



# Omarama Gazette

June 2021



## Excitement builds as reno begins

“Exciting” changes are coming to a pub near you.

“Yes, it is exciting,” owner Richard Subtil said.

Richard and wife Annabelle are part owners of Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama run by Bruce and Julie Dyson.

And it’s in for a bit of a facelift.

Designed by architect Nic Zuppicich, of Nic Zuppicich Design, the extensive renovations to the accommodation, kitchen and restaurant areas will be carried out by Central Otago builders Central Blue Ltd and will start in the next week or two.

With parts of the Hotel including the kitchen being more than 100 years old and with the business growing as it was it had long needed modernising, Julie said.

Maintenance costs were high and fixing burst pipes had almost become a winter routine.

Plans include a new dining area, a bigger kitchen and boutique accommodation.

Instead of 10 “basic bed sits” there would be five self-contained boutique units with ensuites, plus two bed sits for “truckie accommodation”.

It would be “new, modern and clean”.

People would be able to dine at tables or in the new alfresco area with a view to the Benmore Ranges.

“They’ll be able to come in and dine, and we’ll be able to turn the public bar back into a public bar.

“We can get back to having a band, a pool table ...it’s going to be fantastic,” Bruce said.

The décor would continue to be in keeping – a country feel that celebrated the heritage of the building and area, Julie said.

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# Excitement builds as reno begins - continued

The renovations met Waitaki District Council's heritage classification standards. In the oldest parts the walls were triple brick and built to last, Bruce said. During the renovation process they would be operating out of a specially designed container kitchen, which would be on site shortly, and "there will be an outside walk to the toilet".

"We still will be operating, though with a reduced menu."

Until they worked through some of the logistics of operating from the container kitchen they were unsure if they would be able to offer takeaway food throughout.

And they asked for people's patience as they worked through the renovation process which was expected to be completed by the start of the new season.

"It's short-term pain for long term gain," Bruce said.



(left)  
The draft elevations of the proposed extensions to the hotel designed by architect Nic Zuppichich, of Nic Zuppichich Design

(Below)  
Bruce and Jandals Hotel Omarama managers Bruce and Julie Dyson (right) discuss plans for the upcoming renovations with part owner Annabelle and Richard Subtil

DRAFT PLAN SET PARTIAL

Omarama Hotel

DRAFT ONLY



# Residents' Association insists on action

On Tuesday, the Waitaki District Council met in Oamaru to deliberate on the submissions made to its Long Term Plan.

There were 350 submissions in total, up 100% from 2018 and representing 1.5% of the district's population. The Omarama Residents Association made two submissions to the plan.

This followed a council drop-in session at the Omarama Community Centre with Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher, councillor Ross McRobie Ahuriri Community board chairperson Vicky Munro and member Ross Menzies and council Assets Operations manager Joshua Rendell (*see story over*), and subsequent Residents' Association meeting.

The association has asked for support and funding to develop an 'intergenerational' outdoor fitness circuit and new sports facilities in the recreation reserve adjacent to the Omarama Hall.

And it has asked for a workable proposal to be developed urgently to improve the layout of the town centre so it can be used safely by vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Seven residents attended the hearings in support of the Association's submissions. Vice chairperson Ann Patterson spoke to the outdoor exercise circuit project on behalf of project coordinator Jemma Gloag, and after speaking to her own submission about the town centre issues, Maurice Cowie, standing in for chairperson Tony Chapman, spoke to the association's submission about its concerns.

Mrs Patterson told the council traffic and parking issues had been brought up with the council "year after year".

"I know there are statistics out on it and on the dangers in the town but I believe there are far more near misses that go unreported.

"The parking in the town has reached a danger point."

Although both the New Zealand Transport Agency and council cried lack of funds, she urged the council to work with NZTA and the residents and to plan for change now.

"We've got to do something. It's reached a critical point.

"I don't believe the council is taking their share of the responsibility."

Mrs Patterson said moving the business area to the empty block of old Rabbit Board land could be a solution.

Mr Kircher said there was certainly an issue at the intersection.

"Part of it is getting the pub fence where it should be and allowing enough space for a path [for pedestrians and cyclists] to go through there," he said.

Cr McRobie said the priority was to get cyclists off the road.

"Anecdotally we are told the fence is in the wrong place. It shouldn't be difficult from a council perspective to find out where it should be and maybe that's the first step."

Cyclists approaching Omarama from Twizel had no choice but to go onto the road which was unsafe, and moving the fence would be "an easy fix".

The Residents' Association had been talking about the town centre traffic issues "for quite some time now".

"It was highlighted when the masterplan was done a couple of years ago as was the parking. We need to make sure those aspects of the masterplan are taken care of and carried out sooner rather than later," he said.

## *Residents' Association insists on action, continued*

Councillor Jim Hopkins asked what the community's thoughts were on a workable plan, given it could involve moving the main business area.

Mr Kircher said the community could not be expected to come up with a plan.

"We want them involved in the process but it's not up to them to come up with the design now."

Mrs Patterson suggested the Rabbit Board land could be put into coach parking with an ablution block, or perhaps the council could buy another area in town for parking. In discussion she said suggestions truck and buses could park on the outskirts of town, for example, at the sale yards, were unworkable because it was too far from the amenities in the town centre.

Mr Kircher said the "right projects" needed to be pulled out of the masterplan and "pulled into the long term plan"

"Part of that is the Rabbit Board land ... it's a matter of getting ownership of it so it can be developed in a way that fits with the aspirations."

Mrs Patterson said that was the "urgent" problem for Omarama".

"We all want the town to look pretty and have trees and plots ... but we want to be safe and this is the issue."

Mr Kircher said the council had to determine its priorities.

"I'm not making excuses this is something that needs to be dealt with."

Mr Cowie said in the 50 years he had been a permanent resident and ratepayer the SH8 and SH83 intersection and business area had gone from a 30m-wide gravel road to "a confusing bottle neck".

"Omarama has always been known as a whistle stop and as such the business area is what it is.

