

A HISTORY  
of  
CORINNA  
& the  
PIEMAN RIVER  
TASMANIA.  
1870-1950

Peter MacFie

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## CORINNA & THE PIEMAN RIVER

### Phases

European access to the Pieman-Corinna area falls into a number of distinct phases.

1. Aboriginal contact and the convict era.
2. Exploration, surveying and prospecting.
3. Tin mining from the Pieman
4. Pining on the Pieman
5. The Pieman Heads and Corinna – Gold around the Pieman River
6. On the Donaldson - The Alluvial Diggings
7. The village of Corinna -Stage One 1878-1885
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9. Corinna booms again - The Wild Town of the West
10. The mining companies - Optimism & Failure
11. Corinna: The Abandoned Village
12. Whyte River Gold - The Last 'Boom.'
13. Drovers and Ferrymen: Pieman Heads.
14. The west coast cattle trail

Interview With Jack Cowan, Butcher & Drover (Peter MacFie 1992.)

15. Hunters & tourists: the rebirth of Corinna

### Introduction

Settlements on the Pieman River after 1870 were the first post-convict occupation of the West Coast of Tasmania. Pieman Heads was the new point of entry where stores, hotels, and homes were first established to serve the mining and pinning industries. The first births in this second phase happened here, and the first formal marriages occurred there also. As a cattle transit centre for stock travelling south along the coast to Zeehan, the Pieman Heads functioned until at least the 1940's.

Corinna was the first formed village on the West Coast in the second period and superseded the Pieman Heads as the main service centre on the West. Until the dominance of Strahan post-1891, Corinna was the major centre of the new West Coast municipality of Macquarie. The village provided (i) a crossing point on the Waratah to Zeehan track, and (ii) a re-supply depot for miners working in the tributaries to the west of the Pieman.

Unlike contemporary mines of the north-eastern Tasmania where Chinese miners worked on the same fields as Europeans, the alluvial gold-fields near Corinna were the scene of racial

confrontation between white miners and intending Chinese workers. The Pieman was a racial barrier for Chinese who were intimidated into not entering the West Coast which was thereafter for the "white man", and the scene of strong unionism.

From contemporary descriptions, Corinna was the nearest Tasmania had to a lawless community without apparent traditional controls of either the church or police.

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## Chapter 1

### Beginnings – Aboriginal to First European Contact - Corinna & the Pieman River

#### **Aboriginal Contact and the Convict era**

This period falls outside the scope of this study; however, references to aboriginal contact are contained in the journal of G. A. Robinson, edited by Plomley. The convict era is referred to in several publications which document the escape from Sarah Island of prisoners. These include Hamish Maxwell-Stewart's *Closing Hells Gates*.

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## Chapter 2

### Exploration & Surveying and Prospecting.

Burgess in 1864 was the first party to explore the area, followed by Sprent in 1875-6. Neither reached the lower reaches of the Pieman River. As well as the "formal" search for gold, prospectors were already in the Pieman by 1870, as the Launceston Examiner reported:

....gold has been discovered at the Pieman. One party has already gone down and another of four starts on a change of wind...<sup>1</sup>

Another old prospector, Frank Long, recalled in later years the Slater brothers and Weber "sailed from Macquarie Harbour in a small craft of 5 tons, the *Alma*, for the Pieman River" which they entered and found encouraging prospects in the tributaries of the Neal (sic) River ' (Neal River unknown).<sup>2</sup>

### Richard Quinn, Prospector and Explorer Remembers.

The early days of mining exploration on the West Coast were recalled by Richard Quinn, and reported in the 1928 *Mercury*. He was the son of Irish convict, John Quinn, who was transported on the *Hyderabad 3* from Queenstown, Ireland on 13/9/1850, arriving in Hobart Town on the 13/12 the same year. John was a 20 year old labourer from Dublin City, tried on the 30 October 1848 for 'Stealing 9 shillings from the person, at Dublin; and once for stealing a pair of clogs, 18 months imprisonment.' He married Catherine Nelson, a 21 year old servant girl and Richard was their first child.<sup>3</sup>

Stimulated by the tin mining potential of Mt Bischoff discovered by Philosopher Smith, survey parties from both ends of the island began preliminary excursions to the mountainous country in between Waratah and Macquarie Harbour.

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<sup>1</sup> Binks, *Pioneers*, P10

<sup>2</sup> "By a Pioneer, A Sketch of West Coast History." *The Banner*, Strahan, May 5, 12, 19, 26, 1900, Lennox files)

<sup>3</sup> MacFie, Peter: *Quinn Family History*, private publication, 2013.

## Richard Quinn, West Coast Pioneer Remembers The Pieman<sup>4</sup>

### Mr. Richard Quinn Tin Discoveries at The Pieman

#### Richard Quinn's Memoirs

The discovery of the world-famous Bischoff tin mine by "Philosopher" Smith in December, 1871 attracted the attention not only of all residents of Tasmania, but of people in all parts of the world, to the possibilities of further important mineral discoveries on the wild and, up till then, practically unknown and untrodden forests of the West Coast, and it was not long afterwards that prospecting associations were formed in the North, North-West, and South, to send parties out to search the country for minerals. In 1870 the Government commissioned the late Mr. C. P. Sprent, afterwards Surveyor-General, to make a survey of part of the country. The party with Mr. Sprent reported the discovery of tin, and soon afterwards the late Messrs. Owen and George Meredith, representing the Emu Bay and Pieman River Prospecting Association, left Emu Bay (Burnie) in the schooner *Secret*, landed in Macquarie Harbour, and journeyed overland to the Pieman. Messrs. T. B. Moore, J. A. Moore, and James Andrew formed a second party, financed by New Norfolk residents, and a third party, known as the Great Western Prospecting Association, was formed at Hobart.

The sole surviving member of the parties mentioned is Mr. Richard Quinn, now resident at West Kentish, near Sheffield, who yesterday celebrated the 75th anniversary of his birth. Mr. Quinn is visiting Hobart, and in the course of a conversation with a representative of "The Mercury" related some very interesting reminiscences of the early days, when men took their lives in their hands in an endeavour to wrest from Nature some of her secrets. The success which followed their efforts has been of paramount importance to the State, as in the years that have since passed the value of the production of minerals has exceeded £50,000,000.

There were seven members of the original party which set out in the schooner *Harriet* - famous as a trader between Hobart and Port Arthur in convict days in October of 1876, on the first trip to the West Coast. Owing, however, to the fact that they encountered bad weather just when they were ready to cross Macquarie Harbour bar, the party was forced to return to Hobart. It was some time later before they again were able to arrange for transport to the Pieman River, but eventually Captain Henry Lloyd, father of Captain Arthur Lloyd, well-known to old West Coasters, and who himself was drowned when the steamer *Orion* foundered in Bass Strait some years ago, contracted to land them at the Pieman. They arrived in due course, after an uneventful trip, and found they had been forestalled by about a week by the Meredith Brothers.

