

## **Hawksbury Lagoon timeline**

**18/03/1840 (Harris)** When the settlers from the Magnet arrived at Waikouaiti they found the place they were expected to farm was a wilderness of strange plants. The swampy floor of the valley was thick with flax. They choose to build their huts at the north end of the beach on a flat piece of land at the foot of a hill that the Maori called Matainaka.

**1857 (Harris)** Johnny Jones was returning home with Bishop Harper and his son. It took 10 hours to reach Cherry Farm from Dunedin. JJ crossed the ford and headed down Beach St. This was the long straight track through the middle of the valley that linked Hawksbury to the sea, and the route by which goods were bought up after they arrived at the beach. About halfway down the road where it ran close to the lagoon, Jones paused. In the mist and the rain could just be made out Matanaka hill dominating the valley like a fortress and which still meant home. Bishop Harpur had asked Jones if he'd consider building a church at Waikouaiti. There was a slight rise in the ground beside the lagoon which would make a perfect spot for a church. At the end of Beach St Jones turned left and walked his tired horse along the sandy beach through the lagoon outlet, over the sand dunes and up the road to Matanaka.

**(p282)** By the upper reaches of the Waikouaiti Lagoon Matiaha Tiramorehu was waiting for Horomona Pohio. Before him the marshy reaches of the lagoon were dark where the tide had receded. Shy brown Matuku scuttled through the reeds and white kotuku fossicked in the mud. The two chiefs met to talk about the probable demise of their people and the need to return to their ancient knowledge and values.

### **15/03/1862 Otago Witness (extract)**

There appear to be two townships in the Hawksbury Hundreds, one belonging to the government, the other to Mr Jones, and it needs only a superficial examination to pronounce that the latter has the advantage. They are separated from each other only by the intervening lagoon. Unfortunately the government had but little choice, the neighboring land having been occupied for many years. The whole of the front of the bush land passed into private land to the serious injury of the community, but still there is an abundance of available bush for the use of the settlers. Here, as elsewhere there seems to have been a reckless sacrifice of future interest to present claims.

### **30/08/1862 Otago Witness**

The Commissioner of Police asked for information respecting a man named McClay a settler near Waikouaiti who had been missing for some time. We now learn that the body of the unfortunate man has been found in a lagoon. An inquest was to have been held last evening.

### **24/02/1866 Otago Witness**

The recently imported black swans have forsaken the lagoon at Oamaru during the last few days. It is reported that they have found their way to the neighborhood of Waikouaiti and the Oamaru Times bespeaks the attention of anyone who discovers their whereabouts, so that they may be freed from molestation, and, possibly returned to the Acclimatisation Society of that place.

### **4/05/1867 Otago Witness**

Of the swans which were sent to Waikouaiti, the Herald says: "We thought the good sense of every resident in the town, whether sportsman or otherwise, would have restrained them from using firearms on the lagoon, after the information conveyed to them through these columns, that four beautiful black swans had been set free on it; but on Monday last the repeated report of a gun was heard on the lagoon, and this is by no means an isolated case. Is it to be wondered at then that the swans should have sought shelter elsewhere? Fortunately they are still in the neighborhood, but evidently so shy and timid that nothing will tempt them to approach the lagoon in daylight. They are still observable floating majestically on the sea near the Matanaka rocks. Where it is to be feared, unless got out, they will be ultimately dashed to pieces on the rocks. We believe the birds, in the night, have been seen crossing the narrow belt of beach which separates the lagoon from the sea, and if allowed to remain unmolested they may yet become reconciled to their new quarters.

### **9/08/1867 Otago Witness**

In the event that the upper reservoir of the water works not being suitable then the lagoon at Waikouaiti would be a very suitable place for the tench (fish) from Hobart Town.

### **30/08/1867 Otago Witness**

A public meeting to improve the Waikouaiti Harbour, dredging the river, divert the entrance of the river and opening out of a channel into the lagoon. Considered impractical and expensive.

