



Ōmārama Gazette

February 2026

Bringing Connor home

A young man with immense drive and great potential was honoured as searchers recounted their efforts to find him when he went missing in “rugged terrain” on Mt Huxley.

The body of Dunedin man Connor Purvis (20) was found on the southern side of Mt Huxley on January 7 after an extensive search.

On Monday, with Connor’s family’s agreement, organisers of the search held a ‘debrief’ for the community at the Omarama Fire Station in acknowledgement of the community’s support.

They recounted that the effort spent on the search had been intensive with Connor uppermost in their thoughts.

Otago Coastal Search and Rescue Coordinator Sergeant Matt Sheat said volunteers put in more than 1500 hours over three days. Two helicopters spent 40 flying hours,

- continued over

Solo tramper Connor Purvis went missing in rugged terrain on Mt Huxley, last month.

Photo: New Zealand Police



Bringing Connor home - continued

"[There was] "immense resourcing [from] volunteer Sar [Search and Rescue] teams." The support from the Omarama community was "awesome" When others took care of the logistics the incident management team could "focus on running the search" .

"[To the fire brigade] Jack and his team ... to be able to use this place as a resource was hugely beneficial."

To be able to come back at the end of the day to accommodation and meals, "we are indebted to the community".

Incident controller Senior Sergeant Blair Dalton said the task for searchers was to "follow the breadcrumbs as much as we could".

It was an emotional experience for the search teams and they were driven and committed to "bringing Connor home" .

Connor was driven with a desire to challenge himself, and had already begun to make his mark and contribute to his community, Blair said.

He had a good level of fitness as demonstrated by his cycling from Oamaru to the Temple Valley Campsite before starting his tramp. And he was well-prepared with good gear.

However, ultimately, he had lacked the experience to tackle the challenging terrain he found himself in.

Omarama Volunteer Fire brigade chief fire Officer Jack Zorab was in charge of logistics and told those gathered that it quickly became clear there would be about 50 people "descending" from out of town to help for the duration.

The Fire Brigade took on the role of supporting those people and offering food and accommodation.

When he put the call out to the community, the response was overwhelming. "We could have fed an army."

Alongside those volunteers preparing dinners and breakfasts at the Fire Station, the newly formed Community Resilience Hub was set up to prepare packed lunches.

This was done by a small group of volunteers each evening in the Omarama Hall kitchen to be ready first thing in the morning.

Matt said the initial inkling all was not well was when it was Connor's bike that was identified at the Temple campsite, although at that point there was no indication Connor was missing.

Connor left his bike at the Temple Campsite shelter on December 27.

A camper noticed the bike there a few days later and raised the alarm mistakenly believing it had been there much longer than three nights, Sgt Sheat said.

"Which was not a bad thing" because Omarama police were alerted and questions started to be asked.

In those initial days Senior Constable Nayland (Bean) Smith did "a lot of work" trying to find out who owned the bike.

A press release with a photo of the bike was issued on January 2 which Connor's mother saw and made contact.

The family were expecting Connor out the following day.

Nevertheless, preliminary searching began, and an Omarama Group set out to check the huts in the Hopkins and Huxley Valleys but found no signs of the young man.

When Connor did not return as planned the decision was made to "ramp-up" to a full search operation using ground and aerial teams, and a public appeal was made for trampers who had been in the area to come forward, Matt said.

The Incident Management Team set up in Omarama at the Sar shed and Police Station and another at a “forward location” at the end of the formed road at Huxley.

Any search effort needed to be “intelligence-led” otherwise it was hard to guide the search in the right direction, Matt said.

They knew Connor’s intentions were to climb Mt Huxley via the Temple Valley.

The first signs found were footprints in a patch of snow on a rock face the south side of Mt Huxley.

Calls for any trampers climbing in the area to make contact had not resulted in anyone coming forward and so there was a high chance these footprints were Connor’s.

It was the “primary clue”, Matt said.

Around 50 people focused on the upper South Temple Valley, Mt Huxley and the Huxley River South Branch, both on foot and in helicopters.

There followed “extensive” ground searching and flights with a focus on the Huxley South branch and the peaks.

A visiting jet boat club also joined the search.

In a second breakthrough a tent site was located – “a grey tent in a grey rocky environment, not easy to locate”.

Search dogs “indicated” below that site in what was “steep canyon terrain”, Matt said.

Meanwhile the Police Digital Forensic Unit were investigating Connor’s “online footprint”, with the support of his family and friends.

Connor’s social posts gave significant clues that helped to zero in on his location.

He had logged into his work account and not logged out so the team was able to uncover his location data.

A Snap Chat video shared to Instagram on January 30 appeared to show him about 2300m up Mt Huxley.

The video recorded poor visibility that day, but the microphone had picked up

-continued over

Below Otago Coastal Search and Rescue Coordinator Sergeant Matt Sheat outlines how the search played out to the community members gathered at the Omarama Fire Station on Monday



Bringing Connor home - continued

little wind sound. The conclusion drawn was that he was still on his way up, Matt said. Work was done to identify the track Connor took to and from the tent.

New search equipment, RECCO technology, used to search for those lost in avalanches had been suspended under a helicopter and this had “indicated” on the footprint area.

“The scale of the terrain is massive. It’s nearly impossible to search using usual land searching techniques.”

The breakthrough came when a yellow object was spotted from the air on the Ahuriri south side.

It was only visible from a certain angle, he said.

The Wanaka Sar drone and canyon teams were deployed.

It was Tuesday and the “big new clue” and the focus for the next day’s searching was the yellow object.

The next morning the drone team located Connor’s body close to the yellow pack liner. It appeared he had “fallen quite a considerable distance”.

There remained unanswered questions.

“We can’t surmise how he got there... obviously not knowing what led to his decision,” Matt said.

The case has been referred to the coroner.

LandSar Otago/ Southland Group and Volunteer Support Clair Robertson told those gathered the search teams were extremely grateful for the “amazing support” of the community throughout the search. [See official thank you letter below in the Police News]

Connor’s family had been especially supportive of LandSar and had raised more than \$3000 for the volunteer organisation, she said.

Matt paid tribute to the Omarama Sar group and said it’s “strength and capability” were largely because of Bean’s efforts.

“I’m just proud of my community,” Bean said.

The Police Otago Coastal Search and Rescue wish to thank:

Omarama Land Search and Rescue

North Otago Land Search and Rescue

Wanaka Land Search and Rescue

Dunedin Land Search and Rescue

Mackenzie Land Search and Rescue

Otago Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

Oamaru Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

Mt Cook Department of Conservation Alpine Cliff Rescue Team

Queenstown Alpine Cliff Rescue

Wanaka Swiftwater, Canyon Search and Rescue Team

Heliventures (Oamaru)

Helicopter Line (Mt Cook)

Police are grateful to Connor’s friends and family for their input and assistance with the search.

No overseas trips on the horizon just yet

You may think that the numerous hugs are because it's his last day on the run, but actually the day passes much like any other – full of cheerful banter, laughs and hugs.

Reliably, each Tuesday and Friday, since deliveries first began early last century the mail has gone through, right to the end of the road.

Lex Perriam has faithfully continued that tradition since he took on the Omarama runs in 2002, the best part of a quarter of a century ago. Much has changed in that time.

What has not changed is that the mail run still serves those living out their lives against an immense and timeless landscape.

The Gazette last hitched a ride with Lex in April 2017.

Today, riding shotgun is Ross Tangney and after collecting the mail bags and parcels and checking the courier drop-offs at the Challenge Service Station we head round and pick up the third member of the current “‘Last of the Summer Wine’ team” Malcolm Cameron, before heading out of town.

Back in the day the late Kevyn Webb and ‘Jolly’ John Rogers were crew, as was the ‘young’ Mick Walsh, before he moved out of town.

Ross wants to know if the other two watched the cricket. It was a nail-biter.

India chased down 301 in a tense four-wicket win over New Zealand in the first one-day international.

We head south down Broken Hut Rd with stops at Omarama Station, Tara Hills, Berwen, and hitting the gravel road at Twin Peaks we mark off more stations as we go, Clifton Downs, Dunstan Peaks, to Twinburn, some 100m higher above sea level than Omarama.

-continued over

Omarama's 'Last of the Summer Wine' crew (from left) Malcolm Cameron and Ross Tangney toast long-serving and retiring rural mailman Lex Perriam.