The party was landed from the schooner - the *Coral* - and went by whaleboat to the first rapid, just above Corinna, where they landed their stores, and built a camp. They then took the whaleboat some miles up the river to Sprent's Crossing, a journey which entailed a great amount of labour, as several rapids had to be negotiated. That was done successfully, however, and a couple of days were spent in prospecting. Heavy rain came on, and forced the party out, the return journey to the camp being a hair-raising experience down the flooded river, and it was necessary, when the camp was reached, to run the boat into the timber on the banks to stop it. The party was under the leadership of Charles Donnelly, but the only other member who had experience of tin mining was Mr. Quinn, who some time previously had been associated with Donnelly on the North-East Coast, where they had opened up the Atlas mine, on the Cascade River. The other members of the second party were Edward Farrell, George Evans, and Thomas Hutchinson. Further prospecting revealed some promising tin deposits, and on

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<sup>4</sup> Mercury 23/7/1928, p. 5.

May 24, 1877, the party set out on return to Hobart by way of Waratah and Emu Bay. Food was then running short, and when they left the Pieman they had five days' rations. The going was bad, so much so in fact that it was nine days later before they reached Waratah, and they were all glad to see the first signs of civilisation at what was then the southernmost settlement on the coast. A couple of days were spent at Waratah recuperating from the effects of the hardships and privations, and the journey to Emu Bay was resumed. In those days the Emu Bay railway line was only just under construction, and they had to walk to Hampshire, about 20 miles from Burnie, where they picked up the tramline, and were given a lift for the remainder of the way.

### **Maquarie Harbour Tragedy.**

Another journey was made in the following year for the West Coast Prospecting Association, the object being to work the tin deposits found on the second trip. Thirteen men comprised the party, under Donnelly and Mr. Quinn. This time they landed at Strahan and made the trip to the Pieman overland. The mining venture proving unsuccessful, so they returned to Strahan for the purpose of waiting for a boat to take them back to Hobart, and it was while they were camped at what is known as Smith's Cove that tragedy overtook them. They had been in camp for some time when they saw a vessel going up the harbour from the Heads in the direction of the Gordon River. The boat was going there for a load of Huon pine, and it was decided that some members of the prospecting party should row to the Gordon and ask the captain if they could get passages to Hobart. Five men went, Arthur Lloyd, Richard Richardson, McAuliffe, O'Donnell, and Ashmore. They sailed down the harbour, and when opposite Settlement Island the boat filled and the men were thrown into the water. O'Donnell disappeared almost immediately, and Ashmore and Richardson also lost hold of the boat and sank. The accident occurred about 1 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, and Mr. Quinn said that Lloyd and McAuliffe hung on until nearing midnight, when McAuliffe, who had been growing weaker as time went on, also let go and was drowned. Lloyd was then alone in the middle of the harbour clinging desperately to the gunwale of the boat, which was just awash. All through the night and the next morning he clung to the boat, which during the following afternoon drifted ashore at Kelly Basin. Exhausted and without food, Lloyd's position was pitiable, but he set out to walk to Strahan, and was practically dead beat when he was discovered near Regatta Point on the Thursday. Some time afterwards the party was picked up in the schooner *Starling*, and brought to Hobart.

### **The Last of Mining.**

Mr. Quinn then decided to leave mining alone, and in 1883 joined the police force, in which his father had also served. He was stationed at New Town for a while, and then went to Trial Harbour, which was the point of disembarkation for the newly-discovered Zeehan silver lead field. From there he went to Strahan and afterwards served on the North and North-East. He retired from the Force in July, 1914 and was the recipient of the Imperial Service Medal for his long and honourable service.

Mr. Quinn also mentioned the fact that he had at one time - 64 years ago - been in the employ of "*The Mercury*," and told how he had had the New Town "run" as a paper boy delivering "*The Mercury*" to readers in the New Town, Moonah, and Cornelian Bay districts. He still maintains splendid health, and is surprisingly active. Mrs. Quinn is accompanying

him on his visit to Hobart. His two sons both hold positions as council clerks - Mr. A. R. Quinn at Ulverstone and Mr. Albert R. Quinn at Penguin.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Quinn's great grandson, the late Angus Downie, journalist and paraplegic advocate, was my best friend from Hobart High School days. His mother, Maisie Downie, neé Quinn, was the daughter of A. R. Quinn, Ulverstone Town Clerk, son of Richard Quinn. Maisie graduated from the University of Tasmania in 1941, and married Rev Canon Frank Downie in 1942. They had three sons, with Angus born 1943 the eldest. (Peter MacFie 2015)



## Chapter 3.

### Tin Mining from the Pieman

The main feature of the first rush was the concentration on areas south of the Pieman in the vicinity of Mt Heemskirk. As a result, the base of exploration parties was the Pieman Heads, while mining further inland on the Pieman River were a result of the later gold rushes. Sprent's survey sparked interest of two initial prospecting parties. Owing to the interest aroused by "Philosopher" Smith's discoveries of the Mt Bischoff tin fields in 1871, speculators were hoping for more of the same.

Using members of early exploration parties as part of their syndicates, from the 1870s a number of tin mining companies were established to explore the area. These included the Hobart -based Great Western Co. , the Burnie -based Emu Bay and Pieman River Prospecting Co., the latter working the Mt Heemskirk find., and the Corinna Co. from New Norfolk.

In 1876 the Meredith brothers Owen and George, trekked overland from Burnie and Waratah on behalf of the Emu Bay and Pieman River Prospecting Company. Meanwhile a second team led by Charles Donnelly was leaving Hobart on behalf of the Great Western Prospecting Association. They were followed by a third syndicate from the Derwent Valley, later called the Corinna Company. Led by the intrepid T. B. Moore, the party walked overland from Lake St Clair, prospecting along the way. Included in his party were Jack (John) Foster, Gamaliel Webster, Harry Middleton and Mark Ireland who had formed the Corinna Co.

Delayed by bad weather, the Meredith's did not arrive until January 1876. Using a flat-bottomed punt, the *Black Maria*, they worked their way up the Pieman and established a hut where the Owen Meredith River joins the main river. They then attempted to follow Sprent's track toward Mt Heemskirk, prospecting in the Heemskirk River. An apparently rich lode of tin was found on the side of the mountain where a claim was pegged. The next summer a party of 12 men returned to work the claim, building a hut on the site.<sup>6</sup> This hut became a staging post for miners en-route from the Pieman to South Heemskirk.

Donnelly's party arrived in late 1876. Using a whale- boat and punt, they established a camp up-river from the Meredith hut at Donnelly's Crossing. Here they constructed a bark-roofed log-cabin.

In the new year, the Meredith's returned plus a number of others.

In 1878, Reid from the New Norfolk syndicate left Woolnorth (near Port Sorell), with another to walk to the Pieman with two pack-horses. James Powell, leader of the Tamar Prospecting Company also headed for the Pieman.<sup>7</sup> A small fleet of craft sailed to the Pieman from various Tasmanian ports, chiefly those on the north west coast, particularly Latrobe and Launceston. These craft included the *Pauline*, *Foam*, *SS Pioneer*, *Welcome Home*, *SS Amy* and the 30 ton ketch *Dagmar*.

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<sup>6</sup> Binks, P.12.

<sup>7</sup> Tasmanian Mail 20/5/78, P16.

By the second season of 1877-8 the (tin) rush was on. The three initial syndicates were followed by at least a dozen others.<sup>8</sup> Most concentrated on the Mt Heemskirk-Tasman River area. In April 1879, Middleton prospected for tin further inland and discovered gold in the creek which bears his name, and the first gold-rush to the west of the Pieman River began.

### **Pieman River Heads: Structures**

Until the discovery of Trial Harbour to the south, access for supplies going to the Mt Heemskirk fields was through a series of stores established by the various companies at the Pieman Heads. The demand for supplies induced Matthews and Allright to build a hotel at the Heads. They were followed by Middleton and William Sutton.