"It is well overdue to do something about it. Why does this council continue to ignore the wishes and solutions suggested by the community, especially by those that volunteer their time and have local knowledge to assist the council to use the ratepayers money wisely and in the direction the community wishes."

It was raised as a key concern in the masterplan, the problem was not new or one which could be dealt with over the next few decades but "an old and ongoing one that is here and now."

Heavy vehicles, campervans, vehicles towing boats, caravans were parking on the yellow lines east of the fire station on SH83 up to the intersection with Sutherland Rd including across the front of the [fire station] appliance bays. The same type of vehicles were parking in the business area which was a health and safety issue.

"As a whistle stop town people want quick and easy access to public toilets, fuel and refreshments. At present and in the masterplan 2020 this type of travelling public are not appropriately catered for."

To expect operators to park at the sale yard area and walk to and from essential services was not an option.

"What is needed is a large, easy access parking area for all types of vehicles with an appropriate toilet facility ... with easy access to the present business area."

The council needed to take the opportunity to buy the Rabbit Board land before it was "lost for ever".

The Merino Café private car park was being used by the public or commercial vehicles as a turning and parking area – at times overnight parking - leaving the surface

in a badly damaged state.

Because the owner of the land between the hotel and the Merino café had temporarily opened it up for parking it had alleviated some pressure but there was still nothing for heavy vehicles.

“To propose to tighten up access and beautify the business area, with less parking and in order to slow the traffic is not an option for the businesses.

“Trees and shrubs don’t sell or buy merchandise. The council appear to want to turn away the customers with one hand and up the rates with the other.

“This is not just a business problem as it affects the whole community and travelling public alike hence the reason for the immediate need for such an investment,” Mr Cowie said.

Cr Hopkins asked if council officers could investigate and report back on the number of accidents and provide details of the Alps 2 Ocean survey conducted by its joint committee.

At the end-of-year A2O trail summit the results of a survey were presented in which cyclists said they felt unsafe riding into Omarama from SH8.

Councillor Melanie Tavendale asked if the business area would be used differently if the Rabbit Board land was used as suggested.

“If you put the toilets in there would you still need the existing toilets.”

Mr Cowie said it would alleviate a lot of the problems.

At present, towing vehicles and heavy vehicles parked across four to five parks “It confuses everybody”.

“There is nowhere in the town for those vehicles ... to drive in easily and drive out again safely.

“All the areas they can park in, they’ve got to reverse at some stage.

“It is annoying seeing the trucks parked where they shouldn’t, but they are a commercial vehicle. They need to be able to stop, go to the toilet and then go.”

Mr Kircher said the council would “certainly put our hand up” with ECan [Environment Canterbury] indicating an interest in buying the Rabbit Board land. He would be attending a Mayoral forum at the end of the week and would bring up the topic with ECan’s chairperson.

“See if we can start that discussion happening rather than just waiting on them to decide if they might put it on the market or not.”.

Mr Kircher said the council roading manager was talking to NZTA about the intersection.

“A roundabout makes sense, not too big, not too small just the right size.

“The other important point is, it looks like the fence for the pub is very much in the wrong place...there should be plenty of room to actually put pathway around there for cyclists and walkers,” he said.

In the submission about the development of the recreation reserve the council was asked to consider bringing forward some of the budgeted \$400,000 for an adventure playground in 2025 to this year.

“The renovation of the hall and the building of the sports courts has been a success story for our community.”

The association wanted to “build on the popularity” by adding an outdoor exercise circuit for all ages.

## *Residents' Association insists on action, continued*

Other ideas included a cricket pitch and skate park and basketball hoop.

"The planning and the ideas phase could be drawn up now so we can work towards our goals.

"If the council would work closely with the Omarama residents, we could come up with something that benefits the whole community,"

Councillor Colin Wollstein wanted to know if that spending would be instead of putting those funds to the playground.

"If the money is spent now the money won't be there later for the adventure playground, so is it a matter of either or?"

Mrs Patterson said it was not, rather just that some funds be brought forward for this development.

Mr Kircher said the playground had not been "planned out" and these ideas could be included in "how it's all developed over time".

"I believe the funding is partly council funds and then external funding as well.

"We just need to get the detail on that, so it's a worthy suggestion," Mr Kircher said.

**In the Ahuriri Community Board's non-verbal submissions** to the Long Term Plan chairperson Vicky Munro submitted in support of the Omarama intersection upgrade or redevelopment; a safety barrier for the Otematata Domain playground; planning and financial support for the proposed Ohau Nursery; the upgrade of the Kurow Island and boat ramp, and financing a masterplan for Duntroon.

Board member Steve Dalley submitted in support of a bringing the Alps 2 Ocean trail to the south side of Lake Aviemore through Otematata to Aviemore Dam, and that the council spread the funds from the \$100,000 allocated for its town centre development in year 2024 over the next three years to coincide with the improvements that would happen under the Otematata Community-led Development Programme.

**The 2021-31 Long Term Plan is scheduled to be adopted at the council meeting June 29 with effect from July 1. At the June 15 council meeting, "key directions" for the LTP will be discussed.**

**News from the Ahuriri Community Board's May meeting will be in the July issue.**



# Omarama 'legend' does it again

One word - Legend.

And that word has been hard earned by both the man and his dogs over 58 years of dog trialling.

Prominent Omarama Dog triallist Ginger Anderson with Jet took out his fifth New Zealand title winning Event II the short head and yard at last month's South Island and New Zealand sheep dog trial championships at Greenvale, near Gore.

He also placed seventh in the same event with Boss.

Ginger won his first title, a North Otago Championship, as a 19-year-old and, along with winning numerous times through the years, here and overseas, he was granted Life Membership of the New Zealand Sheep Dog Trial Association in 2016. He said it was the first time he had two dogs place in the same event, although there had been times when he had two dogs place in separate events. The Anderson dogs are largely descended from a breed developed by his grandfather, John, who brought dogs out from Scotland to work the Benmore run where he was head shepherd.

As a four-year-old Jet was still a young dog. She had won at the North Otago centre trials a week earlier, Ginger said. "She's a rising star so to speak."