No overseas trips yet - continued

We have a stop at Clifton Downs.

In the far distance the dust begins as a smudge and slowly grows as the stock truck rumbles towards us until it is big enough.

Ross gives a wave when the truck gets to exactly the right size before it disappears again in the distance.

Today, is a calm, blue day and there is a stunning view right down the valley from Twinburn to the Clay Cliffs and Southern Alps.

Not that it's always that way. This valley and the others experience the harshest the high country can throw at them – mud, snow, ice, overflowing fords, washed out bridges and avalanches.

Initially, the mail run was serviced from Kurow.

The mail 'coach', at one time a brown 1947 Ford V8 truck, was run by Kurow Motors Transport Company, which later became Waitaki Transport.

In earlier days, because of the capacity of the vehicles and roads, it made for a slower trip and on the Huxley run the driver would stay overnight at Lake Ohau Station.

Below: Lex picks up the mailbags from Rebecca Green-French at the postal agency; deliveries are packed into the Nissan Mistral before the crew heads out up Broken Hut Rd.



In the 1980s it was Omarama Post Office postmistress Denise Tamati who filled the mailbags for Waitaki Transport's Bill Foster. Back then, the canvas mail bags were heavy with post, shop orders filled cartons not plastic bags, and the mail run was underpinned by a government department which prided itself on delivering no matter what.

"Nowadays, we're not expected to go if we don't want to risk it," Lex says.

He still drives the familiar, trusty old Nissan Mistral and although the old girl is a little worse for wear – there's a bit of duck tape - you don't want to believe everything you see and even less of what you hear. Just saying, but my guess is Mark Paulson is not that poor of a shot. My lips are sealed. This is the country which has honed Lex's story-telling skills, his passion for the history, myths and legends past and present, and the murders and mysteries folded into the vast landscape.

We head back across Short Cut Rd to SH8. Since Lex started there have been new generations and new farming families come and go.

The Hunters are at Berwen Station now, children have grown, flown and returned, and the troll under the bridge at Dalrachney hasn't been seen in a while.

- continued over

Below: It is a sparkling blue day with more hugs as we make our way to the last stop, Twinburn. The traditional mailbags are still used and the troll may or may not still be under the bridge at Dalrachney.



No overseas trips yet - continued

We head back into town, grab a bite of lunch from the Oasis, and then head on up SH8 to the northern most drop-off, Glenburn Station.

As we cross the bridge the Ahuriri River is still up after all the rain, not the best fishing yet.

The traffic police have been well employed on SH8 once again this summer and we carefully pass a campervan which is flanked by not one but two police cars.

We spot smoke to the west, and everyone wonders aloud what the fire restrictions are. The conclusion is that all is well.

Lex is a former chief rural fire officer, but no-one is that relaxed about seeing smoke since the Lake Ohau wildfire.

After turning through Benmore Station which once boasted its own post office – Clearburn – we head up the Lake Ohau Rd.

Photos: (below and right) State Highway 8 north to the last stop at Glenburn is busy with summer travellers Glenburn Station is the furthest north on the run.

The crew place wagers on the numbers of cyclists they'll meet on the Lake Ohau Rd, and there's always time to call in on Lake Ohau resident Mark Paulson.

There's a stop at Lake Ohau Station and at the lodge for a final shout..



The bets have been laid, recorded in Ross's trusty notebook, final and secured. Coins have been duly collected and slotted into the sauce jar.

Yep, the crew take bets on how many cyclists they will meet on the road. Today, it ranges from 25 to 45.

The tally begins.

There are many unspoken rules to this game developed over the years – adjudication is firm and fierce.

A trailer load of cycles does not count.

The closest guess and the winner takes all.

However, on this day it has been agreed the winnings will be used to buy a Lotto ticket – and then they'll be off. For sure.

Various destinations are put forward as options on which to fritter away the winnings living the dream.

In reality, Lex is heading on a North Island road trip to see his granddaughter marry, Ross is heading to help with the Tour of Southland and Malcolm with the help of a friend will see out the term of Lex's mail run contract which ends January 31.

-continued over



No overseas trips yet - continued

Back on the Ohau road and there's little indication of the ferocity of the wildfire fire which blew through the valley in 2020 annihilating all in its path, destroying 48 homes and buildings, and damaging 5043ha of land. No one was killed.

New homes have risen from the ashes and the village is visible from the road now the wildings have gone, but the skeletons of manuka still rise up out of the scrub. We drop into the village to call on the aforementioned Mark, who received a bravery award for the role he played in the fire and is now domiciled in the village with an enviable view of Lake Middleton. He proceeds to give Lex a wind-up. "What, have you got a puncture?", he asks, all innocence. Lex bites.

Lake Ohau is a mill pond but it is ruffling up around the edges, there's high cirrus in the Alps and the dust is rising at the head where the Hopkins and Dobson valleys meet.

There is talk of Mt Huxley claiming the life of young tramper Connor Purvis and how during the search Lex, Malcolm and Ross had scrutinised every cyclist coming down the road, just in case.

The last stop is Lake Ohau Station where we meet station manager Sally Moore for one last hug at the Woolshed.

Everyone has sweaty eyes. We did need to bring the tissues.

Nowadays the run doesn't usually go as far as Huxley Gorge Station at the end of the road. There's not much call for it, Lex says, regretfully. It was a favourite haunt from his forest service days.

As we head back down, we pass camping grounds full of campers, horse trekkers and other visitors revelling in the spectacular beauty we call home when Lex decides to turn into Lake Ohau Lodge and treat the team to a celebratory refreshment.

Owner Mike Neilson and Ohau Snow Fields mountain manager Craig Ovenden are mulling over the recent serious washouts which Craig has been working to fix.



It is a serious moment.

More hugs and the farewell shout – just the one - is on Mike. He insists.

We head back to town in sunshine.

As always, it's been fun.

"That's the only reason I do it," Lex said.

But wait there's more.

Of course there is. Just like one of Lex's stories, it doesn't end there.

You may have spied the Mistral with Lexie and the Last of the Summer Wine crew still picking up the mail bags and trundling down the road. You are not dreaming.

New contractor JD - "You know, JD, he used to work at the pub?" - asked Lex if he might stay on for a bit until he is ready to take up the reins.

What else would Lex say, but 'yes'.

And so, I guess they didn't win Lotto

Below: As time goes by: Former 'Last of the Summer Wine' members included the late Kevyn Webb (not pictured) and 'Jolly' John Rogers (left), and the 'young' Mick Walsh (right), before he moved out of town.

Lake Ohau is calm as dust rises above the river valleys



ICYMI It was 40 years ago

It was forty years ago this year - 1986 - the New Zealand Electricity Omarama subdivision officially opened, although a few were able to move in at the close of December 1985.

This was our story from back in the day - Ruth and Stephen Grundy's story. For those of you who like their stories short, sweet and to the point please indulge us while we enjoy a nostalgic look back.

"It seems to me that the South Island is there for the use of the all-powerful New Zealand Electricity Department, and its minion the Ministry of Works which is re-creating the whole island in its own image... in the national good, of course." Quote by: photographer Robin Morrison, 1978, South Island from the Road.

Omarama must have wondered what it did to deserve it.

Almost overnight it was transformed from a quiet rural servicing town with tourists dropping in through the summer, and doubled in size to accommodate the Ministry of Energy's NZED-base to house workers needed to staff its Upper Waitaki Power Scheme.

You see houses were needed here because Twizel was just supposed to quietly roll over and disappear back into the landscape from whence it had sprung once the construction of the scheme was completed.

Needless to say, Twizel had other ideas.

You have to hand it to them not many in that era challenged that mighty power and won. (Chapter 51 of *Dam Dwellers*, by Marion Sheridan, details the process and is available at the Omarama Library).

Reportedly, the Omarama community was consulted about its proposed change in size, shape and culture at a meeting on March 7, 1983.

The Waitaki County Council, at least, welcomed the move with open arms.

After living here for about 10 years I said out loud to a 'local' (no longer living) that I really hoped Omarama would stay small and quiet. She snapped back; "We had hoped it would, too." That put me back in my box, and smartly.



Meetings were called in both Twizel and Omarama as the tussle over possession ensued. Eventually, a compromise was reached. Those workers who wanted to continue to live in Twizel would. Those who wanted to live in Omarama could. The union – the PSA - would see to it that all parties were treated equally.