#### **Stores:**

According to Julen, 'Two stores in the vicinity of the diggings were a great boon to the miners and prospectors, but unfortunately the stores could not always deliver the goods.'<sup>9</sup> Matthews and Allwright established a store at the mouth of the Pieman as tin-mining companies had erected buildings there to store goods landed by sailing ships and small steamers.

The stores included

- i) T. B. Moore's "framed hut from Launceston (was) the chief of their stores."<sup>10</sup>
- ii) "G. Meredith's stores are also in a hut."<sup>11</sup>

### **Huts on the Pieman -Heemskirk Fields**

- The Meredith and Donnelly parties appear to have built temporary bark huts on the Meredith's track to Donnelly's camp, "about half-way through is Donnelly's old camp - a log hut."<sup>12</sup>
- Meredith's Hut.(1876) At the junction with the Owen Meredith River.
- Donnelly's Crossing/ Donnelly's Landing. Hut. (Jan 1877) Log cabin with bark roof.<sup>13</sup> "A fine log hut"<sup>14</sup> a couple of miles upstream from the Meredith's. Lefroy's 1882 survey identifies the point as "Donnelly's Depot".<sup>15</sup>
- Donnelly's Huts. This party built a series of temporary huts as supply depots along the Pieman and the track to Heemskirk.<sup>16</sup> One appears to have been below their Landing (ie below the rapids).

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<sup>8</sup> Binks, P17

<sup>9</sup> Julen P.3.

<sup>10</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 16/3/78 , P.10 TSA.

<sup>11</sup> op cit.

<sup>12</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 16/3/78/TSA.

<sup>13</sup> Binks P13

<sup>14</sup> *Tasmanian Mail*, 16/3/1878 P10, TSA.

<sup>15</sup> Field Book 16, old series, DEP

<sup>16</sup> See Ireland, Pp 11-15.

- Bells/Webb's Hut. In mid 1878 Ireland reported "a new building erected along side ours, not a bark shanty but composed of weather-boards and palings.....the new house... was brought in sections to bolt together. It was the best equipped party that had come to the coast up to that date...."<sup>17</sup> The new party failed to find tin on the north of the Pieman.
- McCaveside's (or McCavestons) Camp. "The track from Mt Bischoff, 39 miles long, ended at McCaveside's Camp far up Middleton's Creek which consisted of four log huts."<sup>18</sup> These were "on a rise at the junction of two creeks."<sup>19</sup>
- Donaldson's Landing: Later Matthew and Allright erected a small store about twelve miles up the Pieman at Donaldson's Landing Hotel: Bill Sutton, owner of the accommodation house at the Heads, built another at Donaldson's Landing, which was immediately sold to Job Savage and was known as '*Donaldson's Inn*'.<sup>20</sup> Savage hired the *SS North Star* to bring in provisions. The "township was a "mile from the landing place".

At this stage (1880) the population of the goldfields was about 50.

### Huts on Mt Heemskirk

Mark Ireland one of Donnelly's party recalled:

Donnelly had built three huts, at the site of the Great Western Tin Mining Company. The huts were inter-connected by a primitive "telephone" system;"...at this-out-of-the way miner's camp they had telephones from hut to hut, composed of jam tins and wire and the men used to speak through them.<sup>21</sup>

A number of writers refer to a hut built by the government at both the 13 and 18 mile posts on the Waratah-Corinna track.

### A Cemetery at the Heads?

In early 1879, Sutton's Hotel at the Pieman Heads was the scene of the first recorded death of the period. Here in March 1879, Pat Ryan a miner on the Mt Heemskirk field, was carried by other prospectors to the hotel with a gangrenous knee, where he died, aged 45.<sup>22</sup>

Later that year, Henry C. Christian, a constable at the Pieman Heads was 'accidentally drowned' in the course of his duty on the 25 November, 1879.<sup>23</sup> Aged 26, he had arrived in

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<sup>17</sup> Ireland , P16

<sup>18</sup> *ibid* P.3

<sup>19</sup> *Mercury* 14/4/1880

<sup>20</sup> Ireland, *ibid* P.3

<sup>21</sup> Ireland, P12.

<sup>22</sup> RGD 35/37. 13/3/1879.

<sup>23</sup> RGD 36/37 No 336 1879-80 TSA.

Tasmania as a crew-man on the *Waterwitch*...<sup>24</sup> Born on Pitcairn Island, he was the great grandson of Fletcher Christian<sup>25</sup>

There was no exact indication of where they were buried, which was presumably at the Heads. A retired prospector recollected that Christian:

... was drowned at the Pieman Heads whilst attempting to cross the bar in an open boat, and his remains now lie at the Heads within a few yards of where he lost his life.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> MB 2/33/1899 TSA

<sup>25</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 13/12/1879 P 11. TSA

<sup>26</sup> *The Banner*, Strahan, May 5-26 1900, Lennnox files, PWH

## Chapter 4

### Pining & Mining on the Pieman

The Gordon River piners are well documented, cutting and falling the rare Huon pine and rafting the logs down to Macquarie Harbour. Less well known is the pine-getting on the Pieman River. Gathering Huon pine and tin ore were carried out concurrently by the bushmen of the area.

The little-recorded activities specifically of piners appear in the return voyages of the ships bringing miners and supplies into the Pieman. The first mining lease registered on the West Coast, staked by the Meredith brothers in February 1876, was carried out of the Pieman by the ketch *Coral* which was loading pine, having just landed the Meredith's opposition, the party led by Charles Donnelly.<sup>27</sup> In 1877, the *Pauline* and the *Foam* were "loading logs."<sup>28</sup> In December 1878, the *Dagmar* arrived at Launceston with pine from the Pieman. In April, 1880 the *North Star* was moored alongside the Pieman near Donaldson's Landing loading 8,000 feet of Huon pine for the Mersey.<sup>29</sup> In August 1880, the *SS Amy* returned 'from the Pieman with a cargo of pine and 10 and a half tons of tin ore.'<sup>30</sup>

The Field Book notes of Lefroy, who surveyed the Pieman from January to March 1882, record a "Piner's Camp" on the upper reaches of the river. The note-book also records stands of pine, "pinkwood", myrtle and other species along the river bank.

The seasonal nature of pining was integrated with mining. Store-keeper Scott in 1881 recorded that "Pine-getting has been suspended until the summer and the men have proceeded to Heemskirk."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Binks, P12)

<sup>28</sup> Tasmanian Mail, 16/3/1877 P10.

<sup>29</sup> *Mercury* 14/4/1880

<sup>30</sup> TM 15/9/1880 P2

<sup>31</sup> PWD 6/5/1881 TSA.

## Chapter 5

### Mining on the Pieman River & the Establishment of Corinna

#### The Rush From Latrobe

##### **The Pieman Heads**

The main feature of this rush was the gradual removal of the service-centre focus from the Pieman Heads to Corinna, prompted by the discovery of alluvial gold in the tributaries of the Pieman River. While the Pieman Heads was the first base for early miners, crossings could only be made in summer. A new base was needed to serve the inland goldfields, and a narrow place to cross the river at all times. The Heads continued to operate, and supply the Heemskirk fields; later the silver lead mines of Zeehan were served from Trial Harbour, but the Heads continued to function as a transit point. Here, until at least the 1940's, cattle heading south to the butchers at Zeehan were swum across the Pieman.

