



-Omarama Gazette -

October 2018

**Sponsored by
BigSky Motels**

They're ready to answer the call

We all know they make an impressive crew and one which would be the envy of many small communities.

In the past year, between them Omarama's first responders - Geva Innes, Liz Komen, Georgie Robertson, Bruce Dyson, Charlotte Derosa, Sonya Trusler and Stephanie Lord have attended 46 medical call outs and 36 motor vehicle accidents. It's been a record year for all Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade volunteers, with 125 calls to the end of June.

This year the first responders earned a special mention at the FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade honours and awards night.

"Omarama doesn't know how lucky it is...it's the best anywhere ...we can be really, really proud of our first responders," Chief Fire Officer Terry Walsh told the gathering of members, former members and supporters.

After 11 years' service as fire fighter/first-responder Bruce was awarded the two-year silver bar, after five years as operations support/first responder Georgie was awarded the five-year medal, and after just a little over six months on the job Charlotte was named first responder of the year.

Charlotte was presented with some challenging calls in her first months and had "gone above and beyond the call of duty", Terry said on the night.

"I love it. I've got to know lots of lovely locals ... to experience opportunities I might never have had otherwise," Charlotte says.

She says with each new challenge she has grown in confidence. ***Continued...***

This issue is brought to you by ...

BigSky Motels

Last month's official opening of Omarama's latest accommodation complex, BigSky Motels, was a "dream come to fruition", owners Hank and Kay Verheul say. The luxury motels, situated in a quiet back street away from state highways, were designed and built by the couple specifically to meet the needs of independent travellers, especially those taking cycle tours of the Alps to Ocean route. With growing numbers visiting the area and using the trails they could see potential in the idea of providing premium accommodation specifically for the cycle tourism market, Kay says.

The couple, who have run BigSky Bed and Breakfast for more than 10 years, have enjoyed sharing their "piece of paradise" with guests from all over the world, and so were eager to investigate and develop this concept.

However, this new project could not have come to fruition without the help and support of local subcontractors, friends and family, Hank says.

Hank and Kay will continue to run BigSky Bed and Breakfast but have employed experienced managers Brian Hammond and Pam Young as their motel hosts.

Brian and Pam recently returned from their own overseas travels and know first-hand what the independent traveller needs at the end of a day exploring.

Let's begin with luxurious showers.

Then again, the motel's seven units (two one-bedroom apartments, four studio units and a wheelchair accessible unit) are all about relaxation and comfort.

Each unit has, for instance, a smart TV, a kitchenette, plus a patio where you can enjoy a wine and watch the sunset in Omarama's celebrated and starlit big sky.

And they have thought of everything. There is off-street parking, and for the cyclist there is a large cycle shed with cleaning facilities provided.

Omarama is the perfect location from which to base your high-country holiday with numerous outdoor activities on hand at any time of the year. To the north there is Aoraki-Mt Cook and the Mackenzie Country, and Twizel is only a 20-minute drive from the motels. To the South is Queenstown and Central Otago, and to the east are the Waitaki Lakes, Victorian Oamaru and the coast.

To find out more check out the website or give Pam or Brian a call.



BigSky Motels

**52 Ahuriri Drive, Omarama
New Zealand**

Phone: +64 3 4389538

Email: info@Bigsky.kiwi.nz

www.bigsky.kiwi.nz

New to brigade and to the area, Sonya says there is a “wealth of knowledge” to draw on within the crew, which includes three registered nurses. As well as Georgie, there are Geva and Liz who were part of the first cohort to train as fire service co-responders when the service was set up in 1997. Omarama was one of the first rural brigades to set up a co-response team (now known as first response) to provide emergency medical assistance because help from a doctor or St John could be more than 20 minutes away. It is a service that has become increasingly important as time has gone on. Omarama’s population swells to the size of a small town at holiday times, and more and more tourists travel the state highways, use the cycle trails and camp in the area, Bruce says. Earlier this year a successful trial was held in Omarama to investigate how a closer working relationship between St John and Fire and Emergency New Zealand might work nationwide. It involved further training for the crew and it means they are called each time there is a medical event. When you call 111 and ask for ambulance the Omarama Fire Brigade First Response is turned out at the same time and will be first on the scene. Not knowing what may unfold, whoever is available answers the call and heads out to help. It is their job is to assess the situation, provide emergency assistance and relay updates to St John. The ambulance, from which ever service is available – usually Twizel or Kurow – will always be on its way. But First Response will be there in five to 10 minutes rather than the 20 to 45 minutes it can take for the ambulance, Georgie says. “We will stay and hand-hold or help with anything else that needs to be done, help with children or others who may be upset, whatever.” ***continued...***



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Not everyone is taken to hospital, some only need to be taken to the medical clinic. The most important message from the crew is to;

“Yes, please make that call, don’t keep telling yourself, ‘I’ll be alright, I’ll be alright’,” Bruce says.

“But do always call 111 – and not Terry, or any member of the team directly, even if they are personally known to you,” Georgie says.

It is the fastest way to get the best help needed, and it activates the range of services which are necessary to access that help.

“Not going through the channels can hinder what we do,” Bruce says.

In some instances the “big red truck” may need to be dispatched as well but this is not always the case, Georgie says.

Let those who are experienced in the operations involved make those judgement calls, she says. And, as with any other medical service, privacy and confidentiality can be assured, Bruce says.

The crew have all received St John First Response training, as well they train with St John one full day every six months, and train with emergency services from Twizel, Otematata and Kurow, regularly. There are also opportunities offered for further training, nationally.

But the fire brigade underpins all they do.

It’s vital the First Response are part of that “bigger family” of the fire brigade, Georgie says.

Steph is on maternity leave at present.

Liz and Geva were not able to make it for the photo.



FENZ Omarama honours night 2018

Last month former members, family and friends of FENZ Omarama gathered for an evening to honour the service of its volunteers. The Omarama Gazette was invited to share the occasion.

Fire and Emergency Omarama Honours

3-year certificate: Fire Fighter Jaden Jenkins

5-year medal: Operations support./First responder Georgie Robertson

2-year gold bar: Station Officer Maurice Cowie (47 years' service)

2-year silver bar: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Greg Harper (21 years)

2-year silver bar: Senior Fire Fighter Zane Lord (seven years)

2-year silver bar: Qualified Fire Fighter Daniel Leopold (nine years)

2-year silver bar: Fire Fighter/First Responder Bruce Dyson (eleven years)

Brigade Trophies

Most Improved: Peter Trusler

Fire fighter of the year: Jack Zorab

First responder of the year: Charlotte Derosa

Most attendances: Jaden Jenkins

Photos:

FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade chief fire officer Terry Walsh congratulates Charlotte Derosa who was named the brigade's First Responder of the Year.

Operations support/first responder Georgie Robertson is presented with a five-year medal.