The NZED needed up to 70 developed sections and in November 1982 4.8ha of land to the east of Omarama was purchased. You will note this was some time before the community consultation meeting was held.

It was the age of hoisting buildings up and trucking them to wherever they were needed next. No problem. Towns like Cromwell - the last to be reshaped by the NZED for the building of the Clyde Dam - can boast more than one or two old Twizel or Otematata houses.

The Department's first plan was to move existing houses to Omarama and refurbish them. But after doing-up the first few it became obvious the costs to the taxpayer would be prohibitive.

So, it was decided new houses would be built and the NZED Omarama sub-division was born.

"Yes," I would tell those who felt the need to know, "we live in the subdivision". – it still happens.

Although a handful of families - the Rogers, Williams, Bateman, Strong, Reeves, Orford, and Armstrong families - had already moved into existing housing in Omarama, in December 1985, it was Steve Dolan who was first to move into a new house in the subdivision, to Benmore Place.

We moved to Quailburn Drive, January 21, 1986. It was a Tuesday.

1986 proved to be a year of some significance. David Lange was Prime Minister, Winston Peters was MP for Tauranga - National MP for Tauranga.

On January 28, on its 10th mission, the Space Shuttle Challenger was filmed live as it broke apart 73 seconds after take-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, US, killing all seven crew members.

Those scenes were replayed over and over on our 22in Phillips cathode ray tube console cabinet TV.

Back then, there were two TV channels but transmission into Omarama was such we could only get TV One and a very 'snowy' TV Two for which we paid a broadcasting licence fee. We had no radio reception.

In April, the world stood still as a catastrophic nuclear accident unfolded in the northern hemisphere and the account of a disaster in a town we had never heard of entered our common history. Chernobyl.

It was the year Halley's Comet paid its second visit of the 20th century to our sun and Omarama was touted globally as being one of the best sites from which to enjoy the promised spectacle.

Busloads of night-sky watchers from around the world were taken in the early hours of the morning from the Omarama Motor Lodge and Stagecoach Inn to Colin and Gwenda Mackay's woolshed at Ribbonwood Station to view what proved to be a bit of a damp squib.

Nonetheless, the trips raised considerable funds which the Mackays donated to pay for the completion of St Thomas Church which opened and celebrated its first service that year.

-continued over

It was 40 years ago - continued

And 1986 was the year New Zealand was suspended from the ANZUS treaty because we had declared our waters nuclear-free. No-one could quite decide what the treaty should be called after that.

In Omarama, Stan and Pat Cotter had the pub.

Next door, on SH8, Eion Woods had his contracting business.

Down Chain Hills Highway his wife, Aileen, ran Country Crafts (now Merino Country Café and Gifts).

Across the road Red and Bronwyn Stevenson had one garage and Blackie - W. A (Allan) Blackie - had the other.

Four Square Omarama was owned by Joan and Peter Wytenberg, and Joan's brother, Ian Crichton.

The Post Office (now GlenCraig's) was still a post office with a savings bank where careful entries were made by hand into passport-sized post office savings bank books by Post-mistress Denise Tamati and her assistants.

The Oasis was owned by Gary Chang.

The Omarama Motor Lodge – now Distinction Heritage Gateway - was owned by Rob and Jan Perriam (now Jan Wright).

The Countrytime - called the Stagecoach Inn - was lost in its paddock on the far outskirts of town beside the small airfield.

It was not just local Kevyn Webb who had big dreams of bringing private jets into town.

Geoff Pywell, former station manager of Ruataniwha Station, a large chunk of which was swallowed by Twizel township, also proved to be ahead of his time. He set up his fledgeling gliding business that year.

The camping ground was owned by the McDuffs, who later sold to Norman and Lynda Chamberlain.



Each summer, by the stream, the McDuffs would host the social club hangi, supervised by Tom Tamati, followed by a community cricket match. The whole town - everyone- would go.

A doctor from Twizel held clinics in the Plunket Rooms at the Memorial Hall, fortnightly, I think.

Church was in the supper room, as was playgroup.

When the stock sales and dog trials were on, the large kitchen with its spacious wooden cupboards stacked full of mismatched crockery and cavernous aluminium pots, with its yard-long cutlery drawers and never a teaspoon to be found, with its ovens – second hand but not quite so ancient back then – and its electric Zips put on early to heat water, would fill with ladies organized with military precision preparing hot dinners to serve to the men lined up at the counter.

The money raised funded community groups.

That year, Ginger Anderson and Clyde were fifth in the Long Head in the North Island Dog Championship Trials in Te Aute, Hawke's Bay.

Stephen was employed by the NZED as an 'engineering technician – communications', a comms tech.

Like him, many of those who took up the NZED house purchase scheme and moved to the subdivision were single or newly hooked-up men in their mid-twenties, many of whom had been living in the Ministry of Works hostel in Twizel until being let loose on the world and Omarama.

For a while, there was one lawnmower and one vacuum cleaner which regularly did the rounds, particularly if parents were coming to visit.

Of the approximately 35 new houses set around various cul-de-sacs interspersed with empty sections in what was an otherwise barren landscape, there were 11 houses built in the same style as ours.

-continued over



It was 40 years ago - continued

Apparently, the NZED had instructed the three building firms who won the contracts that no more than four houses could be built to look the same.

To fill that requirement they merely flicked the plans around 180 degrees for one third and built the remaining third as a mirror image.

Visiting someone in a house the mirror image of your own can make you feel quite seasick.

Rumour had it workers on site competed with each other to see who could get through different building stages first.

The morning after 'ceilings day' one crew arrived to find theirs on the floor. Oops.

As far as street layout was concerned the subdivision was considered to have incorporated the very latest in urban design to avoid the 'issues' supposedly associated with 'hydro villages'.

The cul-de-sacs were to encourage small nurturing groups of neighbours.

Firm and life-long friendships were made regardless.

The vacant lots meant those not branded NZED could move in, build homes of their own design and mix things up a little.

Those lots sat empty for the best part of a decade.

It was a barren landscape.

Few trees grew in the grey-brown stony silt left from the time old braids the Ahuriri River had washed to the foothills. A tree planted here took twice as long to grow as any tree on the coast, the softwoods that persisted grew as hardwoods.

NZED issued each homeowner with a tree allowance - \$70 - to buy and plant trees. Only a couple of nurseries were chosen to accept the purchase orders, tree lists were not extensive and challenging growing conditions meant silver birches, chestnuts, sycamore maples, bright yellow conifers and flowering cherry plums were pretty ubiquitous. It was not quite like scenes from 'Stepford Wives' but homogenous would have been a good overall description of the subdivision.



The brick houses, with their modern brown aluminium window frames, were fitted-out with the same kitchens and bathrooms complete with pink or green marbled Seratone walls, Government Stores Board Linoleum in mushroom or avocado, and sported the same wallpaper and paint jobs, just in different rooms.

Although you provided your own curtains most of us bought our drapes from the limited selection offered by the visiting 'curtain van', from Oamaru. Sometimes you had to remind yourself whose house you were in.

The hold the NZED and its union, the PSA, had over its workers led to some quirky outcomes.

Managers had front fences built for them by the company.

Those who rented were supplied with letterboxes despite the fact there was no mail delivery.

Staff lobbied for milk boxes to be built in each street so milk deliveries could be made.

There was quite a lengthy battle for that. Eventually, the boxes went up, only to have milk deliveries phased out shortly afterwards.

We were not ungrateful. The houses were modern, well-insulated and warm. Not only was each fitted with a log burner but NZED employees were entitled to generously subsidised electricity.

On weekdays town would empty out at 7am when the convoy of vans set off from the garages (where the Big Sky motels are) for Twizel and it would begin to fill up again from about 4.30 pm.

The shift workers would head out about midnight.

The journey to work was a slow one but there was always a race to get home - travel time was paid time.

While 'the men' - there was one woman station operator for a short time - were employed in Twizel, there were few employment choices in Omarama for the wives and girlfriends, some of whom arrived in town with teaching or other professional qualifications.

-continued over



It was 40 years ago - continued

Legend has it the pub had only six bottles of Speights in the fridge when the guys paid their first after work visit.

Dave Hutton, who was barman, said; "By the end of the week we'll have you all drinking DB."