Newspaper reports and other records, including marriage certificates, reveal that the Pieman Heads continued to operate as the main base for the Pieman even after the opening of Corinna in 1881-82.

##### **Latrobe The Commercial Base.**

Upstream on the Mersey River, the town of Latrobe predated the villages of Torquay and Formby, (later combined to form Devonport) at the mouth of the river. Latrobe continued to act as the supply base for commerce, including banking facilities for the west coast and the delivery of Huon Pine. Locals from Latrobe included Job Savage who owned the Pieman Heads and Corinna hotels, as were two investors, Lobley and Atkinson. They were part of a 12 man syndicate which backed the prospectors, and were led by George Atkinson, all from Latrobe. Whenever Savage returned to the town, his gold was purchased by Atkinson - for example in 1888 when 20 oz were bought by him.<sup>32</sup> George Atkinson was later a politician, and the father-in-law of Welsh Chartist political prisoner and mine manager, Zephaniah Williams, having married his daughter, Rhonda Williams. The couple lived in a two storeyed brick home, Frogmore, near Latrobe

When the first news of gold discoveries on the Pieman River was received, the inhabitants of Latrobe were quick to respond. In April 1879, the *SS Sarah* had been chartered to go to the Pieman and "left Latrobe Creek... with full freight and passengers. Mr H. Middleton, discoverer of gold had a prospector's claim." Another section reported "Gold on the Pieman." and referred to the success of "prospectors sent out from Latrobe by Lobley and Atkinson (who) have discovered gold at the diggings. "<sup>33</sup> Lobleys exaggerated claims the gold extended over 10 miles) led to a rush of hopefuls heading for the Pieman.<sup>34</sup>

Another Latrobe identity, Mark Cullen, a foundation member of the Latrobe Brass Band, was operator of one of the stores near Middleton Creek. Cullen and the mail man were accused of spreading rumours concerning gold finds to profit Cullen store near Donaldson's

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<sup>32</sup> see *Devon Herald* 7/7/1880.

<sup>33</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 12/4/1879 P 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 17/5/1879 P. 13.

Landing. Miners threatening to hang him and he hid in a digger's tent until "arrested" by a Latrobe constable and marched out under protection in company with 20 miners. Another 16 gone round by the beach.<sup>35</sup>

Launceston was the main northern centre; in May 1879, Lobley of Latrobe was in Launceston buying up provisions which were sailing on the *SS Rosedale*.<sup>36</sup>

Extracts from the *Devon Herald*

14/5/79 GOOD NEWS FROM THE PIEMAN

Mr Maclean arrived at Latrobe from the Pieman on Monday and brings very stirring news from the goldfield (&) brings with him 17 oz of fine rich-looking gold, which he purchased from several parties on the ground.

10/4/1880/ PIEMAN PINE

The cutter North Star is now dis-charging at the wharf a cargo of pine from the Pieman River to be disposed of in Latrobe. We understand Mr Job Savage has made the venture and we wish him every success.

As well as the ships referred to earlier, the *SS Rosedale*, *SS Amy*, *SS Sarah* and *SS Devon* were added to those regularly servicing the Pieman.

Although Job Savage had opened a store and hotel at Donaldson's Landing, the Pieman Heads continued to operate as headquarters.

An indication of the activity at the Pieman Heads can be gauged from the advertisement for a "wake" following the death of Constable Christian.

(I)P3 PIEMAN RIVER from correspondent.

The Pieman diggings are looking a little better, owing to the last rain. Here are about 50 men on the ground and doing very well; like all other diggings, some arriving and some leaving. We are having a concert here for the purpose of getting money to erect a tombstone for the deceased Mr Christian; we think the government might have done that themselves considering he lost his life in the execution of his duty. I forward you the program for insertion in your paper.<sup>37</sup>

The program was advertised:

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<sup>35</sup> Tasmanian Mail, 21/6/P17 Col 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Devon Her* 24/5/79/

<sup>37</sup> P.3 advert.

## GRAND ENTERTAINMENT

TO TAKE PLACE at the

ASSEMBLY ROOM,

CORINNA HOTEL,

PIEMAN HEADS.

ON THE EVENING OF THE

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY, May 24 1880.

THE PIEMAN AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLUB will give one of those sparkling entertainments for which if not already renowned, we hope they soon will subject to convulsions or hearty laughter are requested not to attend.

Children in arms 5 guineas; females will commence at 8 o'clock. Admission one shilling.

The police will be in attendance. Boats, punts, dug-outs, wheel-barrows and stretchers can be ordered for 11 thirty.

N. B. Mr G. Webster's coach and horses will be in attendance. A liberal supply of soda water and red herrings have been ordered for the following day.

JOB SAVAGE

Secretary Corps Dramatique<sup>38</sup>

### **Other Structures at the Pieman Heads**

**Post and Telegraph Office.** In December 1878 the first mail delivery was carried out by a Mr Byrne, while a Post Office was located at the Pieman Heads until the establishment of Corinna in 1880.<sup>39</sup> The Post-master at the Heads was Thomas Allright.<sup>40</sup> This presumably operated from his hotel. From 1890 to 1903 the post office was run by Mrs Devlyn.<sup>41</sup>

**Electric Telegraph Office.** In 1877 the telegraph had been connected to Mt Bischoff (Waratah) from Emu Bay. (Burnie).<sup>42</sup> With the opening of the government store at Corinna in

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<sup>38</sup> *Devon Herald* 21/4/1880.

<sup>39</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 28/12/1878 P.124.

<sup>40</sup> NS 687, TSA.

<sup>41</sup> Walch's Almanacs 1881-1903, Tasmaniana Library.

<sup>42</sup> Gov Gazette 1877.



1881, a telegraph line was connected to Corinna from Waratah the same year. The line continued to Heemskirk and Macquarie Harbour at a cost of £2000.<sup>43</sup>

**Private Homes;** At least two homes existed at the Heads. These were:

*Abel/Foster's Home.* In 1880 John Foster and Amelia Abel arrived at the Pieman Heads with 7 children, others were born here also. Amelia was the first white woman to arrive on the west coast in the post-convict era, and her children the first born there. The home appears to have been registered in the mothers name, as in 1883, Gamaliel Webster (aged 29) married Lydia Jane Ratcliffe (aged 21) 'in the house of Mrs Abell, Pieman Heads, Coorinna(sic).'<sup>44</sup> She was the daughter of a 'hotel keeper'.

*Webster's Home.* In 1883, Amelia Foster's eldest daughter married Gamaliel Webster at 'Royenrine', the first name for Corinna. Their home at the Heads was the scene for another marriage, (that of her sister Amy Foster to Thomas Davis). This wedding was celebrated at the Gamaliel Webster's "dwelling house" at the Pieman Heads in December 1883.<sup>45</sup> Later that year Webster must have moved to Corinna as their next three children were born there.

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<sup>43</sup> Government Gazette 1881.

<sup>44</sup> RGD Emu Bay 17/1/1883. No 144 TSA

<sup>45</sup> Sims, p. 166.

## Chapter 6

### 'On the Donaldson' – The Alluvial Diggings

With the Heemskirk fields serviced by the new settlement at Trial Harbour, attention moved from south of the Pieman River to new gold discoveries on its western and north-western tributaries. Initially a new service centre was established at Donaldson's Landing, but the distance from the new finds resulted in the relocation further upstream of a new centre at Corinna in 1881. Here there was good water access for shipping and a link point on the track from Waratah to Heemskirk (and later Zeehan.) as well as serving the miners working in the remote hinterland.

