

# The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust Newsletter

## December 2014



### Christmas Carols – Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec at 5 pm

Come and join in the community carols at St Patrick's Church Burkes Pass, with refreshments (bring a plate) over the road at the Gallery afterward. All welcome, and we would love to see you there.

### Gatherings at The Gallery

Amateur entertainment at its best, hosted by Julie and Jasio, has got off to a rip-roaring start over the past few months with evenings of storytelling, music, poetry and a shared supper. Held on a Thursday night, the monthly event gives plenty of time to brush up on the strum for that ukelele piece or embellish that yarn for the next session. The notice in the Accessible has tempted several young talented musicians at present living here from the other side of the world to share items with a Scottish or Irish flavour, others have contributed their favourite short stories, humorous poems or stand up comedy and it is sure to say we never know what is coming next. To add your name to the email list contact Julie Greig at [info@burkespassnz.co.nz](mailto:info@burkespassnz.co.nz) or check the Accessible for the next round in 2015.



### Burkes Pass and A Load of Old Bullocks – Tales of Traversing the Long Cutting

The Oamaru Victorian Celebrations on 13th November were a great excuse to share some yarns and historical stuff related this year's theme of transport. I was invited to give a talk in the Oamaru library so did some diving into the past to find out more about bullocks, wagons and the men who drove them. A wagon from the early days might be lucky enough to be tucked up in a museum, however the bullock teams that pulled huge loads have largely vanished into mythology and the animals have more significance as the source of BBQ steak. I personally have never seen a bullock teams working as unlike horse teams, they do not seem to feature in A and P shows, and I suspect that not many other people have seen any either. They paid a huge part in opening up the Mackenzie basin and feature in photographs and stories from the 1850's until the 1880's, when tracks and roads were developed for horse drawn vehicles, although a few teams apparently were still pulling wool wagons up until the early 1900's. Their main attributes apart from being powerful but slow (about 2-3 km per hour was the usual pace), were that they were more reliable and less excitable than horses over rough ground, less expensive to buy, with little required in the way of harness (no reins or bridles), just a wooden yoke that could be



fashioned or repaired en route if necessary, and chains or traces to connect with the load. The driver or bullocky directed them by voice, gesture or cracking a very long handled whip from the near side (left side of the team) and sometimes a helper walked on the offside (right side) giving rise to the term “offsider”.



There was no need to carry food for them, as you could just let them graze at the end of the day. However this could be a lottery, as they did tend to wander off and sometimes infuriated the driver, potentially taking days to get them back again. We now take for granted when we park our car or truck, that it generally stays put. If the bullocky suspected that an animal may be unreliable to catch next day sometimes they chained it to the wagon wheel overnight but as the man would probably be sleeping under the wagon or dray at night, it did not lead to a very peaceful night's sleep with a beast pulling and tugging at it.

The Long Cutting was dug out of the hillside in about 1860 to enable bullock wagons and later horse drawn vehicles to traverse Burkes Pass, an easier option than the Mackenzie Pass but still very steep. A resting stop at Bullocky Creek just west of the top of the Pass has been recorded as having up to 30 teams of bullocks camped there. Wagons were unstable and liable to tip if side on to the slope hence they had to go straight up and straight down a hill. An average team could comprise 10-14 bullocks and sometimes for a heavy load more than one team would be hitched together to make the grade.

### **Children's 'Make your Own Bullock' Booklets**

These cut out booklets for a Burkes Pass bullock that nods its head, as well one for a Waggon and a Collie are simple projects for a child with the assistance of an adult. They are available from the church and also from the Burkes Pass Heritage Trust website on-line-shop

<http://www.burkespass.org.nz/burkespass/Shop/indexshop.htm>



### **“The Mackenzie – Through My Eyes”, by Keith Walter, FPSNZ.**

This personal view of the Mackenzie through the medium of photography was launched recently at The Gallery, Burkes Pass. A delicious mix of immense moody skies and wide landscapes with the crisp and seldom seen detail of plant and animal life makes compulsive page turning. These photographs are accompanied by a few carefully chosen words to carry a serious message. The book has been beautifully designed by Keith's daughter, Natasha, and would make a wonderful gift. The book is available from The Gallery and full images from the book can be obtained from Keith by emailing [photoart\\_keithwalter@ymail.com](mailto:photoart_keithwalter@ymail.com) (note the underscore between art\_keith in this address).

### **Julie Greig Fine Art Calendars for 2015**

These magnificent A3 size calendars with open country theme and large sized print, are now available from the Gallery, an impressive gift idea and a pleasure to look at year round. <http://www.juliegreig.co.nz/>

Wishing you all an enjoyable summer season,  
Jane Batchelor

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