"By the end of the week that fridge will be full of Speights," was the retort, and it was. But it was a small fridge and so once that was dry they would adjourn to the restaurant where a keg of Speights was hiding.

It wasn't too long before there was Speights on tap, which was something of an accomplishment at the time for a DB pub.

It was quite some time before Omarama had its own policeman. You could say it was a bit of a frontier town at times but people looked out for each, as it has always been. Bad behaviour has always been bad behaviour, no excuses.

Otherwise, there was general acceptance of some practices which nowadays would seem odd or even intolerable - that's simply the way it was back then.

It could get a bit rowdy after the rodeo and when the shearers got paid - cash or cheque, no direct credit back then.

And sometimes our lads and lasses at this end of town got a bit carried away.

More than one late Friday night saw cars racing down the alleyways.

Not saying, but Stephen's mini was a perfect fit.

Fashion crime was the worst - big hair and shoulder pads. Yes, I had a perm and, later, a spiral perm – Google that! But hey, I wasn't the one wearing stubbies!

The weather was always something to write home about, and we wrote letters.

I'm sure it was colder. Old people always say that.

In winter I walked to work through snow drifts up to my thighs - because I had managed to lose the road and walked into the borrow pit. The windows froze on the inside. I watched picks 'ping' and shovels bounce off the frozen tundra. Washing froze on the line as did the freshly-washed head of spiral perm carrying the basket. I quickly learnt to shovel snow off the drive and paths before it froze.

But, if the sun was out I drank my coffee outside on the porch.

In summer, there was the wonderful, searing heat and walks to the river to cool off.

Yep, in Omarama it's either too hot or too cold to work - ain't that a bonus.

It was a bit of a culture shock moving from Dunedin city life to 'the middle of nowhere' - before marketing people invented kinder terms like 'the heartland'.

"We'll be here six months at the most," he said.

"Then I'll get a job in Christchurch."

Six months grew to a year, and eighteen months into two years.

I wondered why the jobs weren't being applied for, resumes were not being sent, and why the subject always got changed when I brought it up.

"I don't think I want to move," he said, eventually.

I had to go for a really long walk.

But Omarama had won my heart.

I turned and walked HOME.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Benmore seismic strengthening works

Meridian is starting seismic strengthening work on Benmore Power Station's concrete penstocks. This critical work will be carried out from February 2026 and will run through to early 2029.

Loch Laird Road: partial closure

Loch Laird Road on the western side of the dam will be down to one lane for approximately **four weeks during March/April 2026**.

You'll still be able to use the road in both directions, but traffic will be managed by traffic lights.

The works will also require the occasional short-term full closure of Loch Laird Road, both on the western side and across the top of the dam.

Top carpark: partial closure

Part of the carpark adjoining the boat ramp at the top of the Benmore dam will be closed for the duration of works, **from February 2026 to 2029**. We'll need to use it as a construction laydown area.

If there's no room in the carpark, please use another boat ramp and do not attempt park on the road verge.



Construction activities will create hazards from time to time. Please ensure you stay behind barriers and adhere to all safety messaging.



WHAT ARE WE UP TO?

Research indicates there's a 75% chance of a significant earthquake along the Alpine Fault in the next 50 years.

Meridian is working to ensure the Waitaki Scheme's largest hydro station, Benmore, can get back up and running as soon as possible if it suffers damage from a large quake.

To do this, we're replacing the old rubber bearings with anti-seismic devices, installing fluid viscous dampers (a form of shock absorber), wrapping key joints with fibreglass, and modifying the upper joints to ensure they can move freely in an earthquake – all while the penstocks remain in place.

Thank you.

We recognise these disruptions will be inconvenient for some, but they are unfortunately necessary to this important project.



The Noticeboard

To have your community notice included here
email: omaramagazette@gmail.com

The Omarama Lamb Sale will be at 10am, Thursday, February 19, at the Omarama Saleyards.

The Omarama Adult Ewe Fair will be at 10am, Thursday, February 27. at the Omarama Saleyards.



Kurow Medical Centre Ōmārama Clinic at the Ōmārama Community Centre, is on Tuesdays. Appointments are available 9am to 4.30pm.
To make appointments for all clinics, order repeat scripts or make enquiries please contact Kurow Medical Centre 03 436 0760 or Mackenzie Health Clinic 03 976 0503 .
www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz

The Ōmārama Community Library is open 9.30am to 11am, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Library hours can change. Email: omaramalibrary@gmail.com

Ōmārama MenzShed meets each Saturday at 10am and at other times too.
For further information please contact Malcolm Cameron 022 476 2225

St Thomas' Ōmārama Church Community:

Kurow Presbyterian Parish: Rev Eymbert Johannes Schoneveld, Interim Moderator, Kurow Presbyterian Parish, Waiareka-Weston Community Presbyterian Church, 48 Main Street, Weston. Phone: 022 683 5117
email: westonminister@gmail.com

The Ōmārama Golf Club Saturdays cards in 12 noon, tee-off 12.30pm. Club captain: Greg Stuart 027 438 9018, secretary: Arron Chambers 027 203 2340.
www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz

The Ahuriri Community Catchment Group meets once a month. For time and place contact facilitator Bridget Pringle, 021 072 2113 or bridget@irricon.co.nz

The Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month at the Kurow Hotel. All welcome. Join the Facebook group.

Ōmārama Playgroup meets at 9.30am each Wednesday during the primary school term at the Ōmārama Community Centre. For more information phone or email president Olivia Black 027 833 0869, vice-president Jess Townsend and secretary Bridie Brosnahan 027 341 3010 omaramaplaygroup@gmail.com

Bridge Club - The Ōmārama Bridge Club meets on a regular basis and would welcome new members. If you are interested please phone Sylvia Anderson 438 9784 or Ann Patterson 438 9493.

The Ōmārama Model Aircraft Club meets regularly at its flying ground at the Ōmārama airfield. All welcome - Contact Bevan Allan bjallan@xtra.co.nz

FENZ Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade meets at 7pm each Wednesday at the Ōmārama Fire Station and has its meeting on the third Wednesday of the month. If anyone would like more information about the various volunteer roles available within the fire brigade please get in touch. Email omarama@fireandemergency.nz or contact Jack on 020 4045 0909. You can follow us on Facebook (Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade)

A gentle exercises and social afternoon group meets at the Otematata District Club at 1.30pm Thursday afternoons. Gold coin donation and a cuppa after the exercises. Contact Shirley - 021 165 6439, or Diane 021 237 9636.

Waitaki Newcomers Network: For more information about this group and to subscribe to regular updates send contact details to E: waitaki@newcomers.co.nz
W: www.newcomers.co.nz F: facebook.com/WaitakiNewcomersNetwork/

Plunket Line: 0800 933 922

To read more, enjoy more photos and watch our place 'come to life' check out our Facebook page and website.

www.facebook.com/omaramagazette/
omaramagazette.nz

To receive email alerts between monthly editions of the Omarama Gazette sign up to our 'Local List'. Email omaramagazette@gmail.com

Thank you to all who share your stories and contribute in other ways to the Gazette.

We all really appreciate what you do.

**The March Issue of the Omarama Gazette
is Wednesday, March 4, 2026.**

Please submit copy
by Thursday, February 26, 2026

LOVE OUR LAKES

Simple steps can reduce your impact.



ecan.govt.nz/loveourlakes



POO IN THE LOO



CHECK CLEAN DRY YOUR BOATING GEAR



WASH CLOTHES / DISHES AWAY FROM WATERWAYS



BIN YOUR RUBBISH

ERP12267/25

CAN I SWIM HERE?

We monitor water quality at popular river, lakes and beaches over summer.

Check the water quality at

lawa.org.nz/swim



Environment Canterbury Regional Council
Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

LAWA
LAND AIR WATER AOTEAROA



The Community Reports

Ōmārama Police



In case you missed it, from the Omarama Gazette January Extra...

Hi everyone,

- silly season is almost done and we will soon have the place back to ourselves again.

The Christmas period was altogether pretty good for me. I had three extra staff come up from Oamaru again to assist over Christmas and New Year which was great.

The Rodeo was once again no issue whatsoever with everyone behaving and just having a good time. I dealt with some disorder and the odd drunken party but nothing major. Having the liquor ban in place at both Omarama and Otematata was also an invaluable tool and allowed us to be proactive when coming across clowns carrying alcohol on the street, or standing around the back of their car on the booze.