Boss is seven years of age and despite being pipped by Jet was "still going strong". Heading dogs rely on speed and you began to notice when the older dogs became a bit slower and stayed back from the sheep, he said.

Overall, the Omarama Club triallists "did very well".

"Rick [Aubrey] was in [earned enough points to stay on the leader board] for three or four days. Scottie [Hunter] as well and finished well [with Hood] ...Ed [Aubrey] had a good run so we kept our end up."

Although the weather was a "bit rough" through the week, Ginger drew run times which avoided the worst of it.

"It was a wonderful week, Southlanders are great people .. we had great food." – Oysters, of course.

And everyone gathered around any source of warmth under the marquee.

Because last year's trials in the North Island were called off because of the Covid 19 situation it was a great chance to catch up with dog trialling friends he'd not seen for two years.

"We had a lot of catching up to do. Of course we're not as young as we were and can't stay up like we used to, but we put on a fair show."



# Rebuild a time of reflection and gratitude

*Ōhau has to be one of the most beautiful places on earth. The valley unfolds as nature intended, isolated, elemental, breath-taking.*

*For just a few people it is home. And for a few brief hours in the early hours of October 4 it was hell on earth.*

*Each of those – Omarama’s family, friends and neighbours - who lived through that moment in time - the Ohau fire - has their own unique story to tell. Nonetheless, they are bonded by that one ordeal.*

*This story, which is barely a glance at the disaster which changed their lives, comes wrapped in their personal thanks to our communities, Omarama and Twizel, which they say have given so much in love and support, and will continue to do so. Each gesture big and small has helped them get through.*

*They’re moving forward, rebuilding not just physical frameworks but homes and lives, fronting the setbacks and enthusiastically celebrating each steppingstone forward.*

## Mary's story

Mary Miller was the first permanent resident to return.

Clearcut building in Oamaru had built and transported her original home to Lake Ohau Alpine Village in 2014 and were quick to offer to do the same again.

“We moved back in, in February. People have asked, ‘Did your house really burn down?’”

“The insurance [company] was absolutely on the ball.

“As soon as we got back in, the stress levels dropped.

She celebrated with a "welcoming party".

“All the residents - we had a lovely time.”

But what was it that pulled her back?

“The mountains, the place, the community. It’s my permanent home. Where else would you live?”

“Holiday makers have different questions to answer – where and when to rebuild.

“I still want to be here.”

Despite it being described wryly as “one way of having a huge clean out” there were some things lost in the fire which were irreplaceable.

Losing her cell phone and computer – their contents – and the loss of family things.

“[But] You have to get on with it.”

Omarama and Twizel communities, who opened their homes, and businesses and others who "made things available" were “really so wonderful”.

“If it wasn’t for them, it would have been a lot more stressful”

Messages of support came in from around the world.

There were still times when the enormity hit home.

“People are getting tired - it’s the little things.

“For a lot of people, it’s been the taking down of the trees, the loss of the vista.”

The village now looked much more like when she first saw it on holidays several decades ago.

Waiting for the fire report and its recommendations had been difficult as it had a wider impact and other necessary decisions were dependent on that detail, she



said.

"It's been really good to get out and start replanting...exciting going around the garden and seeing plants, like the kowhai, regenerating."

Heat and smoke from wildfires can trigger seed dispersal and germination.

"In Springtime, we will see."

## Martin's story

Martin Heal, who is living temporarily in Twizel, has just held his 'roof shout' with his builder, the 2IC and "half a dozen friends" from the village.

"It was very, very pleasant. It was a stepping stone."

"Things are now starting to happen. One or two houses were redone in January-February. Then there was a lull."

Several holiday home owners would probably rebuild and they could take their time.

"Then there's one or two who don't want to rebuild at all."

Martin's is a slightly smaller build than his original home, the shape is similar, slightly different on the inside but "essentially the same thing".

He was in two minds about returning - "kind of push me, pull you".

The next door neighbours had decided to rebuild.

"I'm very close to them, like another family.. so then, why not?"

He had the land, he had no other home.

"I had nowhere else to go, all my friends are here."

It was a glitch in time which erased all physical evidence of the past and hit reset.

"Everything will be new. This will be unusual, right down to the last teaspoon.

"I will get used to it."

Acting on instinct when the alarms were raised that morning he stopped to pick up his important documents and left.

He and his wife, who died seven years ago, had lived in the village for 14 years, travelled widely and things they had collected could not be replaced.

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## *Rebuild a time of reflection and gratitude - continued*

"It all meant a lot to me."

Although it would have been good to have her support he was pleased she didn't see the effects.

"She would have been heartbroken."

Only six months earlier he had a cleanout.

"So, only everything I wanted or needed, or wanted to be there, was there.

"When it went, it erased my history and my wife's history. All the stuff we had together. It left an empty feeling.

"I'm now existing in the present."

The family had been able to replace some items and some precious photographs.

He's now focused on moving forward.

The new roof, the new build and there was that view.

"It's a better view than anywhere in the UK, you can't beat it."

*Below: Martin Heal has just celebrated building progress with a roof shout*



## Barbara and Norman's story

Barbara and Norman Mackay, German Shepard Mack and world-famous kelpie Milo visit the site of their old home almost daily.

Not only to make sure it is ready for the imminent arrival of their new home but to put food out for their two cats, Dave and Molly, who are yet to make their way home.

Five-year-old kelpie Milo made headlines when she returned safe four days after the blaze.

And a friend's cat was found just a week or so ago.

The Mackay's replacement three-bedroom house is finished and they're just waiting

now for the truck to be available to ship it. Any day now. The date has been pushed back again. The waiting is taxing.

Their original house was built in 1992 and the couple moved in permanently in 2020. "We asked ourselves ...whether to come back or move on.

"We love the area so much, had we been a lot older we wouldn't have stayed," Barbara said.

"We had an offer to build the house in a good timeframe.

"It is our only home, only three in the village didn't have another home somewhere else," she said.

"We're not ready to leave here yet."