#### The New Fields

The new fields attracted a swarm of diggers who just as quickly moved out as the scarcity of gold became known. In the tributaries of the Savage River there were "nearly 200 miners employed and large number of log huts or 'humpys' were erected by them on the rising ground near. At present (ie 1880) there are but a few of the huts remaining, the greater number having been destroyed by bushfires."<sup>46</sup>

**1. Brown's Plains.** Gold was found in 1877 by Jack Browne and his Chinese off-sider, George Ah Choo, on the button-grass plains that bears his name - Brown's Plains.- on the route from Waratah. Here a "considerable amount of gold was obtained."<sup>47</sup> However, they wisely kept their find quiet. A hard-working and hospitable host, the Chinaman welcomed all, and "no traveller passed his camp without receiving full and plenty of everything his larder contained..."<sup>48</sup> Later, the Chinaman died a lonely death in "his lonely humpy" at Brown's Plains, rejected by the racist anger of the white miners at Middleton Creek who turned him away. Another contemporary report elaborated:

Strange to state there are no Chinamen at work on these diggings. One of the Celestials brought a party of his countrymen down soon after the first rush set in, but the diggers began to talk of lynching; and in fact on one occasion they had a rope attached to the neck of the leader of the party, intending to hang him from the nearest tree. Fortunately this extreme course was prevented by the majority, and John and his party were permitted to go scott-free, but ever after gave a wide berth to the diggings.<sup>49</sup>

An invalid, he was visited in his hut by William Burns the mailman, until he died from the effects of prolonged exposure. He as buried near his hut with "no monument to mark his place of sepulchre."<sup>50</sup>

The only recorded death of a Chinaman in the vicinity at that time is that of George Ah Choo, "a gold digger", aged 40, who died at Brown's Plains on 12 August 1879 from "Violent cold and weakness."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Mercury* 14/4/1880.

<sup>47</sup> Witham P.86.

<sup>48</sup> Witham P86.

<sup>49</sup> *Mercury* 14/4/1880.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, P87.

<sup>51</sup> RGD 35/37, No. 285. TSA

## 2. Middleton Creek:

The next month Harry Middleton and others found gold in a stream - Middleton's Creek - running into the Savage River, a tributary of the Pieman. He, along with Alex Tengdahl, George Grove and Sam Blackmore, were prospectors sent out from a Latrobe syndicate of Lobley and Atkinson.<sup>52</sup> After registering their claim in Launceston, the news spread and a party of men were aboard the steamer *Sarah* when she returned to the Pieman." By April the rush was in full swing (and) payable quantities were won from the main creek by some of the five hundred prospectors, using dishes and wooden cradles, as well as large sluicing boxes."

The early promise seemed elusive. Reports to newspapers described it as a "failure - a stringer (with) a little gold in almost all the creeks but little payable."<sup>53</sup> Small "nuggets" were found, the size of beans.<sup>54</sup> But the report of nuggets found on two workings shortly after caused another rush.

## 3. Sunday Creek:

T. B. Moore and Foster found a workable claim on June 22 which attracted others. Diggers however were nearly starving.

## 4. Badger Creek:

A further strike occurred here when Con Lynch and L. Harvey's find attracted 300 men.<sup>55</sup>

## 5. Long Plains 1881-2.

Coarse gold discovered here resulted in 220 miners working the new field.<sup>56</sup> Creeks in the vicinity yielded good results; Crewse and partner got 60 ounces in four days from a crevice; Luke and partner got 160 ounces, the Conrays 200 ounces, while a nugget - the heaviest found - weighed 8 ounces & 15 pennyweights.

## 6. Specimen Reef (1882)

Nine miles north of Savage River, this site became famous for its coarse gold.

## 7. Rocky River (1883.)

Closer to Corinna, 40,000 ounces were said to have been extracted from this field in 5 years. The largest nugget ever found in Tasmania, weighing 243 ounces (7.5 kgs), showed at Rocky River at this time.

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<sup>52</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 12.4.79.P16, in Firth P102.

<sup>53</sup> Mining notes *The Mercury*, 12/7/1879, quoted in Julen, P.1.

<sup>54</sup> Julen P.3.

<sup>55</sup> B, P.29

<sup>56</sup> Julen P.8

## Structures.

### 1. Long Plains.

Apart from the many huts and tents expected on a gold-field, two stores were also built in February 1882. One was kept by Mr Alford of Waratah, and the other by Higgins of Corinna who also opened a butcher's shop. His cattle were walked overland from Waratah.<sup>57</sup>

**2. Brown's Plains.** A store was erected here by Tucker who also had a store at Corinna.

**3. Middleton's Creek.** 'Two miles from the diggings on the small river are two stores, Matthews and Cullens, where provisions can be got at a very fair and reasonable prices.'<sup>58</sup> Later another bush pub was built at the mouth of the Donaldson by Job Savage to serve miners going up to the nearby diggings.

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<sup>57</sup> Julen P.8.

<sup>58</sup> *Devon. Her.* 21/6/79 P16 Pieman Diggings.

## Chapter 7

### The Village of Corinna

#### Stage One 1878-1885

Although the village of Corinna formally dates from the establishment of the Government store in 1881, the locality appears to have been in use from 1878, as a letter from the Pieman refers to "our camp at Corinna" belonging to T. B. Moore.<sup>59</sup>

#### The Government Store(1881)

After repeated requests, the colonial government erected a store and post-office at Corinna, two and a half miles up from Donaldson's Landing, attempting unsuccessfully to change the name to 'Royenrine'. The store-keeper was D. Fergus Scott. The new location caused the rapid decline of the stores at Donaldsons Landing. In January 1881 the schooner *Robert Burns* arrived from Launceston at 6 p.m. on the 21st of February 1881 with three months supplies and provisions for a 100 men.<sup>60</sup> She had left Launceston with 533 packages of merchandise on board.<sup>61</sup>

During August 1881, when the *SS Amy* on an inaugural round trip from Launceston to Hobart via West Coast ports:

.entered the Pieman Heads, discharged cargo and proceeded upstream to Corinna (and) discharged 17 passengers which included D. F. Scott (new keeper of the Government Store and Postmaster), A. J. Scott, Andrew Johnson, J. Spotswood, F. Milne, C. E. Earle, F. Thorne, H. Rex, J. Rabling, E. Tolman, Jos. Taylor, J. Challendar, ? Chaffley, F. Webber, Jas. Shore jnr and snr.

The future notoriety of Corinna as the roughest town in Tasmania was off to a flying start, when on the same trip:

the forwarding of a lot of grog to the diggings necessitated nearly all the potatoes being left behind and at the government store only two bags could be obtained...as those ordered by the store-keeper in Latrobe had to left behind in consequence of the excess of cargo.

D. Fergus Scott the store-keeper had planned to erect a galvanised iron structure to protect the stores against bush-fires; on arrival he found that hut had been built which he refused to accept, and instead built a temporary Store and roofed it with the galvanised iron. By May 1881, a new store had been "Completed to contract.". Scott also asked for permission to build a place "to let travellers pass the night."<sup>62</sup> The new store and its stock were insured in May 1881 for 655 pounds, the building being "erected of corrugated iron, roof corrugated iron." In September a skillion was added to the store, "one portion of which to be used as a living room and the other as Post-office, Mining Office etc.....I could then throw the store into one room and the stock would have the advantage of a fire in the present room used as a living room and office, as well as more space being obtained for storage of goods. "<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Tasmanian Mail* 16/3/1878 P10. Lennox files.