Former fire chief Howard Williams congratulates Jack Zorab, FENZ Omarama's Volunteer fire fighter of the year.

John presents fire fighter Jaden Jenkins with his three-year certificate – the first certificate a fire fighter receives. Jaden also received the trophy for most attendances.

Chief Fire Officer Terry Walsh won this year's "Lip Sync" trophy. He kept that quiet!

With thanks to all family, friends, employers and the Omarama Community.



A traveller's tale from

It may not be the stuff of legends, but you can be sure this trip will make for a few bloody good yarns for years to come.

In August, Omarama shearing legend Peter 'Casso' Casserly together with good mate John Kennedy, of Timaru, set off across the land of crocodiles, snakes and spiders to spend two months ticking a few dreams off the bucket list.

John Kennedy was New Zealand blade shearing champion in 1977 and 2005, and the Australian champion in 2010.

Our man Casso was New Zealand champion in 1975 and world champion in Master-ton in 1980. He hit headlines in 2004 when, despite struggling to stay out of the lime-light, national television managed to catch him on film freeing hermit sheep Shrek of his 27Kg fleece. Casso still also holds a blade-shearing record he set in 1976 after shearing 353 sheep in a nine-hour day in Mt Somers, Mid Canterbury.

He beat the tally of 350 set by an unknown shearer in 1899 and recorded in the Guinness Book of Records.

From Queensland to New South Wales, and to the 'Never Never', the pair checked out every old shearing shed, every pub and the stomping ground of every bush poet this side of the black stump. Okay, that's slightly exaggerated.

The draw card was the 150th anniversary of the small town of Blackall in the heart of Aussie merino country and its salute to legendary Aussie Blade shearer Jack Howe who in 1891, shored 321 sheep in seven hours and 40 minutes at Alice Downs – a record that's not been broken. But wait, have we not heard of something like this before?

Casso and John were invited to join the celebrations where they paid a Kiwi tribute to the Aussie legend and delighted crowds with their blade shearing demonstrations.

Endeavouring to keep a low profile, Casso managed to be cornered by Aussie paparazzi and was pressed for an interview. He told Queensland Country Life; "I didn't come here to tell you how I beat Jackie Howe's record because I didn't."

Nonetheless, Peter does have some interesting theories about Jackie's final tally.

(You can read more of the interview here: <https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/5626730/kiwis-pay-tribute-to-jack-howe/>)

In the meantime, here he is, our very own legend in his hometown in the midst of Kiwi merino country, spinning a bit of a yarn about that bucket list road trip.

ONE MORE OFF THE BUCKET LIST

By Peter Casserly

It was 40 days and 40 nights and not a drop of rain.

I had noticed an ad in a magazine advertising 150-year anniversary and celebration of a wool town a lot like Omarama, in outback Australia.

It was at Blackall where the famous black stump is sited.

In the 1800s, the surveyors and drovers used it as a marker, hence the saying; 'This side of the black stump'.

It was also the town where, in 1892, at Alice Downs Station, the famous blade shearer Jackie Howe shored 321 in one day and then went on to shear 237 the next day with the new machine shears, and received two gold medals.

a journey across the ditch

They have a big bronze statue of him in the town.

The two medals were later sold at auction for \$265,000 dollars.

They are now on display in at the National Museum in Canberra in the same room as Pharlap's heart.

(By the way, the great New Zealand race horse and Melbourne Cup winner from Timaru, has an Omarama connection. Dan Thomas, of Killermont Station, his grandmother saved the foal on her way to school at Seadown.

It had been raining, and the mare had just had the foal in a deep puddle.

Dan's grandmother dragged it out and put her coat around it – true story, says Mick.)

Anyway, I rang an old blade shearing friend, John Kennedy, from Timaru, to see if he wanted to go with me.

Gloria does not like crocodiles, snakes and spiders and someone had to keep the home fires burning and the pets fed.

It took us two days to get to Blackall (from Brisbane) and we nearly hit a big kangaroo on the way.

We had a week there, put on a blade-shearing display and met a lot of nice back country people. We also had a swim every day in their artesian hot pools, a great time!

Then we were off to Barcaldine, home of the 'Tree of Knowledge' and where the blade shearers helped start the Labor Party in 1892.

Next we visited Longreach and the Stockman's Hall of Fame as well as the Qantas Founders Outback Museum and which was also close to Winton where Banjo Patterson first recited Waltzing Matilda.

We set off out Birdsville way – the most isolated town in the outback. The races were on but there were no sheep, only desert and the never-never, and we didn't quite make it.

Continued...



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We stayed in Charleville for three days. They also had a 150-year celebrations. Then we headed down south to the outback towns of Cunnamulla, where Slim Dusty wrote his famous song, 'The Cunnamulla Fella', and to Bourke, New South Wales, where they shipped the wool down the Darling River. It was where the famous bush poet Henry Lawson came from.

Next Dubbo where they sell all the top merino rams, a lot come to the South Island high country.

We had a look at some really big shearing sheds and stations.

Some used to be over 100 miles wide, with 100 blade shearers shearing 500,000 merino sheep. This was from the 1850s to the early 1920s

We drove on to Bendigo way, a gold rush boom town in Victoria.

Later we went up to Canberra to see the National War Museum. It would bring a tear to your eye what those brave Anzacs did to win our freedom. Lest we forget.

Next, we headed to the coast, to Wollongong, where we pigged out on oysters, prawns, Moreton Bay bugs and fish.

Finally, we left Sydney airport and returned home to our beautiful New Zealand, the land of milk and honey and good shearing sheep.

Gloria asked what the highlight of the trip was.

I said, meeting Jackie Howe's descendants and getting invited to Alice Downs Station where the big tally with the blades was done.

She said; "You've got sheep shit on the brain, alright",

I said, "Funny you should say that.

"We were asked by a bloke over there - 'If you had five minutes to live, what would you do?'

"I said, 'I would repent my sins, say a few prayers and hope to go to heaven.'

"John said, 'I would like to shear three sheep and a catch!'"

Now, I ask you, who's got more sheep shit on the brain?!

*Cheers for now,
Sheepo Casso.*

Photos: supplied.



A new woolshed opens at Glenburn

The inaugural merino shear at Glenburn Station's new woolshed took place last month.

A team from Grant Murdoch Shearing put the new Calder and Stewart woolshed through its paces with a tally of 900 merinos through the four-stand shed in a little more than a day.

This week they are tackling the cross-breds.

The property - a fat lamb unit - is owned by the Botto Poala family and farmed as part of Otamatapaio Station - a Reda of Italy farm, with Richard Hay as manager.

The original Glenburn Woolshed – a wooden building with yards and implement shed, is a little further east along SH83 on the stretch of the Alps to Ocean trail which runs from Chain Hills to Sailors Cutting and directly opposite the Lake Benmore Holiday Park, the site of the old homestead. That woolshed, which stand on private property, was built in 1920 and was used until recently.