Mountainous piles of 'windrowed' slash ring the foothills.

They've begun replanting and green shoots circle the site and underscore that view up the valley.

The lawn around the expectant grid of house piles is immaculate.

The first thing Barbara bought after the fire was a lawn mower, and an Edmonds cook book.

"The aim is to get into the new house and move on, and get on and put this behind us."

And they're so very grateful to all who helped and are helping make it happen.

*Greetings everyone,*

*We lost our house in the Ohau Village fire and are getting a new house on site very soon.*

*As you can imagine it was a terrible thing to happen to us and others but I would like to say my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all the support and kind words from everyone. Your kindness meant a lot to us and helped us keep our spirits up and to keep going.*

*Thank you to Fire and Emergency volunteers and employees who raced to help the situation. You encountered the worst fire you could ever have imagined. You rushed in from near and far and put your hearts and souls into managing the fire and the aftermath.*

*We look forward to moving back into the village soon.*

*It has been a longer journey than expected but we are getting there.*

*The Community here is wonderful.*



# *Rebuild a time of reflection and gratitude - continued*

## Hugh and Dwayne's story

Hugh Spiers has become the unofficial spokesperson for the village after the Ohau fire fronting media whenever necessary, no doubt much to the relief of overwhelmed residents.

Hugh, partner Dwayne Rennie, and parents Chris and Rae Spiers have all moved back home.

Chris and Rae to a small relocatable home on the old site and Hugh and Dwayne to the neighbour's cottage close by which went untouched by the fire.

In all there were 15 full time residents, in the village, Hugh said.

"Everyone has their own story to tell, but we've all been through the same ordeal."

To his knowledge no one has "pulled the pin and decided not to come back".

There were no sections on the market.

"I don't know why we want to come back, the quietness, the beauty?"

"We want to embrace what we had and make it better and share it."

Down in their valley alongside Lake Middleton the sound of the mulchers working their way through felled and burnt pines has replaced the sound of the loggers which had been starting up 4.30am.

Over it all is the buzz of continuous construction in the village.

Hugh and Dwayne will rebuild their home and bed and breakfast business - The Barn at Kilin.

Applications for consents, which they hope will be fast tracked, have just gone into the council.

The have a first booking for next March, and their secret hope and wish is all will be in order so family and friends can gather for Christmas lunch.

"We're ready to move forward."

There's some frustration now at the waiting and sorting compliance issues, and there's considerable uncertainty over how the fire report and its recommendations might affect the rebuild or compensation.

The insurance companies had been good to work with but as Dwayne said, "you can't actually buy a replacement".

"You can buy a new shirt but it won't be the shirt you bought in Paris, that time."

"What gutted me most was the precious things," Hugh said.

"My teddy bear – yes it was old 55 years old and still a comfort... a lamp that came out on the sailing ship, my great great grandmother's beaded dress, my mum's wedding dress..."

For landscape photographer Dwayne it was the loss of his computer and back-up drive which stored those precious pics.

Then, there was great grandmother's hand written recipes, we can get the recipes back but not those scraps of butter smeared paper written in her own hand, Hugh said.

"When you have a moment like that you have to remind yourself that no one lost their lives not even a pet."

“The hard reality was there was no time to grab anything. We had to get ourselves, others and the pets to safety so there’s no room for regret.”

“[However] every effn’ thing we’ve got is insured now,” he says, laughing.

“We were lucky, we had our own community, then we were embraced by the wider community, then the whole of New Zealand, and internationally.”

The news of the fires and miraculous escapes rippled out around the world and love and support flowed back.

Someone in the UK found and sent a salt pig that reminded them of their stay at the Barn. There were the offers of accommodation, money, “people coming up and saying OMG I’m so sorry. It was great comfort,” Hugh said.

The visit of the Omarama Volunteer firefighters 10 weeks after the fire, just on Christmas, was “our Santa Parade, with everyone waving, clapping, cheering.”

In the midst of everyone trying to escape the fire the fire fighters moved toward it, in “terrible visibility” through the noise, the sparks, the fury of the wind.

“As we drove through, I was thinking, do I need to go back [to help]? No, I’ll leave it to the professionals.”

When they returned and after making sure the all the animals were accounted for and safe they turned to face the reality of what was lost and begin to make plans to start again.

When they lifted the concrete pad - the final piece to be cleared before laying the new foundations, it was poignant, Hugh said.

The past was taken, history gone, and life had changed.

In and beside the old cart which stands at the site is what they sifted from the ashes of the Barn.

The small, almost unrecognisable pieces of retrieved detritus were all that remained from that night, objects which in the moment had melted and fused into something new and strangely beautiful, now delicately stitched over with cobwebs.



# Pink brunch with girlfriends raises the \$\$\$

Another year and another successful Boots & Jandals Hotel Omarama Pink Ribbon Brunch.

The hotel was packed with 'girls' of all ages to celebrate with our breast cancer survivors and to together remember those who have passed.

The laughter and bubbles flowed as the community gathered to enjoy a five-star meal and loads of fun.

Speaker Bev Purvis said the disease had no respect for age, affecting grandmothers, mothers, daughters, granddaughters, sisters, nieces and friends.

It is a disease which could also affect generations within a single family.

Breasts, no matter what the size, no matter what they were called, "boobs, tits, bosoms, puppies, the girls" - it was important to get to know them and have regular checks.

"Early detection of any form of lump is so very, very important," Bev said.

She concluded with the poem; 'Lunch with girlfriends', by Kathy O'Malley.

The Pink Ribbon brunch raises funds to help raise breast cancer awareness, to support research, and those going through treatment.

*Thank you to Bruce and Julie, and their team – Charlotte, Jan, Ron, Lou, Ron and Cleave.*

*Thanks also to all who contributed to and took part in the raffles.*

*Total amount raised was \$3303.70.*



# New 'place of learning' opens

The Omarama Community Library opened its doors into its “new, beautiful space” in the Omarama Community Centre this morning as sunshine and people flooded through the room.