<sup>60</sup> Julen, P5

<sup>61</sup> PWD 15/2/1881, TSA.

<sup>62</sup> PWD 5/6/1881, TSA.

<sup>63</sup> op cit, 23/9/1881, TSA,

By December 1881, many miners were in debt to the Store, and the government decided to close. A list of goods invoiced to the Store give as insight into the lives of the miners, and should give an indication for archaeological work. (see appendix.)

## Other buildings

**The Government Camp.** D. F. Scott refers to "persons going to and from Heemskirk put up at the Government Camp, and until an accommodation house is opened which will, I understand, be shortly, I have to entertain them and also find them a boat at the Heads."<sup>64</sup>

**Accommodation House.** By September 1881 Scott reported that "the House of Accommodation....is greatly appreciated, but I have lost several articles placed there for travellers."<sup>65</sup>

**Savage's Store and Public House.** In the same letter was noted: "Mr Savage has commenced the removal of his public house and store a short distance above the depot. To draw custom he is giving at the rate of 4 pounds an ounce for gold. (we only allow 3 pound 17 shillings. )"

Savage's new buildings were erected on a newly-declared reserve, and therefore illegal. When told, Savage agreed to, " when he had found a more suitable position. He continues building."<sup>66</sup>

**Scott the Ferry-man.** Scott also took over the police boat, and later complained of his many duties, which he was unable to do without help. His duties required him to "keep up the ferry, look after the store and keep an over-sight on (the) house of accommodation with the increasing through traffic.....".<sup>67</sup> The "police boat" was in use in October 1881 to "carry passengers to and from Lucy River. It requires a set of oars, a pair of paddles , painting,.....planking in places and lining etc." Scott had employed a ferry-man, Lynn, who was followed by Rheuben Inches as assistant and ferryman."<sup>68</sup>

In December, Scott complained of the dingy being taken for police work when needed on the river, and suggested the construction locally of a "large punt."<sup>69</sup>

## Population

In 1881, Scott lists 17 males who reside or had Corinna as their base. When he left, the Corinna base population was given as 37, plus passers-by, and 120 for the total on the new fields.

In February 1882, surveyor Innes marked out 30 blocks at Corinna township, but the new town's prospects were not good. Valuation Rolls for the 1880's and 1890'd indicate the extent of the village's buildings. Very little development was apparent during this first decade, as the majority of structures appear to have been erected during Corinna's second boom of the

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<sup>64</sup> PWD 25/3/1881, TSA

<sup>65</sup> op cit 23/9/1881 TSA.

<sup>66</sup> PWD 31/10/1881.

<sup>67</sup> PWD 23/9/1881.

<sup>68</sup> PWD 20/10/1881.

<sup>69</sup> PWD 31/12/1881.

1890's when the village consisted of over 30 structures, including hotels, houses, huts, shops, and stables.(see below)

### **Corinna's Dominance - The 1880's 'Staging Post'**

In 1881, the track from Waratah was completed, and Corinna became a "recognised staging post on the journey south" to the new mines.<sup>70</sup> The post-office also shifted from the Heads to Corinna where it operated until 1905.<sup>71</sup> By 1884 an over-land "electric telegraph" was linked along the track from Waratah" as far as Corinna only." A weekly mail service through Waratah to Strahan via Corinna and Remine was also in place.<sup>72</sup>

With the quick decline of the station at Donaldson's Landing, Job Savage built a new one at the new settlement, "...a simple structure made of local timber sawn on the spot, and a few bits and pieces salvaged from his Donaldson Inn."<sup>73</sup> This does not appear to have lasted long.

In 1882, John Foster, the former manager of the Latrobe Tin Mining Company at Heemskirk, began an accommodation house on the south bank of the Pieman which became known as the Star Hotel.<sup>74</sup>

The same year, Gamaliel Webster who had just lost his hotel in a fire at Trial Harbour, built a new one at the Pieman on the north side of the river, naming it the Corinna Hotel.<sup>75</sup> Corinna became the home for these two families. Many of their children stayed to marry miners during the '90's mining boom centered on Corinna.

Assessment (or Valuation) Rolls indicate that the allotments were not sold when first offered, as the only properties listed in 1885 were John Foster's *Star Hotel* on the south bank of the Pieman River, and J. J. Gafney's "Shop and store" on the north bank This may have been the former Government Store.

Other residents in 1882 included "Mr Higgins of Corinna" who opened a store and butcher's shop at Long Plains.<sup>76</sup>

**New Tracks.** A separate study of tracks related to the new finds could be made.

In Jan 1882, Store-keeper Scott refers to the new track from " ...the mouth of the Whyte River to the open ground " which I (suggested ) to you, was described as a great asset.<sup>77</sup>

Conservation of Forests Needed. The writer in the 1882 *Tasmanian Mail*, warned

'forest conservation is needed as in a few years time not a stick will be left.'<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Binks, P. 128.

<sup>71</sup> NS 687, TSA.

<sup>72</sup> Walch's Almanac 1885, Tas Library.

<sup>73</sup> Julen, P 7.

<sup>74</sup> Julen P8.

<sup>75</sup> Sims, P166.s

<sup>76</sup> Julen P.8.

<sup>77</sup> PWD 16/1/1882

<sup>78</sup> *Tasmanian Mail*, 18/3/1882, p. 13

## Social Structure at Corinna

Birth and marriage registers indicate that a number of families lived at Corinna; both imply a number of dwellings which are not indicated on Valuation Rolls.

### Births at Corinna. 1883-1899

i. Webster: Charles (c. 1883); Amelia (1884); Constance (1895); Percival (1898) Another four children born at Remine, Trial Harbour.

On the death of Gamaliel, Mrs Webster remarried John Frazer who produced another family.

ii. Frazer: Francis (1899); Amy (1899); (three later children born at Waratah)

iii. Davis: Ellen (1886); Royenrine (1888); Esther (1890)<sup>79</sup>

iv. Chubin: William S jnr (1899)

### Marriages at Corinna.

i. Chubin/Foster. William N.S and Mary Corinna (12/5/1898)

ii. Camp-bell-Smith /(Abel/Foster) Davis Walter G and Amy A (widow) 12/5/1899 (ie a double wedding?)

iii. Frazer/ (Abel/Ratcliffe) Webster(widow); 5/12/1898.

iv. Fergusson/ Foster; William and Constance(1/10 1899).

### Other Residents.

Corinna was a well-situated supply centre for diggers working the new gold fields on the Lucy Creek, Nancy Creek and Paradise River. The location also provided a resting place for other miners walking from Waratah to the new tin fields at Heemskirk, and after 1884, the silver-lead mines of Zeehan. This may partly explain the remnants of structures scattered along the tracks leading to and from Corinna.