**20/02/1868 Wellington Independent**

The Otago Floods

The floods seem to have, for the present, destroyed the Waikouaiti Lagoon, and left its site as a possible cause for disease. The *Herald* says – The late flood has had the most mischievous effect on the lagoon. The sudden rise of the waters caused it to burst its bounds, and a deep channel was cut by the force of the water. Which has had the effect of pretty well exhausting it; and instead of presenting a fine sheet of water to the observer, it bears the appearance of a swamp. It is greatly to be feared that unless some steps are taken to again dam the lagoon up, the health of the inhabitants of this and the adjoining township will be imperiled from the effluvia arising from the decomposing vegetable matter now exposed. The attention of the Town Council should be called to the matter, and prompt action taken to abate the nuisance.

**19/06/1869 Otago Witness**

The Waikouaiti lagoon is stated by the local journal to have been wantonly or maliciously cut open on Sunday night, or early on Monday morning, a large quantity of its waters being emptied into the sea. As it is not many months since a sum of money was expended in damming up the mouth of the lagoon, under the supervision of the Hawksbury Town Council, it is hoped that the perpetrator of this act may be speedily apprehended, and summarily dealt with.

**12/02/1870 Otago Witness**

Two out of four black swans liberated on the Waikouaiti lagoon two years ago, have within the last few days returned to their old haunts, after an absence of several months. They are described as being tame and quiet, and it is believed that they will, if undisturbed, remain until their young can look after themselves, when they will migrate once more.

**19/03/1870 Otago Witness**

Next morning was bright and fair and a start was made immediately after breakfast. Nothing particular was noted on the way, except that among the grassy swamp near Waikouaiti several species of the native turkey (Pukeko) were seen stalking about amongst the rushes. The swamp and lagoon near the mouth of the Waikouaiti River are very extensive and would become very fertile were it possible to drain them. But they are very near the tide level. Next morning got up early and went to the top of the hill and had a general look around. Flag Swamp has evidently been a lake or lagoon at no distant period before the river or sea broke through the narrow gap in the coast range, by which the river finds its way out and the ocean occasionally finds its way in.

**27/05/1870 North Otago Times**

Mr Reid laid on the table a report from the provincial engineer, on the subject of the best means of rendering the Hawksbury lagoon useful to the inhabitants either as a lagoon or as reclaimed ground.

**28/05/1870 Otago Witness**

The inhabitants of Waikouaiti are agitating to obtain a grant of land for a race-course for that district. A petition to the Provincial Council to that effect is being numerously signed.

**5/07/1871 Otago Daily Times**

The Waikouaiti Lagoon. Mr Smith moved "That an address be presented to His Honour the Superintendent, recommending that the Waikouaiti Lagoon be set aside as a reserve for the use of the inhabitants of Hawksbury. Carried.

**09/09/1871 Otago Witness**

Several black swans have been seen on the Waikouaiti Lagoon of late.

**8/06/1872 Otago Witness**

Mr Smith moved that an Address be presented to His Honour the Superintendent, requesting that he will be pleased to place on the Supplementary Estimates the sum of £30, as a subsidiary towards a like amount raised by the inhabitants of Hawksbury, for the purpose of building a suitable embankment across the mouth of the Waikouaiti lagoon.

**31/10/1874 Otago Witness**

10 swans have been during the past few days visiting their old haunts. Annually at this season these graceful birds pay us a visit prolonging their stay according to circumstances. If unmolested they usually remain several weeks but if anything should startle them they will take wing and perhaps do not return.

**25/11/1874 Otago Daily Times**

We observe (says the Waikouaiti and Shag Valley herald) that 10 swans have been, during the past few days, visiting their old haunts, where several of them were liberated some years ago, on the Hawksbury lagoon. Annually at this season of the year, these graceful birds pay us a visit, prolonging their stay according to circumstances. If unmolested, they usually remain several weeks, but should anything startle them, they take wing and perhaps do not return.