It is owned by the Wardell family whose has links with the area dating back to the earliest days of the region's farming history.

In 1915, Omarama Station's original holding of 140,695 acres, almost 57,000 hectares, which took in present-day Glenburn and extended south-east to the Otamatapaio Stream was broken up and distributed under a ballot system.

Pastoralist, businessman and wool industry leader Henry Wardell won the ballot for Otamatapaio which he named for the stream.

The Munro family were the first owners of Glenburn but later sold this to the Wardells.

Photos: Mike King



Search and Rescue teams test skills

The mission is to “go forth” and find the man.

They must think of everything.

In a scenario designed to be as authentic as possible, members of Otago Coastal Police Search and Rescue, and Omarama, Twizel and Oamaru Land Search and Rescue teams met at Omarama’s Landsar headquarters last month to locate 'missing' hunter Mark Wishihad Alandrover (not his real name) Paulson.

Prior to heading out the operations team gathered together all known information about the missing man, estimated distances and times, and ranked all in terms of probability to determine the optimum place to start the search.

Despite being in his own 'backyard' this diabetic hunter-gatherer’s chances are not looking that great.

In an operation like this any and everything is a clue and, in this case, all clues point to the Huxley – Hopkins valleys, an extensive and rugged search area.

Outside headquarter four teams plus a communications team and Central South Island Helicopters’ pilot Bryan Patterson gather for the briefing in somewhat foggy conditions and in temperatures still below zero.

Senior Constable Nayland Smith (Bean) and Otago Coastal SAR co-ordinator Sergeant Nathan White give the briefing.

"What's the mission?" someone asks.

"To go forth and find our man," Nathan replies.

The thin, wiry bloke with the greying ginger hair and beard last spoke to friend Tom Moore at Lake Ohau Station before heading out "into the Huxley" the Intentions Book records.

His sleeping bag and pack were found at Monument Hut but his vehicle, a red beaten-up Toyota Land Cruiser, is missing.

He is a heavy smoker. Look for butts.

He drinks Speights. Look for stubbies.

And it could be he's forgotten his medication.

His big black staffy dog answers to 'Dog', and will leave heavy paw prints in muddy spots.

Bryan will helicopter a crew up to the start area.

The mobile unit will drive and park up to act as communications hub.

Reportedly, there is no fog in the search area but there are wide shingle river beds, there is high ground with drop-offs and possibly icy conditions to negotiate.

Communication is likely to be difficult.

All searchers must plan to stay overnight.

Ideally, they'll make it to a hut before dark, otherwise they must be ready to “cuddle up” to the next person for the night.

There is a bustle to get organised.

Bags of freeze-dried food disappear from shelves and teams from other areas look on enviously at the well-equipped named lockers with “gear that fits”.

Omarama’s new headquarters with its especially equipped whiteboard-lined incident room opened just on two years ago.

The teams head off up the valleys to complete their set tasks.

If this was the adrenaline-pumping real deal an added underlying urgency would drive this operation.

For those new to SAR and on their first exercise there is still a certain level of real apprehension.

Throughout the afternoon as reports from the searchers come in the operations team back at headquarters, led by Omarama Sar chairman and today's manager Mike King, calmly and objectively appraise each piece of new information.

A paw print has been found, measured and logged.

Pulling together all the clues they direct searchers closer to the target, and at the same time check on the welfare of the teams.

"We can't lose anyone."

And they didn't.

In this test the teams come close but do not quite find their target by the time the exercise winds up Sunday lunch time.

Sadly, that means the pair of overalls stuffed with straw lying by the stream are not located.

However, reportedly, a man of a very similar description to the missing Mark had emerged much earlier than the rescuers looking remarkably no worse for wear and in good time to down a cold one.

Bean said there were "valuable learnings" from the exercise.

"It means we are better prepared in the case of an emergency.

"They [the teams] did what they were trained to do."

He wanted to thank family members and employers – Mike and Louise Neilson for allowing Mark the time off, and Central South Island Helicopters.

Photo by Nayland Smith

More photos at back



Blue skies for BigSky Motel's opening

There was not a cloud in Omarama's blue sky for their big day - the opening of Omarama's latest accommodation complex, BigSky Motels.

Friends, family, tourism operators and those who had helped with the design and build gathered on Saturday, September 22, to hear a few short words of congratulations from Omarama's JP Georgie Robertson, who opened the complex.

The motels are owned and were built by Hank and Kay Verheul and will be managed by Pam Young and Brian Hammond.

Photos:

Georgie Robertson declares BigSky Motels open. Guests, family and friends gather in the afternoon sunshine to celebrate the occasion, among them; contractor Kevin Grant and SupplyMoore's Andy Moore, Emma Moore and Janet Mathewson, Twizel marriage celebrant Jill Fordyce, BigSky Motels manager Pam Young and Tourism Waitaki's Lu Jiang.



Employee of the month...

Debs Wilson

owner-operator The Love Shack

We're a small town with so much talent. Together we do so much.

Each month we feature our 'Employee of the Month' - to learn a little more about how our people spend their day.

Her smile says it all and people call by as much for the friendly chat as for what are reportedly 'the best kebabs south of Turkey'.

Debs began running her brightly-coloured street food stall, 'The Love Shack', in main street Omarama about four years ago.

She moved to town from Wanaka when friend Maree Kelman, who owned the Omarama Hotel at the time, persuaded her to come and help in the café.

"Hospo' has been my life," she says.

She laughs and adds her two adult children were raised “under the counter”.

In the 1990s she had café Te Kano - a vegetarian café - in what was the oldest building in Wanaka. Vegetarian was possibly "a little ahead of its time", she says.

Debs makes everything on the menu from scratch - the sauces, the sides, everything is "made with love", and street foodie connoisseurs tell her they can taste the difference.

She's open through summer from 11am until late, but her hours vary in winter.

Some days she is so busy she's has to close early because she has run out of food.

The flexibility is the beauty of it. “The lifestyle is so easy,” she says.

It's a job that can take her around the world in a day through the people she meets.

It's so "rewarding" to connect with such interesting people and there are just so many stories. "You do have the odd one who asks the weird questions like, 'Do you sell Viagra?' "

"Many stop to say what a beautiful place this is but we know that already."

Word of great street food soon gets around and Debs has found the Love Shack's praises sung on the blogs of numerous world travellers.

Many of Debs' stories end with "...and they came back and gave me... 'We want you to have this,' they say."

There was this young man, his car had broken down late at night and Terry Walsh needed to fix it so he had to find a place to stay overnight.

They put him up at the camping ground and he came over for a kebab and a chat. When Debs arrived at work the next day there was a piece of greenstone waiting for her with a note to say how much the young man had appreciated her kindness. On his return trip he called in to introduce his girlfriend and to make sure Debs had found the gift.

"People are so grateful.