Playgroup mums and children along with Omarama School pupils and teachers plus Waitaki Libraries staff and residents made up the gathering of 94 who came to mark the opening.

The school pupils sang and ‘signed’ the waiata ‘Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi’ before dispersing to explore the new space, later queuing to borrow something intriguing to take home. Omarama Residents’ Association vice chairman Ann Patterson thanked Library staff and Omarama volunteers who had worked to bring the project to fruition and arrange the move from the smaller room.

Waitaki District Libraries general manager Jenny Bean said moving from the original room to “new beautiful space” was not only a reflection of growth within the community but also signalled the community’s preparedness “to come together to grow the library”.

She quoted the Te Reo proverb, ‘Poipoia te kākano kia puawai’ - Nurture the seed and it will blossom’ and thanked the Residents’ Association for getting behind the move.

This was now more than just a “place of books but a place of learning”, she said. Omarama School principal Michelle Green also thanked those who had made it possible.

It would benefit all children in the community now and in the future, she said.

As well as new fittings and fixtures there is a new selection of children’s books, new books for adults and three shelves of new fiction.

The colouring-in competition entries were on display and names drawn and presented with book tokens. They were Ella Broughton, Brydie Ferguson, and Samantha Ralston.



# Labour Weekend at Loch Laird - May

The Waitaki District mayor, councillors and council staff met last month in a closed workshop to discuss its lakes camp ground issues.

The Omarama Gazette understands concerns about the alcohol-fuelled unruly behaviour of some young people – many under the legal drinking age - celebrating the end of the school year at the Loch Laird campground each Labour Weekend was also up for discussion.

Seen as harmless fun and a 'rite of passage' by some, emergency service and council workers and volunteers are fed-up with the reckless behaviour which also leaves the community and other lakeside campers fearful of the danger posed by impaired drivers, seriously concerned about the welfare of those young people, and angry about public areas left vandalised and littered with broken glass and other trash.

The weekend activities now attract young people, not only from Oamaru but also from as far afield as Timaru, Ashburton and Christchurch.

Often it is adults supplying the alcohol.

Reports are drugs - MDMA, along with marijuana - are now in use.

Clean-up costs are considerable

It has been of concern for many years, some years are worse than others.

While actual reported incidents are few, the consensus of authorities is the risk of serious harm is high.

After last Labour Weekend the Omarama Gazette/Otematata Chronicle began a series of stories to encourage action and follow progress on steps taken to address matters. A police-led working group, which includes various agencies involved, was set up in March and will have its third meeting on Thursday, June 3.

Last month Waitaki District Ahuriri Ward Councillor Ross McRobie, of Otematata, spoke to the Oamaru Mail about the community's concerns. The article was in the May 21 issue entitled: Loch Laird issues in spotlight

When posted on the Oamaru Mail's Facebook page the story attracted these comments:

*"Nothing has really worked for over a decade, despite all sorts of solutions being tried. The parents and kids ignore it because there are no real consequences. The time has come to have zero tolerance with the teenagers and parents. Before Labour weekend get all the schools from Christchurch to Dunedin and to Queenstown to notify pupils and parents there will be zero tolerance. Put in a heavy police presence and hit the whole area hard. Bring in portable cells.*

*Under age drinking...arrested. Parents dropping off kids with alcohol...arrested. Any offence...arrested.*

*Set up court remand hearings in Timaru on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Parents can pick up their kids from there. Until that happens, kids and their parents will continue to laugh at authority."*

*"Far out we were all young at some point. Man I had a ball up there in my teens running a muck pissed up to the eye balls fun times."*

*"You know we all caused shit as youngsters... tho the group I was in it was harmless fun.... maybe give a area were people can go have fun and be watched...let them do their weed n get loud have cops there for if needed... people will just find other places to go.. it's not gunna fix the problem just move it elsewhere."*

*"That was us in the 90s, ha ha great times . I have photos of one of those weekends ... pretty untidy."*

*"Mate that was us too, had a great time. Too many restrictions and people just won't go there. I'm sure all those parents stop off and spend money in the town for the towns economy too. Still, it was a pretty awesome time."*



# Residents encouraged make submissions

All who attended the Waitaki District Council Long Term Plan drop-in session in Omarama last month were urged by the Mayor to make submissions about their concerns.

A good cross-section of the community formed the group of 20 at one of the better-attended sessions of the series the council hosted in small towns across the district as part of its consultation process.

Waitaki Mayor Gary Kircher was joined by Ahuriri Ward councillor Ross McRobie, Ahuriri Community Board chairperson Vicky Munro and board member Ross Menzies, and council Assets Operations manager Joshua Rendell for the hour-long discussion.

Discussion topics ranged from the possible impacts of the Government-led Three waters reform, to Maori wards and representation, to footpaths and the state of the mud tanks.

Regarding the council proposal for a \$400,000 adventure playground in year 2025 of the plan Omarama Residents' Association member Jemma Gloag asked if the council would consider "bringing the process" forward and contributing some of those funds to the Association's project to build and install an outdoor fitness circuit, 'all age' exercise equipment, and perhaps a cricket pitch or the like in the sports reserve adjacent to the Omarama Memorial Hall.

"Absolutely ask for that," Mr Kircher said.

The council could agree to some funding to go along with community fundraising and that could leverage more funding, he said.

"Back up those things again with a submission."

Omarama farmer Dave Ellis wanted to know if there was a breakdown of costs available which justified the "serious rates demands" proposed.

There appeared to be no justification for the \$400,000 playground proposal.

Environment Canterbury rates were also going up.

"Where does it stop?" he said.

Mr Kircher said there were definitely some things in the plan which were "nice to have" along with the necessities. It was those that made a place attractive to live in.

The rates increase this time was "not just about inflation" but was about "we have to do more".

Mr Kircher said there had been further discussions since the figures were put out and he believed it would be possible now to reduce those initial figures.

Omarama Resident Judy Piner said, if more land was opened up for development, more people would live in the town and contribute to the rate pool.

In answer to a question, Mr Rendell said plans for the Omarama water upgrade were progressing and any relevant discussions would take place with the community as the council worked through the process.