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<sup>79</sup> Sims, Abel History Suppl, 1985



## 8. Corinna Booms Again

### The Wild Town of the West

#### **Temporary Decline. 1885-1892.**

The town dwindled in the last half of the 1880's; by 1892 only four people are shown as residents on the Valuation Roll; Kershaw, Kennedy, Devlyn and Bradley.<sup>80</sup> 1891 was the first year the government appears to have paid for a ferry-man at Corinna, when T. P. Devlyn was paid 26 pounds for the tender.<sup>81</sup> The same year saw a tender for the "Construction of a Punt for the River Pieman " being won by Wilson and Tolman for 163 pounds 18 shillings and fourpence.

By now the new gold-fields were north of the Pieman River along the Whyte , Donaldson, Savage and Lucy Rivers and along Long Plains, and Specimen Reef.<sup>82</sup>

Post Office. With the closure of the Government Store in early 1882, the position was taken by William T. Higgins from April 1st.<sup>83</sup> He was followed by C. E. Young and Charles P. Emmett in 1883.

Other Structures. Suspension Bridge. Due to miner's requests, the Department of Land and Works erected a suspension bridge over the Whyte River in 1887.<sup>84</sup>

**1893 Boom Town.** After 1893, a new mining boom occurred, financed by a capital-intensive investors and speculators, rather than itinerant self-employed miners. Companies, buoyed by earlier finds, invested heavily in men and equipment to wash out gold with high pressure hoses using gravity-fed water. Extravagant claims were made of the areas' potential. By 1894, 'labourers were busy digging water-races to the proposed mining sites.' as six major mining companies prepared for hydraulic mining.<sup>85</sup>

The village of Corinna experienced a new spurt in expansion. A visitor in 1893, before the start of the hydraulic boom, commented on the deserted village:

This little place on the road between Trial Harbour and Waratah, hardly worth the name of a township, wears now a deserted appearance, very different from what it was at the time of the Zeehan boom. The post and telegraph and store on the northern bank and a small inn with out-buildings on the southern bank , are all that may be said to comprise the settlement. There is a good ferry here which has done useful service in its day. Stores are obtained by steamer about once every three months. Perhaps this may account for the abominable spirits which are retailed. The liquor called rum is here called "electricity"<sup>86</sup>

Within a year the scene had changed as hopes for a new boom grew.

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<sup>80</sup> VR 1892, TSA.)

<sup>81</sup> VR 1891, TSA

<sup>82</sup> Walch, 1885

<sup>83</sup> HG P 874, 21/3/1882, NS 687 TSA.

<sup>84</sup> Julen P.10.

<sup>85</sup> Julen, P.10.

<sup>86</sup> Daily Telegraph 7/10/1893.

Prospecting parties are arriving daily.....Foster's new hotel was formally opened by a ball on the evening of the 24 inst. Mr J. H. Findlay as MC and Messrs J. D. Fraser and H. Bond as musicians, kept the ball rolling. The usual dance programme was gone through, in addition to which Messrs Fraser, Findlay, Fowler, Fitzgerald, and several other gentlemen entertained the company with sentimental and serio-comic solos and duets. To the ladies of the district, who were assembled in full force, is due the major portion of the credit for the thoroughly enjoyable evening spent. At mid-night an adjournment was made to the commodious dining-room where there was a most sumptuous spread. All present were unanimous in the opinion that the ball was a perfect success.<sup>87</sup>

**The Bush Clergymen.** At the height of the mining boom, the village was visited by the Rev. F. G. Copeland, a zealous young Anglican clergyman who visited all mining camps on foot, holding services at Corinna, the Pieman Heads, Granville Harbour, the Tasman Mine and occasionally Long Plains.<sup>88</sup> On one visit to Corinna he was accompanied by H. H. Montgomery, the Bishop of Tasmania, both on foot. (Montgomery was the father of the future "Montgomery of Alemein.") They had arrived exhausted after walking the 31 miles from Zeehan in a day, climbing over Mt Heemskirk and Gentle Annie, talking to miners at their camps, and shouldering their swags which each weighed 25 pounds.

.... The corduroy gave place to heavy sand: then we stumbled down and down over broken culverts and worn water courses, till suddenly the lights flashed out, showing Mr Foster's hotel at Corinna. I was too tired to eat anything but in the morning I had entirely recovered....

That evening we had a bright service, the first in Corinna, and Mr Copeland and myself were able to obtain the services of Mr Lightly to conduct regular services there in the future. The hotel is most comfortable and we were royally entertained...."<sup>89</sup>

The adventurous duo were photographed in their bushmen's outfits in which the Bishop earned his "swagman's laurels." The young Anglican clergyman made regular visits to the Pieman alone. On a later visit that year, the Rev Copeland arrived "at Corinna just before dusk. Here a children's service was held, their lessons heard and set for the next visit, a child baptised, and an evening service held in a new building just erected. "<sup>90</sup> The church was also running a "little church day school (which was) well attended." Copeland later earned the praise of the Bishop who recalled "that even in the depths of winter when the creeks had become rivers and in the wildest weather had Mr Copeland been prevented from fulfilling a single engagement."<sup>91</sup>

A year later the village was continuing to grow due to the investment in the hydraulic mines.

"The little township is naturally showing signs of prosperity, like an awakening after a prolonged slumber. The southern bank of the Pieman being graced with a new two-storey hotel, built by Mr John Foster in place of the little old pub, well known to all old identities, and by casual visitors never forgotten. On the northern side quite a large number of buildings are

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<sup>87</sup> *Tasmanian Mail* 2/6/1894, TSA.

<sup>88</sup> *Church News*, 4/2/1897, P.613 TSA.

<sup>89</sup> *Church News*, 1/4/1895, P.253-4. AOT.

<sup>90</sup> *Church News*, 1/10/1895 P.357. AOT.

<sup>91</sup> op cit, 4/2/1897, P. 613

springing up. The stores opened up by McKimmie and Co. of Launceston and Zeehan, and W. L. Grubb and Co. of Hobart are doing good business, the former under the management of Mr W. H. Heaps and the latter by Mr G. Lightly. Next door is Mr Fletcher's butcher shop. Mr G. Webster is also making preparations for the erection of an hotel this side of the river, having removed the best parts of his former building from Trial Harbour. Along the Waratah road a lot of cottages are being erected".<sup>92</sup>

In 1895 Grubb Brothers were also successful in tendering for the "Corinna Ferry."<sup>93</sup>

**Return of the Websters.** The opening of the railway from Strahan to Zeehan ended the function of Trial Harbour. This, and the failure of the mines behind Trial Harbour village resulted in Gamaliel Webster and his family returning to Corinna. At Trial Harbour 'Gam' had a thriving business, and ran a team of 22 pack horses to the mines at Heemskirk and Cumberland.<sup>94</sup>

The Websters next child (Constance E.) was born at Corinna in 1895. The opening of the Corinna Hotel by Webster on the north bank saw a return to the position he was removed from in 1882. The death of Gam Webster in August 1897 was the cause of much regret for the passing of an identity who had become a legend in his life-time. His funeral wake, recorded by the officiating clergyman, the Rev Copeland, was a "fitting" tribute to such a legend, and must go down as one of the all-time 'piss-ups' at the wildest of West Coast towns.

It was quite a triumphal procession that drew up at the Corinna Hotel, in which figured the two horses, the two travellers and the man carrying the Parson's swag, with a small boy behind joyously jingling the coffin trimmings for which eager enquiries were made even before I'd crossed the ferry."