"I love it, I've had lots of other businesses ... this is it."



Obituary

Graeme Cowie, dedicated to making a difference

It has been almost a year since Omarama's first chief fire officer passed away, but his legacy is set to last for generations.

Graeme Robert Cowie died in Timaru last October aged 79 years.

As well as being Omarama's first chief officer – he held that role from 1966 to 1973 – a founding member, and a life member, he was also a “revered and much respected gentleman, friend to all”, Omarama's present fire chief Terry Walsh said at the funeral.

In 2016, at the Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade jubilee Graeme was presented with a life honorary membership.

The award was recognition of his commitment to making a difference but it did not tell the whole story of his contribution to the town.

Graeme began in the fire brigade in Waimate where he was a part-time engineer for WA (Alan) Blackie. He had three years in its fire-brigade and he and wife Fay lived on the fire station when they were first married.

In the early 60s he moved to Omarama to help build the stockyards and the service station – ‘Blackie's Garage’, on the corner of SH83 and Sutherlands Rd.

The memory of the loss by fire, in 1957, of the original wooden Memorial Hall was still fresh.

And there had been several other significant fires about the same time, including a fire at Collin's Tearooms and service station, where Mobil Omarama is now.

Graeme mentioned setting up a fire brigade to a few locals “but the local council and local fire authority didn't want to know,” his brother Maurice, who is Omarama's present station officer, said.

But, in 1966, he and six other locals did form what was known as a ‘fire party’ under the Waitaki Catchment Board.

Several years of battling various authorities and quibbling over population size ensued.

Omarama did not meet the threshold required to be officially recognised by the fire service council and receive funding.

The brigade eventually received official recognition in September 1967.

Despite the delays none of those early crew let red tape tie them down.

They began training, using the New Zealand Forest Service headquarters and Mark I Wajax pump, and fundraising to buy the first appliance, the St Andrews brigade's retired 1935 Ford V8 fire engine.

They also lobbied the council for land and materials to build a fire station.

The council told them to put their order in for the materials they thought they might need, up to \$1500, and the order would be sent up from Oamaru to Omarama on two trucks.

Graeme made sure every cent of that \$1500 was spent and both trucks duly arrived

in Omarama fully-laden which is why the finished building was more than adequate in size for many years.

For the first decade, the brigade attended an average of three to four calls a year. The first major fire the brigade battled was the blaze which destroyed the Walker family homestead at Ben Avon Station.

Through the years volunteer numbers have fluctuated but the will to provide the service for the town has remained strong and, in 1997, it was one of the first rural brigades to set up a co-response team (now known as first response) to provide emergency medical assistance.

This year, 2018, was a record year for the brigade with 125 calls.

At the funeral Terry said Fire and Emergency New Zealand members “past and present” - those who followed in the “footsteps of a great and gentle man” - wanted to pay tribute to Graeme’s dedication and service.

“A mighty Totara has fallen, but due to his inspiration and leadership his seedlings will continue to grow strong.”

Graeme was the dearly loved husband of Fay, much loved dad and father-in-law of Shane and Paula, Judy and Grant, Aaron and Kathy, loved and cherished granddad of Renee, Shannon, and Damien; Tessa, and Kara; Jessica, and Kenneth and great granddad Graeme of Tyler, and Jaxon.

Photo: Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade former chief fire officer Howard Williams presents the brigade's first chief Graeme Cowie a life honorary membership at its jubilee in June 2016. Graeme and Jaden Jenkins cut the anniversary cake.



The Noticeboard



To have your community notice included here.

email: omaramagazette@gmail.com

Tania and Dannie McAughtrie have christened their new venture at Omarama airfield, The Pink Glider Cafe. Congratulations and all the best.

Twizel is hosting this year's New Zealand Grassland Association conference. Omarama farmer Bill Sutherland will speak at the conference which has the theme 'balancing the extremes'. The conference runs from November 6 to November 8 and is based at the Mackenzie Country Inn with field trips to Bog Roy and Omarama stations.

The Omarama Golf Club has changed to daylight saving hours. Saturdays tee-off 1pm. Twilight golf tee-off is 6pm, Thursdays. Club Captain Adrian Tuffley, 027 347 8276. 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 Petrina Paton 027 345 6192 or Carla Hunter 03 976 0504

The Omarama Community Library is open 9am to 10am Wednesdays and Saturdays, at the Omarama Community Centre. Contact Anna: 021 132 5586

The library will start Summer opening hours after Labour Weekend.

This means that over the summer the library will also be open on Tuesdays from 7pm to 8pm. The first evening session will be Tuesday, October 30.

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.

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 Kurow Medical Centre holds a clinic 8.30am to 1pm, and 2pm to 5pm, on Tuesdays at the Omarama Community Centre. Please phone Kurow Medical Centre, 03 436 0760, for appointments. On Fridays phone 0274 347 464 because the Kurow Centre is closed.

The Omarama Model Aircraft Club meets 9.30am to 12 noon Wednesdays and Sundays at its fly-ground at the Omarama airfield. All welcome. Phone Graham McLean 03 438 9832.

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: Lisa Crawford, phone 021 126 3113

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

Breastfeeding Works: Claire Hargest-Slade 03 684 3625, 021 493 863
clairhs@me.com

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.

Advertising pays for production and distribution.

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

**The November issue of the
Omarama Gazette
is Wednesday, November 7, 2018.**

**Please submit copy
by Friday, November 2.**



**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)

The Community Reports

FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade



There were nine calls for the month of September. With daylight saving here it's a great time to check your smoke alarms and change the batteries. If you need a hand please feel free to see me.

-Stay safe.

Omarama Chief Fire Officer Terry Walsh.

FENZ Omarama Rural Fire

Omarama Rural Fire are on the look out for new members, 16 years and over - even if you're retired. Age is not an issue.

Our primary role is to fight vegetation fires which normally take place on our local farms and Department of Conservation reserves.

Rural Fire has been going 30 years and Omarama is leading the way in Otago-Southland.

We have amalgamated with the fire brigade and so we are now all one organisation that operates from the Omarama Fire Station.

I invite you to come along to the station on a Wednesday night at 7pm so we can discuss what we do and show you around the station and the vehicles.



Jimmy Courtney,
Area Controller 027 441 8612
email:
ahuririvalley@gmail.com

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Omarama Residents' Association Inc
is 7.30 pm, Thursday, October 18, 2018,
at the Omarama Community Centre

All are welcome

- Yes, we fundraise - it's fun. Our Garden Tour raised almost \$30,000
- Help plan and build sports courts for our community
- Help care for our Community Centre
- Join to lobby on issues we care about

It's about all of us
Let's work together to make the difference

One meeting, one hour, once a month

Omarama is at the heart of what we do

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



Malcolm McMillan, Lake Ohau Village
438 9798 027 438 9798



Georgie Robertson, Omarama
438 9554 027 4861 525

Omarama Community Library

By Anna Howard

Read all your books at home?