Omarama Residents' Association member Ann Patterson said parking and traffic congestion in the town centre remained a major concern despite fewer international travellers and questioned why the council would not buy the 'Rabbit Board land' from ECan and develop that as a retail hub to help ease the problem.

Mr Kircher said the council had "let Ecan know" it had an interest in that land. But it did not have to be owned by the council for it developed in that manner.

He had not heard about any progress on the sale.

The council's Omarama town masterplan which laid out a concept for the town's future and included the hub had "fed into" both its Long Term and District Plans

“If we have to buy it to make it happen, we will.”

Mr Kircher suggested because ECan was also going through its Long Term Plan process people could make submissions to that also, and ask for the land to be sold to the council.

The town centre, that whole area between the two garages” was a “very complicated little area”, he said.

It could be better managed, and something did need to be done.

He was not sure when that could happen, but it was a “priority”.

“If we have a good plan put in place, with help from others it’s not an impossible problem.

“We need to get onto it as soon as we can.”

Mr Rendell said he believed the matter had been put forward as a “safety improvement project “by the council roading team.

It was “being looked at now, not three to four years out”, he said.

Mrs Munro said solving the problem was one of the goals in the board’s 10-year plan. The lack of international travellers had not reduced the problem. The area was “just as bad” at holiday weekends with only New Zealanders travelling, she said.

Cr McRobie said the corner alongside the Omarama Hotel was of particular safety concern to cyclists.

Mr Kircher said this land was not owned by the Hotel and so changes could be made. The land owned by the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Questions were raised about the state of the footpaths and why the mud tanks flooded across roadways and in the shopping area each time it rained.

Mr Rendell urged people to send photos and register incidents through council customer request avenues. The council did not have the staff to drive around and inspect all problems but relied on photos being sent in.

Some questions asked were regarding new land use designations and were being addressed under the District Plan review and people were directed to make submissions under that process.

“[Regardless] We want to hear from you about anything and everything,” Mr Kircher said.

In a follow up email to Omarama residents, read to the Residents’ Association meeting last month, which was in response to questions about the proposed adventure playground, Mr Rendell said it had been listed under option two of the concept plans put forward for the Omarama Masterplan.

“It was listed as the fifth highest important item in the subsequent community feedback.

Mr Rendell said the project would be spread across several financial years and the council together with the Ahuriri Community Board would work with the community to find out what it wanted.

He apologised for any misleading comments at the meeting stating that a number of community members requested an adventure playground.

However, it had scored as a “medium level priority” in the community feedback, he said.

In a further email to the Omarama Gazette Mr Rendell said the concept of an adventure playground was just that, a concept.

“Nearer to the commencement of the project, there will be discussions as to what the community would like it to include or look like and what activities it might support.

“This could include the activities discussed by the community at the recent drop-in session in Ōmārama,” he said.

# A warm Omarama welcome to you guys

*New faces in town: Natalie and Erwin Beiboer are the new owners of Omarama Top 10 Holiday Park. Photo: <https://www.facebook.com/TOP10omarama>*



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## There'll be smoke on the water

The peace is about to be shattered as rounds four and five of the New Zealand Boat Marathon Commission 2021 take to the water at Lakes Benmore and Aviemore this Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

The Twin Lakes event, hosted by the Waitaki Recreational & Boating Club, attracts power boat enthusiasts from throughout New Zealand who vie for top speeds across the events and the series.

Last year, the racing season was cut short because of the Covid- 19 situation.

In all 29 boats entered last year's Twinlakes competition which was held in July.

Racing begins at 11am both days.

*Photo: supplied*



# The Noticeboard



To have your community notice included here email: [omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)

**Congratulations** to Dan and Sabrina McCormack on the birth of Sophia.

**Our sincere condolences** to Glenys and Craig Dawson and family on the death of Glenys' father Neville.

**Congratulations** to Bill and Kate Sutherland, and Andrew and Deidre Sutherland of Benmore Station who won the Otago Merino Association's NZWTA Clip of the Year title. Benmore won the stud flock section in Clip of the Year, while Ahuriri Downs won the commercial flock. And to Trent Spittle – Quailburn Downs - who won the Child Cancer Foundation

fleece competition – a fundraiser for the cause.

**Kurow Medical Centre** Omarama Clinic at the Omarama Community Centre, is open Thursdays, 8.30am to 5pm. To make appointments for all clinics, order repeat scripts or make enquiries please contact Kurow Medical Centre 03 436 0760 (Monday to Thursdays).

[www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz](http://www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz)

**St Thomas' Omarama Church Community:** chairperson: Jan Thomas; committee secretary (Presbyterian) : Lee Kearon, phone: 021 250 1060 or email: [lee.kearon@gmail.com](mailto:lee.kearon@gmail.com); Anglican representative: Ven Dr Michael Godfrey, phone 022 342 9977 or email [Dylanfreak@gmail.com](mailto:Dylanfreak@gmail.com)

**The Omarama Community Library** is open 9am to 10am Wednesdays and Saturdays, Library hours can change. Contact Yvonne: 027 476 7473.

**The Omarama Golf Club** Saturdays, cards in 12 midday, tee-off 12.30pm. Club captain James Moynihan phone: 027 215 8266; email [jwmoynih@2yahoo.co.nz](mailto:jwmoynih@2yahoo.co.nz). [www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz](http://www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz)

**Omarama Playgroup** meets at 9.30am each Wednesday during the primary school term at the Omarama Community Centre. For more information phone president Tarryn Benton 027 201 7065 or secretary Aimee Snelgrove 022 350 5536 [aimeesnelgrove@hotmail.com](mailto:aimeesnelgrove@hotmail.com)

**The Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club** meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month at the 'Top Pub' - the Blue and Gold pub, in Kurow. All welcome. Join the Facebook group.

**Bridge Club** - The Omarama 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 Omarama Model Aircraft Club** meets on Saturdays from 9.00 am to 12.00

noon at its flying ground at the Omarama airfield. All welcome - Contact Don Selbie on 027 435 5516.

**FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade** meets 7pm each Wednesday and has its meeting at 7:30pm on the third Wednesday of the month. New members welcome.

**Plunket Line:** 0800 933 922

**Omarama Plunket Committee:** Aimee Snelgrove 022 350 5536

**Car Seat Rentals:** Christine, phone: 03 435 0557 or 027 208 0362

**In case of emergency:** to prevent any confusion about the location of Lake Ohau Alpine Village in an emergency, the following points should be noted:

When phoning 111, advise that Lake Ohau is in South Island and the nearest cross road is State Highway 8 and Lake Ohau Road. Also mention that Lake Ohau Alpine Village is on the shore of Lake Ohau, and is 20 mins (40 km) from both Twizel and Omarama. This will assist the operator to find the required information to enter location in the system and allowing the call to progress to the next screen in the system.

**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](http://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](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com) and put 'Local List' in the subject line.**

**Thank you to all who share your stories and contribute in other way to the Gazette. We all really appreciate what you do.**

**The July issue of the  
Omarama Gazette  
is Wednesday, June 7, 2021.**

Please submit copy  
by Friday, July 2, 2021

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To find out about publication and close-off dates, and how much it costs to place your advertisement, please phone 021 294 8002, 03 438 9766 or email [omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)

# The Community Reports

## Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade



*Hello to you all,*

Another month has raced by. Congratulations to FENZ Twizel Volunteer Fire Brigade celebrating its 50th jubilee this coming Queens Birthday Weekend! Things are a bit cooler, just a friendly reminder to those of you that use an electric blanket to get it checked by an electrician. A timely reminder about your smoke alarms please make sure they are working correctly. There have been a number of house fires around New Zealand in the past few weeks. Some were tragic with a

number of deaths due to the fact there were no working smoke alarms.

We have moved into an open fire season. If burning please make sure the conditions are suitable before you light any fires.

Winter driving conditions are definitely here please drive to the conditions.

*- Stay Safe, Chief Fire Officer Greg Harper*

**FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade meets 7pm each Wednesday and has its meeting at 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of the month.**



*Last weekend, Omarama Firebrigade volunteer Aaron Ferguson completed a two-day Operational Support course at the Woolston training centre in Christchurch. Operational support volunteers help firefighters and medical first responders at incidents. They carry out tasks to help keep the crew and public safe at an incident. For example, managing traffic and pedestrians, closing roads, transporting equipment and providing lighting and refreshments.*  
[facebook.com/Omaramafirebrigade](https://www.facebook.com/Omaramafirebrigade)

**'The Community Reports' is  
dedicated to news  
from clubs, groups and sports teams.  
Contributions are welcome.  
[omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)**

# Omarama School

## Day of fun and learning in the valley

It was a lesson in how to tackle pretty much all of life's challenges and it came as fun, wrapped in newspaper with bamboo sticks and cardboard, all held together with sticky tape.

This year's Waitaki Valley interschool technology challenge brought pupils from Dunroon, Papakaio, Glenavy and Omarama schools to Waitaki Valley School, in Kurow, for a day of technological creativity and competition with their peers.

It was a day for pupils from up and down the valley to get to know each other and complete tasks together, Papakaio school principal Gary Shirley said.

The challenges catered for differing learning styles, were about problem solving and "thinking spatially", and there was "a little bit of competition", Mr Shirley said.

But the challenges also taught so much more than that, he said.

It may have appeared they were building Rapunzel's tower or a waka or a marble run ski jump.

"[But] It is about managing time, managing relationships, managing resources. It's about negotiation, linking science concepts to technology and developing confidence," he said.

### RESULTS

Bungy Platform, Year 4-5 second place Omarama - Liam McLeod, Paige Doree, Brydie Ferguson ; Lighthouse, Year 4-5 first place Omarama – Samantha Ralston, Lucy Radford, Angus Gloag, Year 7-8 second place Omarama – Hazel Mason, Alex McDonald-McCabe, Jake McCabe; Ski Jump, Year 4-5 second place Omarama – Samantha Ralston, Lucy Radford, Angus Gloag; Home challenge, Year 4-5 third place Omarama – Amelia Paton; Year 5-6 second place Omarama – Robbie Anderson, third place Jack Doree. Year 4-5 Shield winners; Omarama



# Omarama Community Library



The Omarama Community Library  
is open 9am to 10am,  
Wednesdays and Saturdays  
at the  
Omarama Community Centre  
omaramalibrary@gmail.com

## Omarama Rodeo Club

### Annual Meeting

7pm, June 14, 2021 at  
Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama

## The Waitaki Newcomers Network

Contact: Christine Dorsey  
027 242 8643.  
waitaki@newcomers.co.nz  
Abacus House,  
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Oamaru  
03 434 7544.  
[www.newcomers.co.nz](http://www.newcomers.co.nz)

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**Applications must be received by 30 July 2021.**



# Ōhau Conservation Trust

*By Viv Smith-Campbell, Chairperson, The Ōhau Conservation Trust*

Come and help at the last two planting sessions for autumn 2021 at Lake Ōhau. Two down and two to go - following our very successful planting sessions in May, the Village Association and the Ōhau Conservation Trust are holding the final planting sessions for this autumn on Saturday, June 5, and Sunday, June 6, (Queens Birthday weekend).

On Saturday, you can help to finish the planting of snow tussocks at the entrance to the Village. On Sunday, beech trees are to be planted below the Village, along Lake Ōhau road in the McKinnon reserve and across the road in the Aubrey reserve.

Both sessions start at 10am. On Saturday, please meet at the entrance to the Village (parking along Ōhau Drive in the Village). Please gather on the reserve for a safety briefing and instructions for the day. On Sunday, please gather at the planting location along Lake Ōhau road (careful parking along the side of the road or park in the Village along Ōhau Drive) for a safety briefing and instructions for the day.

