūnanga is one of the 18 Rūnanga (tribal councils) of Ngāi Tahu. They hold mana (spiritual authority) and kaitiakitanga (stewardship) in this area to this day.

Hokonui Rūnanga provides well-being for members and deliver a range of whānau (family) services while building spiritual, cultural, social and economic growth for their people and the wider community. Their main location on Charlton Road, Gore, is on one of the ancient Trails through this region.

The name "Kaiwera" can be literally translated as "hot food", however this is a corruption of the word "Kahuwera" or "Kauwera" meaning "warm clothes".

KAIWERA DOWNS WIND FARM

FARMING FAMILIES AND CURRENT USE

Since the mid-1800s European settlement has shaped this land. Hard-working farmers built productive farms, and now this wind farm joins this long tradition.

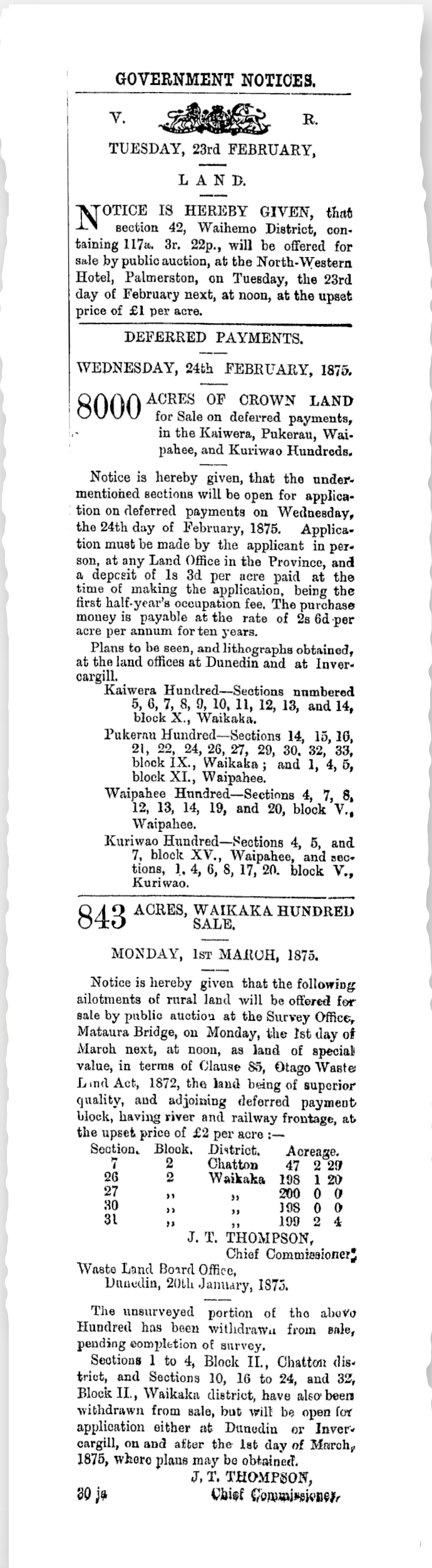
THE TRAILS BECOME A ROAD

European explorers often used trails first walked by Māori travellers. SH93 next to us is one example. It became the Old Coach Road from Popotunoa (Clinton) through to the Tutarau Ford on the Mataura River, part of the old Dunedin to Invercargill route in the mid 1800s.

In the early days three relays of horses were needed for the 20 miles of rough country separating Popotunoa and Mataura. The second stage was right here at Otaraiā. A hut erected here in 1856 as a shelter at this staging point of the route was rebuilt as a hotel in about 1870. The memorial plaque for the Otaraiā Hotel on the nearby boulder was unveiled in 1974.