Don't forget that there is a book sales table in the waiting room area at the Community Centre - gold coin donation, with all proceeds going towards improving library provision.

You can buy book sale items whenever the Community Centre is open.

The library will start summer opening hours after

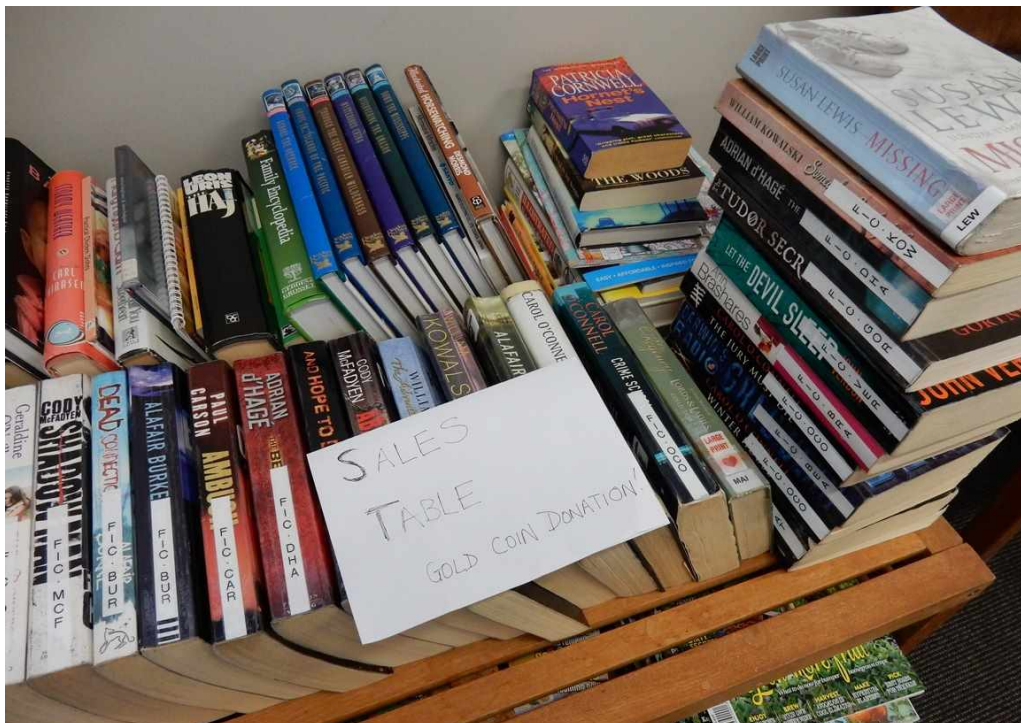
Labour Weekend. This means that over the summer the library will be open on Tuesdays 7pm to 8pm, Wednesdays 9am to 10am and Saturdays 9am to 10am. The first Tuesday night will be Tuesday, October 30.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help with the library sessions.

Full training and support provided. Please contact Anna 021 132 5586 for more information or to register your interest.

Come and have a look, and get yourself a book!

(Or DVD, talking book, jigsaw etc etc - you name it, we've got it....almost!)



Omarama Residents' Association

From the last meeting...

Chairperson Ann Patterson told the meeting there had been little new information forthcoming about concerns raised by the association about the management of the Department of Conservation's Ahuriri River Bridge Campsite. She had been contacted by Waitaki District Council recreation manager Erik van der Spek, who is the council representative on the Mackenzie and Waitaki Basins Responsible Camping Strategy Working Group, who confirmed the new toilet and fencing would be installed by Labour Weekend. Ann asked Erik for all further communication on the topic to be by email so it could be documented by the association.

Jemma Gloag spoke about progress with applications for funding for the sports courts. The courts could be developed in two stages, laid in asphalt initially with specialty turf laid at a later date when the budget allowed, she said. This would mean the community could start to use the courts sooner.

Pam Young asked, on behalf of Omarama businesses, for the association to continue to support its update of the town's promotional map by providing banking facilities as it had done in the past, and this was approved.

**Next meeting: following the annual meeting at 7.30 pm,
Thursday, October 18,
at the Omarama Community Centre.**

**Contacts: Ann Patterson, chairperson, 03 438 9493,
Lorraine King, secretary, 027 434 6027**

Omarama School Board of Trustees

Many thanks to all those who attended our Omarama School Board of Trustees fundraiser "Dinner with Daggy".

We are sure those of you who attended would agree it was a great night out with an outstanding array of delicious foods and interesting discussions around Brian Daggy's climbing expeditions.

The fundraiser raised \$2,376.00 so all-in-all a very successful event. These funds will be put towards our school.

Many thanks:

- to James and Trish Kerr for allowing us to hold this event at the Wrinkly Rams and for supplying the amazing meals at no cost!
- to Wendy Parsons for organizing this event and Brian's talk to Tarras and Omarama School earlier in the day.
- to Granny Ann for supplying accommodation and breakfast to Brian and his wife
- to Bill Adams for his donation of a stone carved wrinkly ram for a presentation gift from the school.

Thank you to everybody for helping make this event the success it was.

- *Omarama School Board of Trustees*



Let them entertain you!

There was suspense. There was drama. There was action.
There was comedy. (Oops, that bit wasn't meant to be funny. Don't laugh, Dad.)
But most of all there was a whopping ton of 'You can do it' attitude at last month's Omarama School Concert at the Omarama Memorial Hall.

Credits

The Omarama School 'You Can Do It' concert.

Cast: Omarama School pupils

Directed by: The Kids.

Produced by: The Kids.

Costumes: The Kids.

Makeup: the Kids.

Scenery and props: The Kids.

Stunt doubles: The Kids.

Publicity: The Kids.

And special thanks to ... The audience. Mr S and Teresa. The Supper crew.

To see more photos and a video go to the Omarama Gazette Facebook page.







Presents

SHOW US YOUR TOYS

COMMUNITY FETE FUN DAY

**Cars, Bikes, Trucks,
Boats, ATVs ..Anything goes!**

\$15 per exhibit

REGISTER ON THE DAY FROM 9.30AM

\$2 Public entry

Lawn mower racing

Stalls Food Coffee

Competitions for Prizes

Spot Prizes, Auctions

27th October

The Kurow Racecourse 10am

Thank you to all

Omarama School's Casino Night

Saturday 29th September 7pm

Omarama Community Hall



Tickets still available from Mobil Omarama or Boots and Jandals Hotel

Huge Thank you to all of our Sponsors for supporting the School, there are heaps of great prizes, come on down for a fun night and to win your share.

