

The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust Newsletter

September 2015



Work Day – Sunday 11th October, starting 9.30 am

Meet at Musterer's Hut. Max, our octogenarian from Timaru, will be there as usual, come and give him a hand! Does anyone have access to a posthole borer?

At long last the interpretation panels and stands are ready to install along the Heritage Walk along with signs to indicate either end of the walk. It would be great to have a team to do this and contribute to this amazing facility for the Burkes Pass area. Bring spades/shovel/bar/rammers to dig the posts in. Other light tasks are also available or just come and share a cup of tea and a yarn.

Wee Georgie

An exquisite hand drawn memorial to this 3 year old boy now hangs in the church. Made of brown paper and decorated with flowers drawn in coloured pencil, this lovingly framed text was recently donated by the Willetts family. It comes with a heart-rending story of this toddler who stood on a rake in the garden at Mary Hill and became ill with tetanus (these days, thankfully, a preventable illness with immunisation). His mother, Mary Smart, undertook a desperate and legendary ride on horseback with him cradled in her arms to seek help. She crossed the Tekapo River and the Mackenzie Basin, travelled over Burkes Pass to Fairlie and eventually took him on to Timaru where sadly he later died. He is buried in the Burkes Pass Cemetery.



Annis Cottage Tree Drama

This little cob cottage had a very close shave recently when the massive multiple trunks of a 135 year old cedar, fell over. Luckily it toppled away from the building but lifted an enormous root plate at one corner of the veranda. Many factors probably contributed, including high winds, rain and also the erosion from the rabbit warren under and around the base. If you have followed this drama on our Facebook site, you will have seen several photos including subsequent felling of the twin of this tree that was partially dead, before it also put the building at risk. Certainly it has left a gap in the landscape but we plan to replant something smaller there in future.



Visiting Singers to St Patrick's Church

You can hear them on our Facebook site, posted in July by Barbara Corcoran, after they held a spontaneous performance that was recorded by cellphone.

Be impressed by Te Wai O Te Kotahitanga with their amazing harmony and power, and The Miltones performing 'Gypsy Queen'. They found the acoustics in the church really cool!

<https://www.facebook.com/burkespassht>

Annis Cottage Wall Repair

Our April working bee on the back wall of the cottage, was highly successful with the western portion being completely built up to the top plate and is looking good for another 100 years. A team, including a visiting couple from Christchurch, made this possible and they now are accredited cobbers! If you have visited it lately and noticed the rough finish with some superficial cracking and tussock stems protruding from the clay, you can now also see an area with the finishing coating on the front wall which will transform the exterior when the structural cob work is complete. More work is planned over the warmer months.



Silver Beech Seedlings

We have a few of these special trees available for a donation to the Trust. *Lophozonia menziesii* or Silver beech (Maori name Tawhai) is a beautiful tree of the southern beech family native to New Zealand. It is widespread in the South island but rare in the Mackenzie Basin and Burkes Pass area. We have been lucky enough to gather some locally sourced seed last year and had a great strike rate from it. In a few years we will have a significant number of young trees ready to plant in the township area to create some shelter and fabulous looking groups of trees. They prefer to have some shelter by while young and like some moisture so could potentially take off in areas where willow grows well but do not have the maintenance issues of willow and will look amazing. Contact Jane if you would like to obtain seedlings.



Alma Cottage Coal Range Refurbishment

The old black Watter's range was taken out of the kitchen in pieces, repaired and painfully reinstalled over a couple of weekends. It is an older style of range that needs to be bricked in place and was a model prior to the 'self setter' that was manufactured basically as a box that could be slid into place. Much grinding of bricks and Graham's teeth created dust and thick air before the plates settled into position, however with a few modifications will be easier next time!

Remembering Don

Don Willetts was a generous supporter of The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust who with Helen, his wife, has contributed enormously to several of our projects. He spent several hours with oral historian Jacquie Foley to put on record his memories and events of the Burkes Pass area, having gone to school here, grown up and lived at Dornie as a child and later when married to Helen. Helen and Don donated a leadlight window to St Patrick's Church and also when the Jubilee oak tree outside the former hotel was struck by lightning in 2013, he kindly donated a young oak tree to replace it from the memorial trees at Dornie gateway. Don died earlier this year and our sympathy goes out to Helen, their family and younger brother, Max

Best wishes,
Jane Batchelor

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