**14/ 1/1875 Otago Daily Times**

The Board reheard the case of Mr Donald Malloch on behalf of the committee of the East Hawksbury, requesting the Board to limit the area under license applied for by the corporation West Hawksbury, it appeared, wanted to have control of the lagoon that they might dam the water to such a height as would cover certain mud banks that, if exposed, would be dangerous to the health of their neighborhood, while the Progress Committee of East Hawksbury objected to land in their district being covered with water, and to other land being rendered liable to flood. Finally, a decision on the matter was deferred, pending levels being taken.

**23/01/1875 Otago Witness**

Survey of the railway between Waikouaiti and Palmerston skirting the upper part of the lagoon.

**12/06/1875 Otago Witness**

A deputation waited upon his Honour the Superintendent to urge the vesting of two reserves. One forming a portion of the lagoon for a race-course the other for recreation purposes with the corporation. It was their object to secure both to the district at large permanently. His Honour replied that a numerous and influential deputation had requested him a few days previously, not to all the reserves referred to become vested in the council. He would consult his advisers.

**3/07/1875 Otago Witness**

Regina v Murdoch and another

Argument on a rule *nisi* to quash a conviction. Mr Mouat moved that the rule be made absolute; Mr E Cook showed cause. In this case the appellant, Daniel Murdock, had, on the information of the Town Clerk of Hawksbury been fined 5 shillings, and ordered to pay a sum of £5 for damaging property belonging to the Superintendant namely, the dam on the Hawksbury Lagoon. The accused had been convicted under the provisions of the Town and Country Police Ordinance: and it was now contended that the conviction was illegal, on the ground that the Malicious Injuries to Property Act q1867 repealed the provision of the Town and Country Police Ordinance, under which the Hawksbury Bench (the respondent) had convicted Murdoch. The conviction was quashed, and the rule made absolute, with costs.

**7/08/1875 Otago Witness**

Mr D Mallochs request that the Board should grant a company 21 years lease of the Waikouaiti Lagoon at a nominal rent with a view to draining off the water, and otherwise improving the locality was declined.

**7/09/1875 Bruce Herald**

Mr John Bright on behalf of the Hawksbury Road Board wrote asking permission to drain all the water from the Hawksbury lagoon. Permission was granted on the understanding that no objections would be raised by the inhabitants.

**11/09/1875 Otago Witness**

***The Hawksbury Lagoon again***

This is a matter which has been up times out of number before the Board. Mr John Bright, on behalf of the Hawksbury Road Board, asked permission to draw off the waters of the Hawksbury Lagoon. There are rival municipalities, and it appears one wants the Lagoon emptied in order that it may be planted in trees, and, ultimately, made fit for recreation, and the other wants to have the Lagoon as full as possible, so as to prevent the foul smells which arise whenever the bottom of the Lagoon is exposed. After some discussion, the following resolution was minuted; Board cannot interfere, but will offer no objections if the inhabitants desire the work to be done.

**13/09/1878 Otago Daily Times**

Mr D Malloch Chairman of the Hawksbury Road Board, asked that a survey of a road line, at present in use across Hawksbury Lagoon, be recorded in the maps – referred to the Chief Surveyor. The clerk of the Hawksbury Road Board forwarded a resolution to that body, asking that a road line be recorded on a certain unsurveyed portion of Hawksbury township. Referred also to the Chief Surveyor. Mr Malloch on behalf of Mr J Chisholm, asked to be allowed to purchase part of section 63 block V Hawksbury district, on similar terms to which other portions had been sold to Mr Letham and others. Application Granted.

**21/09/1878 Otago Daily Times**

The consideration of the granting of a road line across the Hawksbury Lagoon from block XIV to XXXII, was deferred as the survey of the road cannot be recorded in its present state. In reply to a request by the Road Board to be recorded across block XVII Hawksbury Township, it was decided to ask the Board to furnish the reasons for the application, and to inform them of the objections raised thereto by the Chief Surveyor.

**28/09/1878 Otago Witness**

Mr J Douglas and others requested that the road line across the Hawksbury lagoon connecting Blocks 14 and 32 be not recorded, the same being unnecessary. Other settlers petitioned that a survey of the road be not entertained. Petition to be forwarded to the local Roads Board for any remarks they may have to offer on it.