I did attend a fairly serious domestic violence incident, which resulted in one person being arrested and charged with Assault.

With the large amount of traffic on the road I was surprised we didn't have more vehicle crashes than we did. Although, with the larger volume of traffic, people are forced to slow down which may be why there weren't more. I did get smashed with a lot of driving complaints, however.

On my last day of work I received a call about concerns some members of the public had about a bicycle that had been left at the South Temple carpark, and so begun the Search and Rescue operation to look for Connor Purvis. Although it is not the result anyone wishes for, it was good that the SAR teams were able to locate Connor and return him to his family and friends.

I didn't have a lot to do with this search as I'd just completed working 10 days straight so Dunedin Police SAR came to run things which was great, because in all honesty I was spent!

I was hugely proud of our local group of SAR members who once again showed that, although we're a small team, we have a lot of skills to offer. My colleagues mentioned that they were hugely impressed with how well trained and helpful the Omarama SAR group was. But not only that, also how great the wider Omarama community was in offering assistance with logistics/accommodation and food.

For me it's not surprising, I know how awesome our wee town is, but for the city walloppers they were blown away. Clair Robertson who is our NZ Land Search and Rescue Group support officer sent me an email asking that I forward on her thanks (below)

From me... "Thank you", it's this reason why we love being part of this community.

Thank you from Clair -

I was hoping you could pass on our thanks on behalf of NZ Land Search and Rescue to the Omarama community for the amazing support that they provided during the recent operation for Connor Purvis.

Ōmārama Police news - continued

I have had great feedback from the teams who attended, particularly those who had travelled some distance to assist. They asked me to pass on their thanks for the way Omarama SAR looked after the welfare of the out-of-area groups in particular, and were very appreciative of the catering and support from the local community throughout the search.

They worked hard in some very challenging terrain to locate and return Mr Purvis to his family, and the support from both the local group and the wider Omarama community was invaluable and made a difficult job achievable.

Our thoughts are very much with Connor's family and friends at this time, and we hope that they will find some comfort in the knowledge that so many people cared about him and were willing to offer their time and their skills to support the search effort to find him and bring him home.

Please will you offer our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the Omarama community for all their assistance, food, accommodation and resources offered, and their unwavering support of our volunteers throughout the search.

Ngā mihi | Kind regards

Clair Robertson

Group and Volunteer Support

Otago and Southland

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue

Call triple one (111) when you need an emergency response from police, fire or ambulance.

Use Ten Five (105) to report things that don't need urgent Police assistance.

Usual office contact details:

Senior Constable Nayland Smith

Sole charge Constable / Omarama / Po Box 101, Omarama 9448.

Phone: (03) 438 9559 / Ext: 34580 / <mailto:nayland.smith@police.govt.nz>

	 <p>Ford Simpson Ltd Chartered Accountants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm Accounting Expertise• Business Advice• Family and Succession Planning <p><i>If you would like us to visit you, please call and arrange a time.</i></p> <p>e. office@fordsimpson.co.nz w. www.fordsimpson.co.nz</p> <p>PHONE 03 687 2080</p> 	
<p>Antony Ford CA</p>		<p>Brodie Craig CA</p>

Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade



- By Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade chief fire officer Jack Zorab

Kia ora everyone,
It's been a huge start to the year for the Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade — last year was our busiest on record, and 2026 has kicked off in the same way, with our busiest January to date. I want to acknowledge the tremendous effort from our volunteers. No matter how many times the siren goes, the team continue to turn out professionally, calmly, and capably. The workload has been heavy, but they've handled it like absolute pros.

Connor Purvis search response

As many of you know, the year began with the large-scale search for Connor Purvis. The brigade was able to mobilise quickly to support search teams and the Incident Management Team with accommodation, meals, logistics support and anything else required in those early days.

I want to express my deepest thanks to our community. When I put the call out for help on Shenanigans, you responded instantly and overwhelmingly — baking, home-cooked meals, offers of rooms, people opening their homes to complete strangers. Our Community Resilience Group managed all the cut lunches, and at the peak we were caring for around 50 searchers and IMT personnel each day. Throughout the operation our volunteers still turned out to every emergency call and maintained full cover. Breakfast was ready at 6.30am every morning, and dinners were served every evening when teams returned from the field. It was an enormous effort, and we could not have done it without the community beside us. Thank you to every single person who stepped up and our sincere condolences to the whānau of Connor.

Annual golf tournament fundraiser

January also saw our annual brigade golf tournament fundraiser. Once again, the generosity from the community was incredible — we had raffle prizes coming out our ears! A huge thank you to everyone who donated, played, supported, or opened their wallets on the day. Special thanks to Arron Chambers for leading the organising effort. This year's funds (around \$2,500) will go towards improving the brigade's resilience for future large-scale events such as major storms or earthquakes. The recent search operation highlighted areas where we can strengthen our own preparedness, and your support means we can now get that work started.

Congratulations to our new firefighters

We're also celebrating two big achievements in the brigade. Over the past fortnight, both Jase and Dan completed their basic training and earned their yellow helmets — a milestone that requires real dedication.

Jase has steadily built his skills over several years, starting as a medical first responder before adding firefighting to his role.

-continued over

Omarama Fire brigade news - continued

Dan has returned after some time away, bringing back valuable knowledge and experience that we're grateful to have on the team. These achievements bring us to seven firefighters qualified to wear breathing apparatus. Our goal is twelve to ensure we can always field a fully crewed response to house fires, so this is excellent progress.

Firefighter Challenge – Oamaru and beyond

By the time this goes to print, our newly-formed competition team will have competed in the Firefighter Challenge in Oamaru — known as “the toughest two minutes in sport” (or three to five minutes for most of us!). Training has involved early morning climbs up Ladybird Hill, practice on a homemade course, and a general push to lift fitness levels. A huge thank you to Ōmārama Lodge for allowing us access to the hill so we can practise our stair climbing!

Respect to our seven team members who've put their hands up to take on the challenge. Next stop: South Island Champs in Christchurch this March.

Thank you, Ken

December also marked the end of an era with the retirement of Ken Rogers after 20 years as brigade secretary. Ken avoids the spotlight, but after two decades of service he deserves proper recognition.

He has been the steady hand behind the scenes — keeping meticulous records, navigating all the complicated processes that keep a volunteer brigade compliant, and making sure everything was always done correctly and on time. He's also quietly kept the lawns and gardens looking immaculate, and both Ken and Kay have been first in the door after social nights to get the station back into shape.

Ken will continue as secretary for our First Response Trust and as groundskeeper, but on behalf of the entire brigade and the wider community: thank you for two decades of service, Ken and Kay. Your commitment has shaped this brigade for the better.

Looking ahead to 2026

This year promises to be another busy one for us.

We have: Four members booked into the basic vegetation firefighting course as we look to reestablish a dedicated vegetation firefighting capability in Ōmārama.

Three members attending the two-day Operational Support course, building strength across our support roles.

Two members heading to their seven-day recruit course, which will see them return as BA-qualified firefighters.

2026 is also the 60th anniversary of the Ōmārama Volunteer Fire Brigade. We plan to mark the occasion later in the year — keep an eye out for more details as plans develop. We'll also begin work on a project to replace our 2008 Nissan Navara Medical First Response ute, starting with needs analysis and design before we commence fundraising.

And of course, we're always looking for more people to join our growing team. There are many different ways to volunteer with us — firefighting, medical response, operational support, logistics, administration and more. If you're interested in getting involved, please give me a call. I'd love to chat.

That's it from me, see you when the siren sounds.

Jack

THE LATEST

FUNDRAISING 01 * NOT FOR CONSUMPTION * 9 FEBRUARY 2026

BREAKING NEWS

LOCAL BUSINESS TO DONATE FUNDS

North Otago business, Omarama Lodge, have started an auction for some rather unique items. The auction which is now live, will run until 9pm Friday 13th February 2026 with the full winning bid amount being donated to the local Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Some of the local brigade members have been training for the past couple of months in preparation for up coming firefighter challenges. The funds raised will go towards personalised gear for those team members, showing our support for all their hard work and determination.

SEARCH ON TRADE ME
5768010267



These bottles represent some of the pioneering efforts of the Waitaki Valley wine region. The Clay Cliffs Estate Vineyard was planted in the early 1990s, becoming the first vineyard in the Waitaki and the highest vineyard in New Zealand. This is a glimpse of local history from right here in Omarama. These are for display only. If opened, we take no responsibility for the horrific stench that may occur. Search this number on Trade Me 5768010267 to place your bids.