Sponsors include:

- Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama
- AON Insurance Oamaru
- LJ Hooker Twizel
- Hi Flow Plumbing Oamaru/Omarama
- Lakes Electrical Otematata/Omarama
- Omarama Service Station
- David O'Neill Contracting
- MacKenzie Pharmacy
- Omarama Four Square
- CP Wool Timaru
- Omarama Top 10 Holiday Park
- Dr Wellness – Timaru
- Top Hut Twizel
- MacKenzie Country Inn
- Heritage Hotel Omarama
- Ann Murray
- Tekapo Springs Hotpools
- CRT Kurow
- Supplymoore yard Omarama
- Oamaru Honda and Stihl Shop
- Silver Fern Farms
- GlenCraigs Omarama
- Ostler Wines Kurow
- The Market Store Twizel
- Jakes Hardware Twizel
- PGG Wrightson's Oamaru
- Trail Adventures Omarama
- Otematata Gym
- Longslip Station Ltd
- Yoga with Ashalea - Twizel

There are some fantastic prizes from these awesome businesses. Please support them, they are amazing for supporting our little local School.

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

Waitaki District Council - news in brief

Alcohol ban bylaw changes

The Waitaki District Council would like to hear what people think about its proposed changes to its alcohol ban bylaw.

The main change from the previous bylaw is that Omarama and Otematata will now be covered under the ban.

The bylaw aims to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve community enjoyment of public places by reducing alcohol consumption in certain areas.

It means alcohol will not be able to be consumed in defined public areas and allows police to make decisions and arrests based on infringements of the bylaw.

People who live in Waitaki are invited to share their thoughts, either online via the public consultation page on the website or visit the customer services desk and pick up a copy of the consultation document and submission form. Submissions close on October 15.

Civil Defence

The Waitaki District Council will release its Community Response Plans – information about what to do in a flood, fire, storm, and so on to coincide with a nationwide 'ShakeOut' drill planned for later this month.

The plans, unique to each area, are made up of maps which include details such as where Civil Defence centres will be open.

The drill, at 9.30am on Thursday, October 18, is one of several events scheduled for that time to highlight the need for emergency readiness.

It is being used as an opportunity for council staff and contractors, who work in widely different environments, to rehearse what they would do in the case of an earthquake or tsunami, and think about how they might support their colleagues.

The Waitaki Bridge siren at the Kaik Fishing village will be tested and Kakanui School pupils will practice what they would do in the case of a tsunami by walking to higher ground.

The Response plans will be on the council website and available in printed form from specific locations from October 18.

Phone: 03 433 0300

Freephone 0800 108 081

Automated options after hours

E-mail: service@waitaki.govt.nz

www.waitaki.govt.nz

Ahuriri Community Board Meeting

From the Ahuriri Community Board meeting, Monday, October 1, Otematata Community Centre . In brief...

Omarama Playgroup treasurer and Residents' Association member Jemma Gloag spoke at the Ahuriri Community Board public forum on Monday to ask for funding for Playgroup and for the proposed sports courts planned for the Community Centre.

The Ahuriri Community Board has agreed to pay \$784 for a sandpit cover for the Omarama Playgroup sandpit.

After some discussion, Waitaki mayor Gary Kircher indicated the council would look favourably at providing some funding towards the proposed sports courts.

Councillor Craig Dawson indicated he would prefer the council look at extending a loan to the association rather than a grant.

The Board resolved to ask for council officers to prepare a report detailing options for it to consider.

**The next Ahuriri Community Board meeting is
3.15pm to 5.15pm
Monday, November 12,
Community Centre, Omarama**

Temporary Liquor Ban

There will be Temporary Liquor Bans in place in Otematata and Omarama for the following period:

**Labour weekend (9pm Friday 19 October 2018) until
Queen's Birthday weekend (6am Monday 3 June 2019) incl.**



OMARAMA

The liquor ban area shown on the map covers the township of Omarama within the 100km speed limit signs.



OTEMATATA

The liquor ban area shown on the map extends to the southern boundary of the town, the boundaries of the Otematata Golf Course, the 80km speed limit signs to the east and west of Otematata and on Loch Laird Rd.

This temporary liquor ban was made by Council resolution in accordance with the Liquor Ban Bylaw 2009.
For more information go to www.waitaki.govt.nz or phone 03 433 0300

Phone 03 433 0300 Email service@waitaki.govt.nz
Office 20 Thames Street, Private Bag 50058, Oamaru 9444
www.waitaki.govt.nz



Waitaki
DISTRICT COUNCIL
TE KAUNIHERA A ROHE O WAITAKI

Environment Canterbury news in brief

Canterbury's water zone committees are looking for new community members. Applications to join the zone committees are open from September 10 till October 8, 2018. If shortlisted, you will need to take part in a selection workshop at which you will be expected to:

- make a presentation of no more than four minutes on a specified topic.
- participate in an assessment workshop involving small group exercises.

If you would like to know more phone ECan customer services: 0800 324 636.

Canterbury homeowners can now get a \$6000 rates advance to pay for home heating, insulation and ventilation improvements. ECan has begun accepting applications to Healthier Homes Canterbury, announced as part of the Long-Term Plan 2018-28.

Fish screens: There are about 1400 consents throughout the region to take water from rivers. These takes must have an effective fish screen, be fit for purpose and not cause harm to the environment.

For further information go to www.ecan.govt.nz

ECan Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee

From the meeting September 21, 2018, in Twizel.

ECan water scientists have begun work in anticipation of a notification of a plan change to the Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan in about four year's time.

The plan was made operative in 2006.

ECan surface water science manager Helen Shaw presented an outline of proposed work for the Upper Waitaki.

Collecting data early meant ECan could establish a good "dataset", and start to work and "share knowledge" with the parties involved, and address any issues that arise early on, she said.

It will carry out work in the Ahuriri catchment, the Hakataramea catchment, and some of the tributaries of the Lower Waitaki in preparation for the review of the plan.

Those who are involved include rūnanga, the Waitaki and Mackenzie district councils, the Upper and Lower Waitaki water zone committees, the Department of Conservation, Land Information New Zealand, Central South Island Fish and Game, irrigation schemes, aquaculture groups and the hydroelectricity companies.

ECan plans to work with those involved to establish the "key science questions" about meeting the zone committees' water quality objectives which might need further investigation, she said.

In the Ahuriri ECan plan to investigate what the smaller tributaries contribute and how this fits with the water conservation order plus carry out further work on those rivers in the upper Waitaki identified as "flow-stressed".

Both Meridian and Genesis have consents which expire 2025 and some work on the

plan change and for the consent renewal applications could be done at the same time, she said.

Ms Shaw presented graphs depicting TLI levels for various lakes in the Upper Waitaki.

Overall lake health is measured through the Trophic Level Index (TLI), a commonly used water-quality measure.

The higher the TLI the greater the nutrient load.

She stressed, while the data collected did not provide a complete record and could not yet be used as a scientific gauge of trends, the monitoring done so far had still given good indicators of the direction water quality was taking over time.

Further analysis would also need to be done to determine which factors - such as climate - might be directly influencing a change in level, she said.