**12/10/1878 Otago Witness**

That the Land Board be requested to record a road line across the Hawksbury lagoon connecting Blocks XIV and XXXII.

**20/03/1879 Otago Witness**

Mr Thomas Allcock applied for a lease of the seabeach reserve at Waikouaiti, bounded on one side by the mouth of the Hawksbury lagoon, and on the other by the ocean. – Declined.

**12/04/1879 Otago Witness**

Application made for a lease of a portion of Crown lands in Hawksbury Township situated between Block XXIII and the lagoon. Matter referred to the Chief Surveyor with the view that the land applied for and other land adjacent to the lagoon being surveyed for the purpose of sale, also portion of lagoon to the north of Kinross St and adjoining Railway reserve.

**14/06/1879 Otago Witness**

With regard to the application by the Chairman of the Hawksbury Road Board for the laying down of a road line through the Hawksbury lagoon, the Chief Surveyor reported that one objection lay in the fact that portion of the land was under Crown grant to the Superintendent, and also that in surveying the block for a township ample provision would be made for street lines. The CHAIRMAN said the first of the objections would no doubt prove formal, and he would recommend that the Hawksbury Road Board be forwarded a copy of the Surveyors report. This course was agreed to.

**12/06/1880 Otago Witness**

A 'Pioneer' who has given his mind to the formation of a harbour at Waikouaiti estimates the total cost would be £200,000 – Breakwater £50,000 dredging lagoon to railway station 30 feet deep £50,000, Pier and quays £100,000.

**02/10/1880 Otago Witness**

The Hawksbury Domain Board decided to cut up the Hawksbury commonage into 2 and 3 acre blocks, and to submit the whole of them to public auction. The local paper says that the income of upwards of £300 is the Boards estimated revenue from this source alone. This money is intended to improve the lagoon.

**29/01/1881 Otago Witness**

Thomas Allcock applied for a 10 years lease of portion of land known as the "Esplanade," Hawksbury Lagoon. The application was declined.

**3/09/1881 Otago Witness**

The Hawksbury Domain Board have received three reports from Mr Barr with respect to draining the lagoon, the estimated expenditure for each scheme is £14,800, £1257 and £1000 odd. The scheme

embodying the expenditure of £1257 was accepted. As the Board has no funds at present the matter has been shelved for a time.

**17/09/1881 Otago Witness**

The Hawksbury Domain Board have decided to commence the work of draining the lagoon in sections at the upper portion on what is known as the Recreation reserve and on which grazing rights have been issued. The estimated cost of the proposed work is from £200 - £250 as the Board has no power to borrow money or pay interest Messieurs Reid and Malloch have offered to lend the money without interest rather than see the work delayed.

**15/10/1881 Otago Witness**

The Hawksbury Domain Board has let several tenders for the cutting of the channel through the Hawksbury Lagoon and a number of men are now at work.

**07/01/1882 Otago Witness**

Waikouaiti Road Board invites tenders for the lease for 14 years of about 1000 acres of the Waikouaiti Recreation Reserve tenders to be in by the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**2/2/1884 Otago Witness**

Waikouaiti County Council Inspectors Report

Number 7 report entered fully into the matter of levels from Hawksbury lagoon to the property of Mr Thompson – The clerk was instructed to reply to Mr Thompson that after giving his application most careful consideration, the council could not entertain his request.

**06/09/1884 Otago Witness**

Have the ditch from the lagoon in Dingwell St to Mr A Thomson's cleaned out and the bridge in Aberdeen St across the same ditch enlarged to sufficient size to carry all the water.

**18/04/1885 Otago Witness**

Kate Martin inquest drowned in the ditch draining the lagoon. She had attempted to cross the ditch on a plank of wood, lost her balance and fell in.

**10/09/1886 Otago Witness**

Church News: The Rev Mr Southam, who has removed to Lyttleton, has been replaced by the Rev Mr Parkes. Mr Southam must be only too delighted to get away from the smell of the lagoon, which he in common with a great many more in the borough was afflicted with for the last few years until the water asserted the rights of the inhabitants to fresh air against the caprice and whims of the Domain Board, not with-standing its expenditure of £1000 which has literally been thrown away.