Ōmārama Golf Club

In the Omarama Gazette, September 2024, you would have read that on September 7, 1974, Prue Aubrey and Ada Patterson, two enthusiastic local golfers called the first meeting to see if there was interest to form a golf club. A committee was formed to investigate the feasibility. After a lot of hard work and commitment from many in the community, the opening day of the club is recorded as March 6, 1976. The club is celebrating this significant milestone the weekend of March 13 and 14 2026. (refer to invitation below)

If anyone has any old photo's or memorabilia etc from the previous 50 years, could you please contact Christine Bowman (email: bambamclarke@yahoo.co.nz) so we can get a copy to put in our photo albums for posterity. We welcome all past, present and future members, sponsors and supporters to join us on this special occasion.

Also please share the message with anyone you know that has been involved with the club.

If you could please register your interest, for catering purposes to bambamclarke@yahoo.co.nz.

We look forward to seeing some of you then, as we would love to hear old stories etc from the last 50 years. - *Christine Bowman*

Saturday Club Day: cards in 12.30pm and tee-off at 1pm.

If you are interested in joining the club
email Arron Chambers,

secretary@omaramagolfclub.co.nz for details.

Club captain: Greg Stuart phone: 027 438 9018

Secretary: Arron Chambers phone: 027 203 2340

email secretary@omaramagolfclub.co.nz

www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz

OMARAMA GOLF CLUB INVITE YOU TO JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLUB'S OPENING

Friday 13th March 2026 – 6.30 p.m. at the clubrooms

Tour course/clubrooms, drinks (eftpos available), speeches etc and social catch up

Saturday 14th March 2026 – 12.00 p.m.

Join us on club day for 18 holes or a fun 9 hole ambrose option

Please register your interest by 6/3/2026 (for catering purposes) to bambamclarke@yahoo.co.nz



**Boots and Jandals Omarama Hotel
Social club,**

Spud in the bucket function

including judging will be held

2.30pm, Sunday, February 22, 2026.

**FOC meal for social club members will be
provided later in the day.**

Hope to see you there

for a fun filled day

Ōmārama Community Garden

We are a group of gardeners who work together to create something for everyone in our community. Anyone is welcome to pop along to the Community Centre and have a potter, and also to pop in any plants they may have ready to go in.

Contact: Jennie Hales, jenniehollows@hotmail.com

Ōmārama Community Library

The Ōmārama Community Library's opening hours are 9.30am to 11am, Wednesdays and Saturdays, at the Ōmārama Community Centre. omaramalibrary@gmail.com

Knit Night Ōmārama

Knit Night Ōmārama
5.15pm each Tuesday
at the Omarama Community Centre
Gold coin donations towards room hire would be appreciated.



LJ Hooker Property Management

We don't just manage your property, we maximise your investment.

Get in touch to find out more!

Rachel Sheridan
Business Development
Manager
0274647751
pmrentals@mcre.co.nz



Ōmārama MenzShed

- by *Malcolm Cameron, convenor*

The Omarama Menzshed would like to wish all residents of Omarama a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

We were back into action in early January and have been busy constructing a new vegetable stall for the Community Garden. Once completed, it will be placed by the fence at the back of the Community Hall.

Our team has also been busy at the school, where we've been erecting a small fence in the grounds behind the swimming pool.



The Ōmārama MenzShed meets
at 10am each Saturday
and at other times, too.

**For further information contact:
Malcolm Cameron 022 476 2225**

Kurow Medical Centre

8 Wynyard St, Kurow
P: 03 4360760 F: 03 4360780

E: info@kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz
W: www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz
www.facebook.com/kurowmedicalcentre

**Providing 24/7 health care and support to
the people of the Upper Waitaki and Mackenzie**

**Kurow Medical Centre and its satellite clinics
in Twizel (Mackenzie Health Centre Private Clinic)
and Omarama (Community Hall)**

are proud to offer our registered and casual patients the following services

- * Ultrasound performed by a qualified clinician (great for minor fractures, gall stones, kidney stones, heart and lung problems, foreign bodies, blood clots, detecting early pregnancy and much more!)
- * Minor surgery * Vasectomies
- * Mole checking and removal * Steroid injections * Venesection
- * Aviation, workplace and driving medicals * Botox for Wrinkle reduction
- * Workplace health screening * Counselling
- * Spirometry to diagnose asthma and COPD
- * Hearing and sight tests for adults and children * Ear syringing
- * Liquid nitrogen for warts, verruca's and skin lesions
- * Cardiovascular risk assessment and diabetic checks (funded for eligible patients)
- * Travel advice and vaccination
- * Cervical smears (funded for eligible patients)
- * Seasonal flu shots and shingles vaccine (funded for eligible patients)
- * Childhood immunisation * Before school checks
- * Postnatal and six-week baby health check

And much more!

GP consult fees: Under 14yrs Free; Adult \$50.00

Care Plus – Free to eligible patients only. Community Services Card \$20

We also offer the following services from external Health Care Providers:

- * Podiatry and Ear Health (Kurow only)
- * Physiotherapy, Acupuncture and Massage (Kurow and Twizel)

Opening hours

Omarama: Tuesdays 9am to 4.30pm

Kurow: Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 1pm

Twizel: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 12pm

Please note: We provide 24/7 on call after hours cover by our doctors and PRIME nurses for all our registered and casual patients.

If you require further information or an appointment, please contact us on:

For Kurow 03 436 0760 or for Twizel 03 976 0503

-Dr Tim and Juliet Gardner

Look us up on our website or Facebook page for more information

Wellness Matters

*A health column from the Kurow Medical/Mackenzie Health Centre Team
- contributed by Fiona Chamberlain*

Repeat Prescriptions and Your Safety

There has been recent national guidance encouraging longer repeat prescriptions for some long-term medicines. While this may suit a small number of people with very stable conditions, it is not appropriate or safe for many patients.

Regular in person reviews are an important part of good medical care. They allow us to:

- Check that medicines are still working as intended
- Monitor for side effects or interactions
- Order and review blood tests and check your blood pressure where needed
- Adjust doses if health needs change
- Identify other health problems early, before they become serious

Health conditions and medications often change gradually, sometimes without obvious symptoms. Without regular review, important warning signs can be missed. For this reason, we will continue to recommend regular check-ins for most patients taking long-term medication. Any decision about extending prescriptions will be made case by case by your doctor, based on your individual health needs.

Our priority is to provide safe, high-quality care. While national policies may change, clinical judgement remains essential. We will continue to base prescribing decisions on:

- Your medical history
- Your current health
- Your test results
- Your personal risk factors

Our aim is to prevent problems, not just respond to them.

Measles: Prevention Matters

Measles remains present in New Zealand and continues to cause outbreaks, particularly where vaccination rates are lower. It spreads very easily through coughing and sneezing. Early symptoms often resemble a severe cold, followed by a rash. Some people - including adults - can become seriously unwell and require hospital care. Vaccination remains the best protection. Two doses of the MMR vaccine provide strong immunity, and babies should receive their first vaccine on time at 12 months and their second at 15 months of age. Many people born between 1969 and 2004 in New Zealand were not vaccinated against measles or might have had only 1 dose. If you are uncertain, we can check your records and arrange free catch-up vaccination if needed.

<https://info.health.nz/health-topics/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine>

Wishing you a healthy and steady start to the year from all of us.



OMARAMA SCHOOL 2 Omarama Ave, Omarama Ph: 03 4389815

Learning and thriving in the place of light - Ki te Whei Ao, Ki te Ao Mārama e!

Omarama School is a Full Primary School (Year 1 - Year 8)

We are welcoming new enrolments, please contact Alison Holden at principal@omarama.school.nz to arrange a school visit at your convenience. Give us a call, if you wish to discuss an educational opportunity at Omarama School.

