

The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust Newsletter

March 2015



Easter weekend Cob Session at Anniss Cottage

Any assistance, even for an hour or two, would be greatly appreciated on any day.

Friday 3rd until Monday 4th April.

Have a go, watch or help. There are clean tasks such as cutting up tussock, or pouring the cups of tea, or getting as mucky you wish mixing clay, and patching small or large holes. No experience required, children welcome, old clothes and gloves advisable.

Contact Jane by phone or email (see end of newsletter for details).



The Cottage that John and Margaret Built

Amazingly this cottage has survived 92 years without a roof, use as a stock pen, and mature trees growing inside its floor space (one of which has shunted a wall about 15 cm sideways). The exact date of building is not certain but does appear in the distance in a photographic panorama of Burkes Pass Township dated 1880's and in the background of a painting by James Preston.



John (1854-1934) originated from a village called Piddley Fen in Huntingdonshire, U.K. and emigrated to NZ aged 19 years with his elder brother, William and his wife Jane. They were assisted immigrants and arrived at Lyttleton in Sept 1873 on the 'Columbus'. John worked on building the railway to Pleasant Point. He then became a shepherd on the Wolds Station and married Margaret who worked at the Burkes Pass Hotel. They went as a married couple to work at Lilybank Station and later John was a road worker on the Rollesby Road. They then took up the licence of the Tekapo Hotel.

While living at Burkes Pass they had 6 children who attended the Burkes Pass School. A young daughter was killed about the age of 4 or 5 years by being butted by a sheep.

In 1911, when the Grampion Hills station was divided up, Millicent, their daughter, won the ballot for Curraghmore Station and the family moved there taking the iron roof from their Burkes Pass cottage to reuse leaving the clay walls exposed to the weather.

The building is made of cob, consisting of clay, chopped tussock and manure and the wooden floor built on a foundation of rocks.

With the agreement of the owner, Paul Drake, the Burkes Pass Heritage Trust has renewed the roof and is restoring the walls so it can stand proudly again as one of the unique group of six cob buildings remaining in the Burkes Pass Valley.

New Cladding Cheers up Highfield Cob Cottage

What a difference three days made when rot and rats nests were removed from the back wall by Graham and Morris last week. These two volunteered to stay on at Burkes Pass after the Pass to Pub bike race on 1st March to make some progress on the renovation. The sad looking corrugated iron cladding of the back lean-to covered over more sins underneath. The structure was made sound, and now the covering of ply and batten looks great and just needs a coat of paint to look positively smart. Repair of the roof will follow when time and pairs of hands are available. Follow progress on [Facebook](#) and the [story on our website](#).



A wee joke heard on site went like this: ‘ A builder needed some assistance constructing a new house and hired a new hammer hand. The new fellow seemed to be doing Ok except after a while the builder noticed he was throwing away nearly every second nail. He asked him why are you wasting so many nails and throwing them on the ground? The fellow replied that those ones had the head on the wrong end. The builder told him to stop being such an idiot, they were for using on the other side of the house!



Kaka Beak Seeds for Sale

The stall at the back of the church now has seeds from our brilliantly red flowered NZ native shrub. The two varieties are endangered plants in the wild but are spectacular and hardy shrubs for the garden, sometimes called red kowhai. They can grow to a mature height of 1-2m in 2-3 years.

Best wishes,
Jane Batchelor

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