**5/01/1887 Otago Daily Times**

The Hawksbury Domain Board have liberated 500 Brown Trout in the Hawksbury Lagoon.

**17/08/1888 Otago Witness**

Main Road at Hawksbury, the water rose to an unusual height and at the latter place all the houses on the lagoon flat where the land was low had from one to two feet of water in them.

**31/08/1888 Otago Witness**

A dozen black and white swans were seen on the lagoon.

**11/01/1889 Otago Witness**

Hawksbury Domain Board has liberated 500 Brown Trout in the Hawksbury lagoon.

**4/08/1892 Otago Witness**

*First Arbor Day*

50 school children, Mayor, Councilors and Domain Board members were present and planted on the large bank on the east side of the lagoon with all sorts of trees, evergreen, deciduous, and native a total of 500 trees.

**September 1898 Otago Witness**

The lagoon is once more full, large numbers of wild ducks.

**2/11/1898 Otago Daily Times (Advertisement)**

TENDERS will be received until noon on MONDAY November 7<sup>th</sup>, for PROTECTIVE WORKS at the mouth of the Waikouaiti Lagoon. Plans may be seen at the office of Mr Robert Hay, engineer, High Street. The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

**17/11/1900 Otago Daily Times (Advertisement)**

Tenders wanted for cutting drains and forming embankments on the Hawksbury lagoon. Specifications to be seen at the clerks office. Tenders to be sent in by 7pm on Monday December 3<sup>rd</sup>

Dated: Waikouaiti November 17 E Davis clerk

**20/05/1901 Otago Witness**

Lagoon contract. I am sorry to see that the works on the lagoon have come to a sudden stop for a time. After having tried for some days to let out the water without any appreciable effect and finding the rough seas too hard to battle with, the contractor has suspended operations for a time until more a reasonable opportunity occurs to dry the lagoon. It is much to be regretted that the contractor has had a series of unfortunate events which have combined to delay matters and make his job a very lengthy one, he having started work on the Domain last December. It only remains now for a good flood to come so as to scour out a channel to the sea and thereby facilitate draining.

**29/05/1901 Otago Witness**

Lagoon – A gang of men were employed to open out the mouth of the lagoon last week, but the water is running out very slowly. The grass in the upper portion will suffer for a long while, owing to the salt water lying for such a time over nearly the whole of the reclaimed portion. The tides have been very high in the bay, and the sea has not rushed over into the lagoon in such force for many years past.

**29/05/1901 Otago Witness**

The Domain Board not having been successful in opening out the lagoon by day labour are now calling for tenders to let out the water, the tenderer having to work on the “no cure, no pay” principle. Meanwhile the contract works on the lagoon are at a standstill.

**5/06/1901 Otago Witness**

No tenders for letting out the water were received at the meeting of the Domain Board on Monday. Since March the Board has expended about £20 in trying to let out the water from the lagoon in order that the contract works in progress might be finished, but to little avail, the lower portion still being covered.

**15/08/1901 Otago Witness**

The Domain Board and Racing Club are jointly organizing a working bee for next Wednesday to drain off the water from the lagoon, so as to enable contract work to be resumed, in order that the lagoon may be put into a decent state before the summer season.

**29/08/1901 Otago Witness**

Members of the Racing Club and others interested, to the number of 25 worked away in the sand at the lagoon mouth on the 21<sup>st</sup> trying to dig a channel deep enough to carry off flood water. Some good work was done, the amateur navies giving a good account of themselves, but it was necessary to keep a gang of five or six men working for several days afterwards in order to deepen the channel. Even now it is questionable if the water will be entirely run off, as the scour is not strong enough to cut a deep passage through the long stretch of hard sand.

The Board seems determined to succeed this time in letting out the lagoon water, men being still employed to keep the water running at the mouth. The upper portion is now dry, and the lower part will soon be dry enough to get the contract work gone on with and finished.