- Stable staffing, happy environment, collaborative children.
- Rural community with excellent support from parents, Board and Friends of the School
- Small class sizes to address learning needs, extension through Mindplus & Virtual Learning Network
- Structured Literacy (iDeal) + Structured Maths (Numicon (Y1 - Y3) & Maths No Problem (Y4 - Y8)
- School Pool with swimming coach, Garden Club, Ski Programme, Music lessons, Whanau groups
- Close liaison with Omarama Playgroup, Twizel Kindergarten and Waitaki Valley Pre-school
- PB4L Pedagogy, Incredible Years Trained staff, School LIGHT values, connections to Waihao Marae
- William Pike Challenge initiative for Y7 & Y8 students in 2025
- Headstart programme for children who are four years of age - one afternoon per week.
- Transport options for students living north and south of Omarama



Ōmārama School contact details:
Phone: 03 438 9815

principal@omarama.school.nz,
office@omarama.school.nz
www.omarama.school.nz

Ōmārama Playgroup

Ōmārama Playgroup meets at 9.30am each Wednesday during the primary school term at the Ōmārama Community Centre.

For more information contact:

President Olivia Black 027 833 0869, vice-president Jess Townsend and secretary Bridie Brosnahan 027 341 3010
omaramaplaygroup@gmail.com

Ōmārama Gliding Club

Copy and photos from the Omarama Gliding Club Facebook page

Top Gun Advanced Soaring Course

Many of New Zealand's top pilots enjoyed a week in Omarama at the inaugural Top Gun Advanced Soaring Course with a lead and follow format, navigating and learning more about flying in our beautiful Southern Alps.

Thank you to the Top Gun Coaches (left to right): Grae, Nigel, Justin, Terry, Dane and Vaughn.



Youth Soaring Development Camp 2026!

[It was] An epic week of aviation for youth all over New Zealand, we had students from Auckland, Tauranga, and even Germany!

Huge shout out to the volunteers from OGC, to the parents that all chipped in, to Canterbury Gliding Club for providing aircraft, to Ballooning Canterbury - New Zealand's Ultimate Scenic Adventure and Mike Oakley for some awesome prizes for our kids, to G Dale for the donation of Soaring Engine novels and lectures, NZAWA for Silver Wings books for our girls, the YSDT for the use of their winch, to our Sponsors at Youth Glide NZ and the Umbrella Trust, as well as special thanks to Glide Queenstown and Kahu Soaring for



Ōmārama Residents' Association

By Ruth Grundy

The Omarama Residents' Association December meeting and Christmas function were held at the Glider Café.

Of the many topics for discussion MenzShed will construct a traffic island in the car park to prevent large vehicles using it as turning space.

The funds from the sale of the church, which were expected within a few days would be placed in a term deposit account.

A letter had been received from Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail Manager Xanthe Musgrave confirming she had reminded cycle trail companies to urge cyclists not to ride on the footpaths in town after the association raised their concerns about pedestrian safety.

Jacqui Eggleton, CCS Disability Action Board Member, has asked to speak to the association about the footpaths in Omarama and difficulties for accessibility.

She is to be invited to speak to the February meeting (see below).

The Waitaki District Council Ahuriri Locality Advisor Linda Mullenger has also been invited to introduce herself and her role at the meeting.

Board member reports to the Ahuriri Community Board meeting of February 2, show that council staff and an Ahuriri Community Board member held a 'walk around' footpaths and berms on December 16, prior to the RAOI's December meeting. However, the RAOI committee was not made aware of the date and time for this council 'walk-around'.

Members of the committee have undertaken to hold their own 'walk around' ahead of the RAOI's February's meeting to collect information ahead of Ms Eggleton's visit and with a view to making a submission to the council's annual plan.

**The February meeting
of the Ōmārama Residents' Association is
7pm, Thursday, February 19, 2026
at the Omarama Community Centre**

**The Secretary, P O Box 93, Ōmārama 9448.
The association's email address is omarama.committee@gmail.com**

ŌMĀRAMA COMMUNITY CENTRE HALL HIRE

To make a booking for an upcoming event or for more
information about hall hire and availability
please contact Michelle Kitchen 027 280 5446
or email hallhire.omarama@xtra.co.nz



Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club

The Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club
meets at
7.30pm on the first Monday
of each month
at the Kurow Hotel.

All welcome. Join the Facebook group.



When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural business crisis be it financial, climatic or personal the Rural Support Trust is ready to assist. Services are free and confidential.

0800 RURAL HELP (0800 787 254)

Omarama Storage



- Secure Lockup Storage
- 3.6m h x 3m w entry
- Short & Long term

Don't let the weather deteriorate your caravan, boat or motorhome over winter. Spaces available now. Contact Bridget – bridgesp@xtra.co.nz or Ph /txt 021572798

'The Community Reports' is dedicated to news from clubs, groups and sports teams.

Contributions are welcome.
omaramagazette@gmail.com

Age Concern Ōmārama

The Omarama Pop-up Café, run by Age Concern Waitaki, held its first session on Monday.

This year café meetings will be held every second month on a Monday at the same time, 1pm to 3pm, at the Omarama community Centre.

The Waitaki/Otago branch will be working on two projects this year. There will be another 'seniors' survey' conducted.

As well a 'Nineties' project will be undertaken which will interview those in their 90s to record their experiences. The information will be released on October 1, the International Day of the Older Person.

Two 'Big Day Outs' are planned in the coming months (see poster below). Bookings are required so organisers can get an indication of numbers. The bus would aim to leave the centre at 10am and return by 3pm.

The school has asked if any members could let them know if they have work available for its 'William Pike Challenge' year seven and eight pupils who are required to complete 20 hours of community service.

Kathryn Bennett is the coordinator for Age Concern Waitaki, based in Oamaru.

Kathryn's contact details are: 03 434 7008, 027 4347 089

NthOtago@ageconcernotago.co.nz

Hours: Mon-Wed 9- 4.30pm / Thurs - Fri 9-12.30pm

Age Concern Otago-Waitaki Bus Trip, February 2026

Save the date

Monday, February 23, 2026

Pick up and drop off.

All welcome.



An indication of numbers would be appreciated

Ph/txt 027 201 2312 or 021 294 8002 to book

Care in the community

Ōmārama Community Care Group

If you are in need of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact Ruth Grundy 021 294 8002 and we can work together on options and put you in contact with those who can help or for whatever will best suit you.



Twizel Community Care Centre

If you need any of the services listed below please contact:

Twizel Community Care Centre

Mount Cook St, Twizel

Phone: 03 435 0687

Email: admin@twizelcare.co.nz

Hours of opening: 9am - 3pm

Days of opening: Monday - Friday

- **A reminder we have a food bank** available with no questions asked. Our contact details are 03 4350687 and email admin@twizelcare.co.nz if you would like to arrange a convenient time to collect a parcel. (Donations of non-perishable or foods that can be frozen always welcome)
- **Twizel-Tekapo Community Car bookings** – this is a community car that picks you up from your house and takes you wherever you need to go such as town here in Twizel or Timaru for an appointment, whatever you need. There is a cost involved depending on destinations. Monday to Friday
- **Work and Income** – assistance with applying for benefits, helping with queries regarding superannuation, and any other financial assistance you may receive. Printing and scanning of documents.
- **Inland Revenue** – queries regarding anything IRD related, access to forms.
- **Immigration** - passport and other Government agencies.
- **Cancer Society Navigator** – support for anyone with any cancer each third Thursday of every month
- **Home Delivered Meals** – We have small roasts for \$10, Regular meals for \$8 and small snack meals for \$4. We can deliver to your home.
- **Printing/scanning services**
- **Arowhenua Whanau services** – Free health clinic on the first Wednesday of each month.
- **Access to a computer**, printing, free WIFI, community notice boards

 *for community*

GRANTS & FUNDING

WAITAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL

Apply for the **CREATIVE COMMUNITIES SCHEME**

Funding for local arts projects that benefit the Waitaki community and promote participation in the arts.

2026 FUNDING ROUNDS

Opens 16 Feb 2026 - closes 19 March 2026

Opens 3 Aug 2026 - closes 3 Sept 2026

Need some dollars for a project to get people involved in performance, literature, visual arts, craft or music?

More information, including application forms, can be found at www.waitaki.govt.nz, Council offices and at Waitaki District Libraries.

www.waitaki.govt.nz



Waitaki District
creative
COMMUNITIES *nz*

 **Waitaki**
District Council
TE KAUNIHĀRA A HĀHĀ O WAITAKI



GRANTS & FUNDING

WAITAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL

Apply for

COMMUNITY GROUP GRANTS

Funding to help community groups and not-for-profits with projects and programmes that benefit the Waitaki community.