Please see the Ōhau Conservation Trust webpage for more details -

[ohauconservationtrust.nz](http://ohauconservationtrust.nz)

*Photo below: volunteers attend the May planting day. Supplied*



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# Omarama Residents' Association

The next meeting of the  
Omarama Residents' Association

**7.30pm Thursday, June 17, 2021**

at the Omarama Community Centre

An invitation is extended to all

**Contacts: Tony Chapman, chairperson, 027 242 8605.  
Yvonne Jones, secretary, 027 476 7473.**

## **THE ASSOCIATION HAS ITS OWN POST OFFICE BOX**

Could all those who want to contact the association by mail,  
send accounts to be paid,  
or have correspondence considered at the monthly meetings  
ensure it is addressed to:

**The Secretary, P O Box 93, Omarama 9448.**

**The association's email address is [omarama.committee@gmail.com](mailto:omarama.committee@gmail.com)**

## OMARAMA 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 54446  
or email [hallhire.omarama@xtra.co.nz](mailto:hallhire.omarama@xtra.co.nz)



The Omarama Gazette

# **Brown Bag Brainstormer**

Bring your lunch,  
a cushion,  
bring your ideas.

An invitation is extended to all

Free event, tea and coffee provided

**Wednesday, June 16**

from 12 noon to 2pm

Feel free to come and go as you please :)

**Omarama Community Centre  
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We'd like to set up a 'winter warmer series'  
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and we'd love your ideas



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Georgie Robertson  
Omarama

03 438 9554 027 4861525



Vicky Munro  
Otematata

03 438 7855 021 438745



Alona Shaw  
Omarama

027 773 4214



## Notary Public Services Affidavits and Declarations

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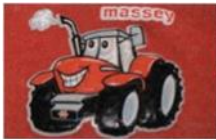


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0275 177 959  
karanm.twizel@ljh.co.nz



The café is now closed for the season  
Re-opening Labour weekend

Tanya and Dannie would like to thank all for their patronage



# Back my the Day - the old schoolyard

*We're running a series to share a little of the whakapapa of our place.*

*Various snippets by different contributors will recount stories of 'back in the day'.*

*Let's indulge in a little reminiscing.*

*Do you remember back in the days of the 1950s schoolyard ?*

## In My Day - By Pat McCormack née Patterson

Back in my day in the 1950s, Omarama was a small isolated community.

The village consisted of the Hotel, old Hall, General Store, Rapson's Tea rooms and a garage.

There was no electricity, telephone by party lines only, gravel roads, dusty in summer and muddy in winter, and the Waitaki Dam (1934) was the only dam in the area.

I grew up at Longslip Station, the eldest of six children, and attended Omarama School from 1951 to 1957. Over the years I went to school by different modes of transport: sometimes by car, home on the Mt Cook Bus, even the Mail Bus on Friday afternoons and eventually by school bus when the number of students had increased. For a five year old the Mt Cook Bus experience was a scary one as the driver would often forget to drop me off so the bus would have to turn around and go back.

Mr Brown was our teacher. The original school building was moved from Buscot to Omarama in 1943 and a new classroom built in the 1950s. While the classroom was



**The weather that was**

**@ 44.526686"S 169.889115"E**

(MetService Tara Hills Station)

**May 2021**

**Highest temperature: May 5, C 19.8 C**

**Lowest temperature: May 27, -10.8C**

**Most rainfall: May 29, 11.2mm**

**Total rainfall for April: 33 mm**

being built school was in the supper room of the old hall opposite the Hotel. I can still remember standing outside on a frosty morning watching the boys play rugby and waiting for the school day to begin.

School activities and games included Kick the Tin, Rounders, Statues, Hopscotch, skipping, swimming in the Omarama Stream and Ahuriri River, but not the main branch, ice-skating on the Horseshoe Lagoon, Ben Avon, the Annual School Picnic at Lake Middleton, Ohau, and only one Flower Show (1957) in the old hall which burnt down later that night.

Over the winter months we walked to the Hotel through shingle and briar bushes, for a cooked meal in the middle of the day. We entered through the kitchen as the dining area was at the end of the bar and children couldn't be seen entering a bar. One day we were asked by a fellow diner where our parents were.

School trips I remember were to Kurow, where a local brand of fizzy drink was made, Hakataramea to see the salmon spawning, Oamaru to visit the offices of the Oamaru Mail, Timaru to visit a local Dairy Factory, Pukaki School before the level of the lake was raised and the Maori Rock Drawings on the banks of the Waitaki River before the Benmore Dam was built.

The Queen and Prince Phillip visited New Zealand for the first time in 1953/54 and we drove to Oamaru to see them.

The 1950s were the time of the Polio Epidemic, 1955/56, and the arrival of electricity to the district.

*Photo: The original Omarama Hall (right) beside the Omarama Hotel prior to it being destroyed by fire. From It's Our Valley, the second collection, by Lynley Eade.*



# The Last Page is Classifieds

## BREEN CONSTRUCTION

Building since 1939 - available for your all of your construction projects in the Upper Waitaki and Mackenzie districts. Contact our Area Manager Jason Pryde on 021 340 694 or email [jason.pryde@breen.co.nz](mailto:jason.pryde@breen.co.nz)  
[www.breen.co.nz](http://www.breen.co.nz)

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## LAKE BENMORE WEED SPRAYING

Boat based spraying of aquatic weed in Lake Benmore using the herbicide diquat was successfully completed on Friday, May 28, 2021. The following sites were targeted for treatment: Sailors Cutting, The Neck The Ahuriri Delta & Arm will be treated by aerial spraying at a future date

A 24 hour stand-down is recommended on swimming, fishing or taking water for irrigation or domestic supply once the spraying is complete f you have any questions in relation to this work, please call 0800 638 943 or keep up to date with treatment progress on the LINZ website.

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## ANNUAL MEETING

Lake Ohau Alpine Village Residents and Ratepayers Association

Date: Saturday, June 5, 2021 (Queens Birthday Weekend)

Time: 4pm, Place: 122 Ohau Dr, Lake Ohau Village

For more information, association membership forms or nomination forms for the Committee, please email [lakeohauvillage@gmail.com](mailto:lakeohauvillage@gmail.com)

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