The committee asked for information boards featuring the TLI graphs with accompanying short explanations and links to a site where the public could go for more information be installed at each of the major lakes and recreation areas before November.

Community member and Omarama farmer Lisa Anderson said she would also like to see the information given to consent holders when they are sent their annual compliance report.

Concerns were raised by the committee about the difficulty it is experiencing attracting new members from across various interest groups.

The several vacant positions on the committee have proved difficult to fill.

As well, Barry Shepherd, Mathew Bayliss, Richard Subtil and Simon Cameron's terms expire on December 31.

After nine years of service, Mr Shepherd has given notice he will retire at the end of this term.

ECan is at present advertising for people to apply to be appointed to zone committees throughout Canterbury.

The other members have indicated they will stand again.

Sandra Hampstead-Tipene, of Arowhenua, said some rūnanga had indicated they could pull out of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy because of concerns about lack of progress and she was unsure what implications this might have for other representatives.

ECan councillor John Sunckell said he understood it was only a minority who felt this way.

Mrs Anderson said any such action could put "the whole structure at risk".

Mr Cameron said he spoke for the zone committee when he said it was "unanimous" in its support not only for retaining rūnanga representation but also in its acknowledgement of the value and importance of their contribution.

"We need that grassroots knowledge."

Should it be that Mrs Hampstead-Tipene and fellow representative John Wilkie, of Waihao, could no longer stand as rūnanga representatives the committee would encourage them to apply to be appointed to the committee as community members, he said.

Applications to join Canterbury's water zone committees are open now until 8 October 2018.

Community members are appointed to zone committees for three years.

Approval of funding for projects

The zone committee has approved up to \$20,000 for “pre-emptive” weed control in the upper reaches of the Waitaki catchment.

Immediate Steps funding is available annually for protection and restoration of biodiversity on private and public land.

ECan Biodiversity officer Rob Carson-Iles said the sum would be used primarily to control cotoneaster and try to prevent its spread further up the Ahuriri and Ohau valleys.

It would be working with the Department of Conservation who will match the funding “dollar for dollar”.

“We won’t totally remove it but it’s a start.”

Further funding was approved for a rabbit-proof fence around two lifestyle properties in Manuka Terrace in Twizel and to assist with stock exclusion from Lakes Murray and Alexandrina, and Tui, Stony and Grebe tarns, on Glemore Station near Tekapo.

Twizel appointment

Environment Canterbury principal resource management adviser Marty Mortiaux has begun working in Twizel “two to three days” each week to help farmers, water-user groups and other entities with compliance issues.

ECan will be running a competition for its “Love our Lakes” summer campaign and the winner will receive a waste-free picnic hamper.

Looking ahead

The UWWZC members were asked to contribute comment on the draft Regional Water Management committee “Fit for Future” goals for 2025 and 2030 ahead of its meeting on October 9. Once finalised the goals will form the basis of its recommendations for future regional water management to be presented to the Canterbury Mayoral Forum in April 2019.

The next meeting of ECan’s Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee

is a joint meeting with

the Lower Waitaki-South Coastal Canterbury Zone Committee
at the Waitaki Rod and Gun Club, Hayes Rd, Hakataramea,

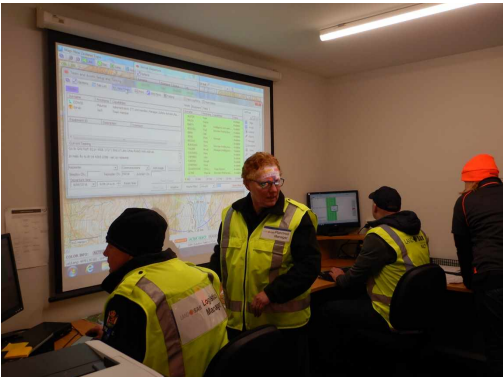
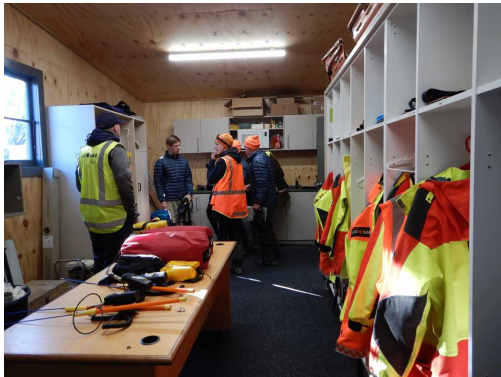
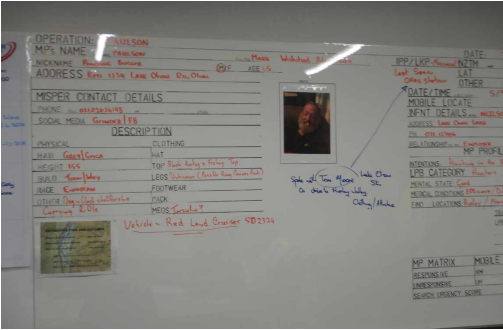
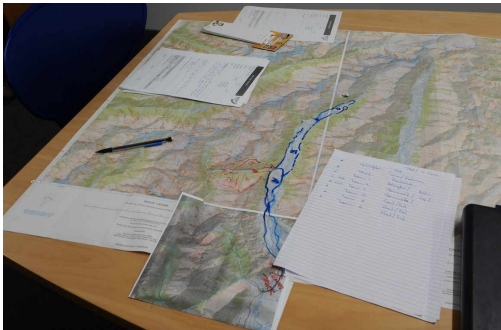
at 9.30 am, Thursday, October 18,

and followed by the Hakataramea Sustainability Collective field day
about pest management at Invercroy Station's new woolshed,
Hakataramea Valley which begins at **2pm**.

Minutes and agendas are posted at:

**[https://ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/water/
whats-happening-in-my-water-zone/upper-waitaki-water-zone/
www.ecan.govt.nz](https://ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/water/whats-happening-in-my-water-zone/upper-waitaki-water-zone/)**

Search and Rescue exercise , Saturday, September 22





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**

IMPORTANT PATIENT NOTICE

Kurow Medical Centre wish to advise that effective from October 1, 2018, there will be a small fee increase for patients aged 13 years and over. This follows a two-year period of no fee increases. The change has been approved by our PHO, WellSouth.

The following fee schedule is for standard doctor consultations.