2026 FUNDING ROUNDS

Opens 9 Feb 2026 - closes 12 March 2026

Opens 3 Aug 2026 - closes 7 Sept 2026

Could your community group use a funding boost towards a special project? Big or small: we want to hear from you!

More information, including application forms, can be found at www.waitaki.govt.nz, Council offices and at Waitaki District Libraries.

www.waitaki.govt.nz



Justices of the Peace

JPs are available by appointment to:

- * Witness documents such as applications for citizenship.
- * Certify copies.
- * Take declarations, affidavits and affirmations.

The service is free of charge.

To make your visit quick and easy:

- * Do not sign anything beforehand.
- * Do take photo identification.
- * Remember to take the original as well as the copy to be certified.
- * Check that a New Zealand Justice of the Peace can complete your documentation



Vicky Munro

Otematata

03 438 7855 021 438745



Alona Shaw

Omarara

027 773 4214

Miles Anderson MP for Waitaki

**Your local MP welcomes
all enquiries.**

waitaki.mp@parliament.govt.nz

Oamaru

127 Thames Street

03 434 7325

Wanaka

Spencer House Mall

12/31 Dunmore St

03 443 4820



Authorised by M Anderson,
Parliament Buildings, Wgtn.





**CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND
HELICOPTERS LIMITED**

For all your agricultural needs and more:

- ❖ Competitive rates on Gorse/Broom/Horehound etc
- ❖ Spraying – crops and forestry
- ❖ Bucket work – fertilising and seed
- ❖ Scenic Flights
- ❖ Pest Control
- ❖ Fire lighting and fighting
- ❖ All Lifting/mustering/hunting requirements
- ❖ Search and Rescue



Phone Matt 027 227 8256
Email: info@csihelicopters.co.nz



**TRUCK & DIGGER HIRE
CERTIFYING DRAINLAYERS
SEPTIC & WASTEWATER SYSTEMS**

Info@swiftcontracting.co.nz

Swiftcontracting.co.nz

Steve 021 99 33 52





The difference between settling for a good result and celebrating a great one.

LJ Hooker continues to lead the way across the Waitaki and Mackenzie districts. With strong local knowledge and a track record of successful sales, we're proud to deliver great results for our clients, time and time again.

Call 03 435 0170 or scan the QR code to book your free property appraisal today.



 **LJ Hooker**

Mackenzie Country Real Estate Ltd MREINZ Licensed Real Estate Agent (REA 2008)

Team Twizel

Jess, Karan & Libby



Gary is proud to be covering the Waitaki Valley - with **over three decades in the Real Estate industry** in the Waitaki, Central Otago and Mackenzie Country, selling residential, lifestyle & commercial property.

Living in Omarama, Gary is proud to offer New Zealand's **#1 FREE marketing package and fair flat fees.**

With one centralised national office, we keep overheads low and savings where they belong - in your pocket!

Thinking of selling? **Call Gary today.**



Gary Sutherland
Business Partner & Sales Consultant
027 432 6615
gary.sutherland@tallpoppy.co.nz

CHIROPRACTIC CARE
in MACKENZIE BASIN & WAITAKI VALLEY

We're Expanding Our Hours!
Monday & Wednesday 2-6pm

Good news for our local community – Waitaki Chiropractic is now open **Monday and Wednesday** afternoons in the Omarama Community Hall

This change means greater flexibility, shorter wait times, and more opportunities to help prioritise your spinal health and wellbeing.

Whether you're managing aches and pains, staying active through work and sport, or simply wanting to move and function better, we're here to support you.

Get in contact with us or book online to start your journey towards better health

ACC Accredited and registered - no referral required

Where you'll find us:

Omarama Practice: 03 433 1888

Omarama Community Hall info@waitakichiropractic.co.nz

35 Chain Hills Highway, Omarama, 9412 www.waitakichiropractic.co.nz

WAITAKI
CHIROPRACTIC



Coralie Reid
" | **ONE AGENCY**
THE PROPERTY SPECIALISTS



LICENSED AGENT

021 919 089

coralie.reid@oatps.nz



Licensed REAA, 2008

www.coraliereid.nz

Scarlett
hydraulic technology

For all your hydraulic requirements

Sales, service, design,
hose fittings & spare parts
97 Racecourse Rd, Washdyke.

Phone 03 688 2902

www.scarlett-hydraulics.co.nz

CarpetPlus+

John Bennett

Owner Operator
Mackenzie and Waitaki Districts

13 Chain Hills Highway
Omarama
027 208 7383
john@carpetplus.co.nz
www.carpetplus.co.nz

+ Carpet + Vinyl + Tiles + Laminate + Timber Floors

Michelle Ward

Registered Valuer

B Com (VPM) PG Dip Com (VFM)
ANZIV SPINZ

michelle@mackenzievaluations.co.nz
0274 329 015

Mackenzie Country Valuations



T & J Golder Ltd
Omarama

Travis 021 710305

For all your excavation
needs give us a call!
Landscaping,
Farm work, Building
sites and more.

Garden Diary - Sparks will fly

The sun is shining, it's warm at last and the frequent and unusual summer rains means there is much to do outside.

Instead of it relaxing and baking in the sun, like I would like to do, the garden keeps growing! It's hard to settle at the desk. The dog and I keep popping out the back to check, to check on just about anything we can think of, as a reason to procrastinate.

The hens patiently let me lift them off their nest yet again to see if they've laid yet.

The first thistle down has floated through the garden and the mornings are cool, but it seems much too early. We haven't had a summer yet. Yet nature has been busy - pollinating, seeding, flowering, fruiting.

This year I decided to give a wildflower meadow a go along a border of the new house. I mixed various and numerous packets of expired seeds plus a packet or two of commercial wildflower mix in a pot and then cast the result across a prepared bed, covered from the birds.

I tossed the empty packets so it's since been a guessing game. The yarrow which existed has persisted. The waiting was interminable. Nothing was happening.

Now the opening blooms are like an advent calendar of summer.

Shifting points of colour across the bed catch the wind twirling into a kaleidoscope.

Who would have guessed that Viper's Bugloss would be part of the new mix in white, pink and the high country's electric blue. Funny.

Often when I sow seed deliberately and carefully it fails but if I just lay down the seed head in a nearby spot of bare earth a "*...sturdy seedling with arched body comes, Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs.*" just as poet Robert Frost observed in his garden. I grow all my carrots, parsnips and red bunching onions that way.

Plus the foxgloves, poppies, mignonette and Bishop's flower.

And now there maybe new wildflowers to join them.

So far, I've ID-ed white starry heads of Iberis sempervirens, candytuft or erodium – aka fairy heron's bill, and Nigella - love in a mist.

The garden is alive with more than just plants, tree frogs are tucked in behind logs and pots singing as the rain comes down.

Native bees, butterflies and moths flicker in the sun and moonlight.

And those other night visitors, hedgehogs scurry around to worry the dog.

Tho' there maybe not so many butterflies, this year, not even the cabbage white.

I've noticed here the admirals have always loved the Cineraria silver dust, so I've replaced the ones I lost in the hope of attracting more than just a single.

But we've had more moths - dusky dark and velvety inevitably drawn inexorably to the nightlights.

In breaking news ...

My immaculate white Casa Blanca Oriental Lily has been opening minute-by-minute, unfurling into immense starry blooms of intoxicating fragrance,

The cut stems keep toppling any vase I have as its ginormous heads open one by one.

They are now suffering the ultimate indignity of being put on the deck in a bucket weighted down with rocks so we can watch as the drama continues to unfold.

*By Ruth Grundy,
I garden a small space under the big sky in
Ōmārama.*





The weather that was @ 44°29'30.1"S 169°58'20.3"E

December 2025

Highest temperature: December 23, 28.1C

Lowest temperature: December 21, 1.1C

Most rainfall: December 15, 20.3mm mm

Total rainfall for December: 63.4mm



The weather that was @ 44°29'30.1"S 169°58'20.3"E

January 2026

Highest temperature: January 9, 28.3C

Lowest temperature: January 13, 4.4C

Most rainfall: January 23, 23.3mm mm

Total rainfall for January: 85.8mm

The Ōmārama Gazette

Ōmārama's news delivered to your inbox
the first Wednesday of each month

To subscribe email:

omaramagazette@gmail.com

Copyright © 2016 -2026 Omarama Gazette, All rights reserved.