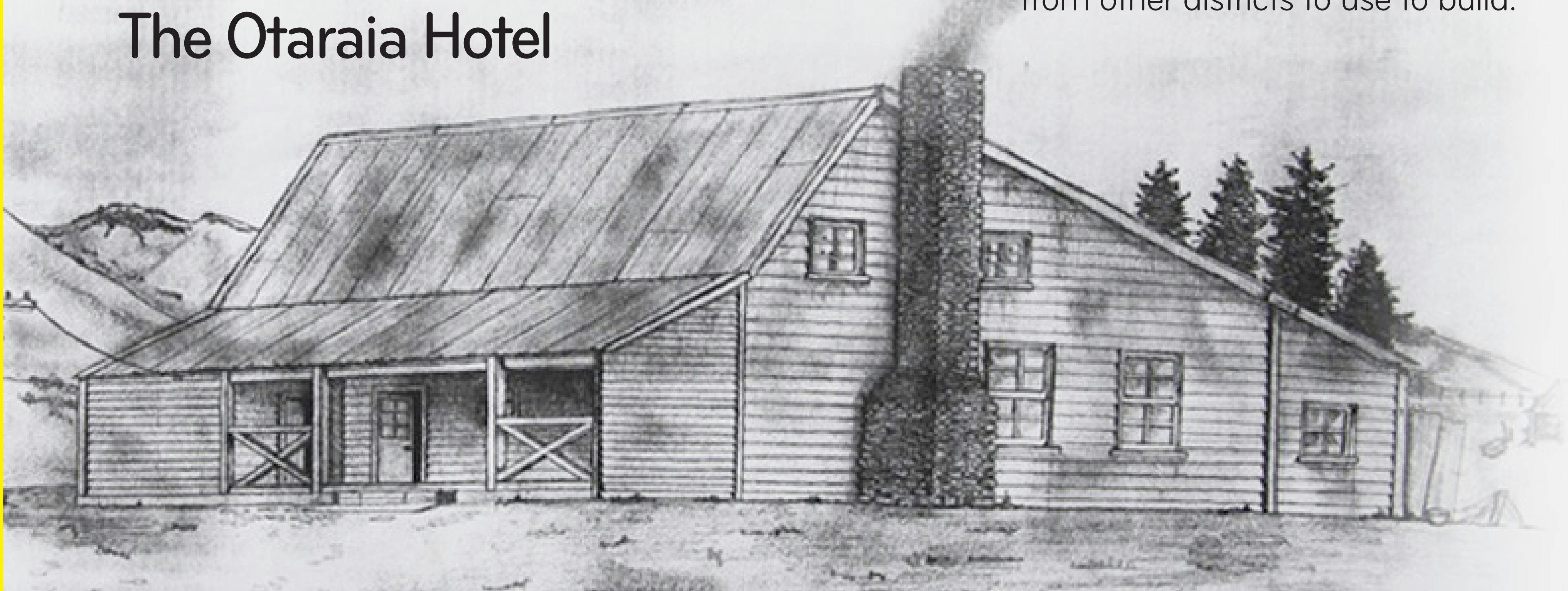
THE EARLY SETTLERS

Some sections of this road were the site of races between rival coaches, but apparently not this section. E M Lovell-Smith is quoted "In 1864 the tussocks were not yet worn down and occupants were tossed about in a violent manner."



Otago Witness, 20 Feb 1875, page 12 (credit: National Library of New Zealand)

The Otaraiā Hotel



Copy of a drawing of the Otaraiā Hotel by John Wilson. From the collection of the Mātaura and Districts Historical Society Incorporated

In 1927 a local man reminisced about the early days in the district:

“In those days the main road traffic was through Otaraiā... from Clinton to Mātaura, and the administration of local affairs was in the hands of the Otaraiā Road Board. Resources of the board were very limited and little money was available for district roads, which consisted of mud, mud and still more mud – so deep that the horses’ tails trailed on the surface.”

By the 1870s the settlement of Otaraiā included a blacksmith’s shop and a store, and cricket matches were played in a paddock adjacent to the hotel.

FARMS WERE ESTABLISHED

European settlement in Southland accelerated in the 1870s and newspapers ran advertisements like the one reprinted on this sign for the sale and subdivision of land across the area. (The term ‘Hundred’ refers to an area of land considered to be adequate for settlement of 100 families.)

The Ferndale area was settled around this time, with a school building erected in 1884. Over its lifetime this building was used as a Post Office, and a venue for community events.

In 1913 Knowsley Park, a large holding over the hill behind the wind farm, was subdivided into nine sections advertised as “admirably adapted for either sheep or cattle farming, dairying or mixed farming. Originally the land was covered with silver tussock, heavy flax and tutu with some bush and scrub. All of the sections are well watered by running streams and the property is practically free from rabbits”.

Many of the first homes of the European settlers were calico tents and sod houses. This area is largely tussock country, with no native bush from which timber could be sawn, so settlers brought in timber from other districts to use to build.

SHEEP, BEEF, ARABLE FARMING AND FORESTRY

Throughout the 20th century, farming communities in the region continued to grow, with strong networks and shared resources that supported their resilience.

World War II imposed significant challenges, as enlistments to fight depleted the rural workforce, and government mandates prioritised food production for export. Farmers had to adapt with family labour and limited mechanisation. Post-war recovery led to investments in infrastructure and farming technology.

The wind farm is part of a highly modified Southland high country environment: grassland for grazing is interspersed with areas of exotic forestry, reflecting the area’s suitability for extensive farming on its rolling terrain.

The wind farm construction worked around ongoing farming on the site including the important spring lambing and calving season, with extensive temporary fencing involved. Today the wind turbines generate electricity above, while farming continues at ground-level with less than 2% of the land impacted by the wind farm operations.

Agriculture continues to be the cornerstone of life in this area, with strong community ties and reliance on farming heritage, and events and traditions centred on agricultural life.

FIND OUT MORE

Thank you to the many people who have helped us understand these histories and tell these stories:

Hokonui Rūnanga
We acknowledge Bill Dacker, historian of Hokonui Rūnanga who recorded extensive histories and stories about this area and early people here.



Māruawai Centre, Gore
Especially Jim Geddes for his research, support and advice.



Mātaura Historical Society
Especially Helen McFadzien’s research.



Ngai Tahu