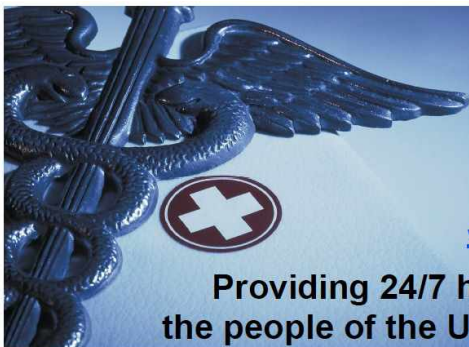
Age Group	Current Fee	Amended Fee
Under 6	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
6-12 years	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
13-17 years	\$ 25.00	\$ 26.00
18-24 years	\$ 39.50	\$ 40.00
25-44 years	\$ 39.50	\$ 40.00
45-64 years	\$ 39.50	\$ 40.00
65+ years	\$ 39.50	\$ 40.00

For other fee increases or if you have any questions please contact the Receptionist or Practice Manager at the Medical Centre.

We look forward to continuing to provide excellence in primary health care to all our patients.

Best wishes Tim and Juliet Gardner





Kurow Medical Centre

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

E: info@kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz

W: www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz

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- * 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)
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- * Before School checks
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- * Podiatry and Ear Health (Kurow only)
- * Physiotherapy, Acupuncture and Massage (Kurow and Twizel)
- * Reiki and Reflexology (Twizel only)

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 opening times and health articles'



15 Mackenzie Drive PH: 4350777

OPENING HOURS

We are now open for appointments.

9:30am to 6pm	Mondays and Fridays
8.30am to 5pm	Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
9:45am to 11:45am	Saturdays

AFTER-HOURS

On call after-hours services are also offered 24/7 for urgent care.

Other Health and Wellbeing Services

Blood Tests, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Risk Assessment, Minor Surgical Procedures such as Skin Lesion removal, Smears, Medicals, Ultrasound and Physio, Podiatry, Counselling, Dentures and Mole Map, are also available at Twizel Medical Centre.

We will be also be advertising other services as these come on stream.

Please make inquiries with our reception. 4350777

Enrol With Us

Twizel Medical Centre is an enrolling practice. When you are an enrolled patient your fees are reduced. Please feel free to come in see our centre and talk to the team about our services and enrolling. Because our centre is community owned and has charitable status, any surplus can be reinvested into improving access to services for our community.

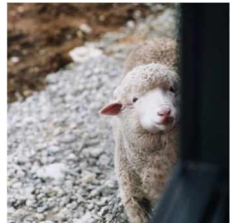
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Those FAQs - the five awkward questions

(special edition)

Omarama long distance walkers Katrina Sole and Jan Perriam



They may have struggled to find words to describe their sense of achievement but the smiles that are still there on their faces weeks after the event say it all. Team Oasis - Katrina Sole and Jan Perriam - came 35th in the field of 144 who undertook the Dunedin Half Marathon Recreational Walk last month. This is the second time Jan and Katrina have competed in the walk, this time completing it in three hours, one minute and 35 seconds, beating their previous time by 45 seconds.

"Katrina was my energiser bunny."

But a 79-year-old competitor was their "inspiration of the day" as the pair tried valiantly but unsuccessfully to match her pace.

Deciding to enter after having had "too many wines", the pair trained throughout the winter months, either before or after work and often in the dark.

Practice sessions included walking around 'The Triangle', 9.5km, three times a week and clocking up "a lot of miles during the day" in their respective jobs at the busy cafe. Walking was such a great way to unwind, they said.

In the final month they took on a 30-day fitness challenge to build endurance.

Michelle and Todd Hancox sponsored their team "uniform".

"Dream, believe, inspire, achieve," their hoodies read.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given?

"Keep it up. Don't give up."

Tell us something about Omarama we might not know?

"How many seats there are on the Alps to Ocean trail between Omarama and Sailors Cutting? We're not telling!"

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?

"Mountaineer Mark Inglis."

Best day outside the office?

"Going to the river for some quiet time out and walking is such good unwinding time."

What is one thing that would make the world a better place?

"If everyone experienced more of the outdoors. It puts you in a better space."

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Keys and fobs are collected from Charlotte



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Situations Vacant

Secretary

Omarama School Board of Trustees

We meet approximately 10 times per year for about two hours, generally on a Thursday at 3.50 pm.

The role requires you to attend the meeting, take the minutes, type up and send to Board members within 24hours.

There may be some other occasional minute taking required.

An honorarium is paid for this role.

**Please contact
David Anderson
021 457 073**

The View from the Chook House



Okay, Guys. We think this should be painted blue
with P-O-L-I-C-E B-O-X in white letters,
perhaps a flashy light?
And it should be bigger on the inside.

The Garden Diary - Staying grounded

There is something so special about that first morning it is bright and warm enough to step out the back door barefoot and walk across the dewy lawn.

Some years I am so eager for that spring morning that those sunlit crystal drops give a slight crunch beneath toes because the temperature has still not climbed above zero. Some days tho', I'll admit, the birds are awake, done with their chorusing, and are bustling and busy while I'm still in dressing gown and gumboots when I venture out. Distracted by each newly-opened spring flower, pausing to pull out that fizzy little shepherd's purse before it spits its seeds far and wide, and stopping to collect the warm, brown hens' eggs, the morning recce can take a while.

Today, a fist full of violets fills the glass jar on my desk, each petal dyed a different colour purple, some daubed with dark freckles, some have had the finest strokes etch in whiskery faces.

It's so tempting to stay out all day but ultimately duty and responsibility prevail and draw me back.

Some days obligations or frustration or anger or despondency or heartache grow so wearying. Healing and hope.

There's that moment when you push your hand deep into the soil, testing its warmth in the spring sunshine, crumbling it fine to sprinkle over newly-sown seeds, in faith, knowing each will follow the plan written deep within its core. The darkness of winter forgotten, their roots firmly grounded they shoot for the light.

"All day

I am sitting in the vegetable garden

In the sun

Trying to get things straight

Trying to write

*Trying to disappear." **

Healing and hope.

Soon the nor'west will bring spring rains, we all hope, and enough to set us up for the summer dry, we do all hope. The smack of fat raindrops on the path will let loose that restoring earthy scent. The rain will wash green and gold over the garden and beyond to the foothills. The sunlight will break through rain clouds making rainbows, and filter through petals like stained glass. This is the time when this high country forgets its robust resilient ruggedness just for a moment and clothes itself in softness – to look, almost, dare I say it, pretty. A descriptor it shrugs quickly off its shoulders.

Here landscape and weather surround and bring us back to earth.

It's a reminder to ego there is a universe in both the microscopic and the majestic that greater than ourselves.

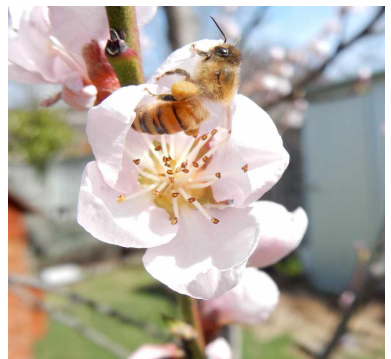
"Surrender to the sky

Your heart of anger."

James K. Baxter, 'High country weather', 1948

Ruth Grundy

(I garden a small space under a big sky in Omarama)



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