**28/11/1901 Otago Witness**

The contractors are busy on the lower portion of the lagoon finishing their contract which has been in abeyance for the last six months owing to the wet state of the ground. A few more days of the present dry windy weather will see work completed.

**20/12/1901 Otago Witness**

Heavy thunderstorms and a downpour of rain and hail have been quite exceptional. No great damage was done, however as the water forced its way out to sea through the sand at the mouth of the lagoon. Fortunately the contractors had just finished the work they have had in hand for so long.

**21/03/1902 Otago Witness**

The creek running into the lagoon carried an immense volume of water, which overflowed the flats, washing away a good number of stooks of oats and wheat which had been standing for some days waiting for fine weather before being stacked.

**16/04/1902 Otago Witness**

The Hawksbury lagoon has had a good scour out during the last flood and the channels which were silted up and overgrown with weeds are now cleaned out with the force of the water which rushed down them. The Board was about to have them cleaned out by manual labour but the flood has saved that expense. A new footbridge is to be erected at the mouth of the lagoon a work that is much needed now that the channel at the sea end is so deep.

**23/04/1902 Otago Witness**

Heron – A white heron has made its appearance during the last week on the Waikouaiti lagoon. It is pure white in colour, with the usual yellow bill, and stands about 5 feet high. It seems to be very tame, as though it had formerly been in some place of confinement. It is to be hoped that no one will molest it, as these birds are absolutely protected, and a heavy penalty would be inflicted on anyone interfering with it.

**25/08/1902 Otago Witness**

Beautifying the township. Marram grass from Dr King is being planted on the sand hills and a large quantity of Willow cuttings have been put along the lagoon banks and other parts of the domain.

**8/12/1902 Otago Witness**

Application from the Racing Club and Caledonian Society for permission to hold their meetings on the Domain and to charge admission to the ground. Requests granted.

**21/01/1903 Otago Witness**

Excerpt Hawksbury Domain Board meeting

Following out the scheme drawn up by the inspector, the late Mr John Lawson, and since his death by Mr T. Smith, the board have completed the raising of the embankments along the canal and part of the lagoon. Three new bridges have been built across the canal, and the others repaired; a walk has been made through the plantation below Rothesay St, and that part made into a resort for visitors. The drains leading to the windmill have been attended to, and the pump improved and made more fitted to serve its purpose in draining the upper portion and throwing the surface water into the lagoon. The lagoon itself has been kept full of water; but if it is to be successful as a boating lake it will require to be deepened, or a greater volume of water kept in it than at present. Many hundreds of willow cuttings were planted around the lagoon and along the canal. Most are growing, and the others will need renewing later on. A quantity of Marram grass was planted on the sandhills, so as to keep the drift of sand from filling up the canal sea wards. As will be seen by the balance sheet, the various works undertaken have caused the board to end the year with a liability of some £60, and until this is liquidated the chairman has given a guarantee to the bank for the overdraft.

**24/06/1903 Otago Witness**

June 22<sup>nd</sup>. In Wednesday's Times Professor Hutton notices the absence of the stilt plovers from the lower Canterbury Plains from June till the end of August. It is the same here, for whereas at other times there are hundreds to be seen on the Hawksbury Lagoon there is not one about now, and it would be interesting to know where they go to at this period of the year. It may be mentioned that there are still plenty of wild ducks and swans continually on the Lagoon.

**13/12/1905 Otago Witness**

T. McKenzie said he hoped next session to reaffirm the principle of preservation in the House. The preservation accorded the Paradise Duck had resulted in the rare and pleasing sight the other day of a flock of those birds on the Waikouaiti lagoon. Mr Chisholm said he would bring this matter before the Acclimatisation Society also. It was decided to pass a resolution to the effect that in the leagues opinion the pigeon, the kaka and the Paradise duck should be among the birds permanently protected.

**16/05/1906 Otago Witness**

The Waikouaiti lagoon is a great attraction now to visitors and to passersby in the trains, who are pleased to see the great number of ducks and swans frequenting the lake. At times the surface of the

lake is black with native game and they seem to be quite at home, and to know they are quite safe from molestation there.