The funeral party moved off from the hotel. "A good wide gravel road leads down to the river, and the ferry.....soon all were assembled around the grave on far side of the river.....I invited all to attend a service that night in a large bunk-house opposite the hotel.....I was surprised how soon the congregation melted away, and I saw the ferry crossing with men clinging to it in ever possible direction, while dugout canoes and boats were all making across the river as fast as possible., and a stream of men on the opposite bank made a bee-line straight for the hotel.

...I would beg you not to judge these men too harshly.....These same men will risk their lives, their gold, their all to help a miner in distress or danger. These same men when sober will nurse a sick pal with a tenderness that could shame a woman."

After the service, Copeland returned to the hotel.

"Long before I reached the hotel I heard the din proceeding from the bar and the dining room."

The hotel was deserted and the men watching a series of bloody bare-fisted boxing matches held in ring on " a flat down by the river."

In despair, the Rev Copeland took the key from Fraser and locked up the pub, despite the abuse from the angry miners. Next morning he headed back for Zeehan.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Corinna District. *Daily Telegraph*. April 2, 1895.

<sup>93</sup> *Government Gazette* 5/2/1895 P.366.

<sup>94</sup> Sims, P169.

<sup>95</sup> NS 94/27 P15.

### **A (Short-lived) School.**

From 1898 to 1900, Corinna was blessed with a school. This was due to the efforts of the Rev Copeland, the Anglican priest based at Zeehan. The teacher was Mrs Jane Eastman, aged 44, who was living in Launceston at the time of her appointment. The site of the school was presumably on the designated reserve. The school was an "assisted school", that is, a jointly subsidised school between the church and state.<sup>96</sup>

When Rev Copeland officiated at the funeral of Gam Webster, he inspected the small school.

Next day, he visited 'the little day school' where he gave an hour's religious instruction in the morning, after which (he) proceeded to examine the school in its secular work....."This was a school begun by the Church of England....here I got a mistress to open the school, a boon much appreciated by the parents of the children who came regularly for instruction.."

Mrs Eastman resigned in August 1900, and Mrs Devlyn was allowed to keep the school books to teach her own children.

### **Corinna Third Phase - Shape of the Town:**

The 1896 Valuation Roll (see appendix) lists the owners and occupiers of land, and includes over 30 structures. The allotments were sub-divided into Sections and numbered in fives. Sections A, B, C, D, and F were on the northern bank of the Pieman; Sections G and H on the south bank. The exact location of ten of these structures can be identified from their allotment number matched with those on the village plan. The other 20 aren't specified.

### **Site-identifiable Structures.**

#### **North Bank.**

**The Esplanade.** Two slaughter yards are named on the Esplanade.. These were run in conjunction with two butcher's shop's and residences both on land leased by J. P. Devlyn. One occupied by William Beauchamp who also occupied a butcher's shop and residence (location not specified), and another identical establishment (slaughter yard, butcher's shop and house), run by John H. Findlay.

#### **Section B.**

Findlay's butcher's shop and residence was located at Section B Lot. 5, cnr. Scott and Moore Streets.(see map)

Next door, Section B Lot 4, was occupied by the store and stable of WC Grubb Brothers of Hobart

Next to this (B Lot 3) was a house owned by Mrs G. Webster and occupied by her husband Gamaliel Webster.

#### **Section D**

Across the street on Section D Lot 1 (now a scenic reserve) was another store run by McKimmie and Co of Zeehan.

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<sup>96</sup> ED 6/2, TSA.

Also in Section D Lot 5 , was a stable , property of J. P Devlyn

### **Section F.**

(Facing the river) Lot 1(cnr Thomas and Esplanade) Cottage owned and occupied by J. P. Devlyn (ie the Post and telegraph office.)

### **South Bank.**

#### **Section G**

Lot 1. Stable, unoccupied, owner, Andrew Kennedy, Wellington St, Launceston.

Lot 2. Hut occupied by Mrs A Davis (c/- John Foster, ) and owned by W. Thorne on behalf of Chapman and Maxwell, Hobart.

Lot 3. Stable Occupied by Alfred Foster, and rented from W. Thorne for Chapman and Maxwell, Hobart.

### **Other 1896 Structures(Location not specified)**

Hut - Occ. Matthias Alexander

Butcher's Shop and Residence - Occ. Wm Beauchamp.

Two huts- Brookside Hydraulic GM Co Launceston.

Three huts and smiths shop- Corinna Hydraulic Sluicing Co. Launceston.

Baker's shop - Chapman and Sutton, Corinna

Hut -.Occ Geo. Harris c/- W. J. Heaps Hobart.

Cottage.- Thomas Moran

Store - McKimmie and Co , Zeehan ( ie in addition to above store ?)

Hut - ditto

Hut - Occ. John Power (Crown)

Hut - Wm. Stuart (Crown)

Cottage - Thomas Tulip (Crown)

Boot-makers Shop - Jos. Triffitt (Crown)

Hut - John Thurley (do).

Hut -William Titmus (do )

Hut - T. Thow C/- W Heaps (do)

Cottage - unocc. Owner R. Pemberton, Corinna.

Cottage - occ. John Watson, Beaconsfield. (Crown)

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## Chapter 10

### The Mining Companies.

#### Optimism & Failure

Five mines were raised with Tasmanian finance, while the sixth (Frenchman's Peak) was funded by British investors. All lost heavily as the technique of sluicing proved an utter failure. Of the local companies, four were based in Launceston, and the fifth was a subsidiary of the Beaconsfield Gold Mine.

Cross-ownership occurred; E. Gaunt of Launceston was manager for The Corinna Hydraulic Gold Mining Company, the Lucy Spur Hydraulic Gold Mining Co. and the Nicholson No. 1 Hydraulic Gold Mining Company. Lesley Jolly also of Launceston, was chairman of directors of the Corinna and Brookside Companies. He had sold the Frenchman's Peak lease to the British speculators.

#### **The Companies.** (see Lennox map)

##### 1. The Corinna Hydraulic Gold Mining Company.

Manager G. Webb

Lease granted 1895

Location. 1000 acre lease across Sailor Jack & Middleton Creek.

##### 2. The Nicholson No.1 Hydraulic Gold Mining Company.

Manager. ?

Leased: ?

Location ?

##### 3. The Lucy Spur Hydraulic Gold Mining Company.

Manager T. Dunn

Lease: 1897.

Location: Lucy Spur.

##### 4. The Donaldson (and New Donaldson) Hydraulic Gold Mining Company

Manager. John McCormack

Lease: 1897.

Location: Gutherie Creek.

##### 5. The Savage River Hydraulic Sluicing and Gold Mining Company.

Manager John Watson.

Lease 1895

Location None-such & Brooklyn Creeks..

##### 6. The Frenchman's Peak, Limited.

Manager Mark Ireland.

Lease 1895.

Location: Nancy Spur

7. Brookside Hydraulic Gold Mining Company. N/L

Manager G. Botterell.

Lease 1895

Location: Brookside.

8. Brooklyn Hydraulic Gold Mining Co

Manager: F. C. Brooks

Lease: 1897

Location: None Such Creek

## NEW TRENDS IN MINING

Newspaper reports reveal that a new approach to metal extraction had reached Tasmania by 1894, and followed the experience of men in the New Zealand gold-rush at Otago. The idea of sluicing precious metal from ore seems to have reached Tasmania with the appointment of John Watson to the position of Mine Manager at the Salisbury and Beaconsfield Goldmining Company's mine near the mouth of the Tamar River. In August 1893, Watson's exploits were published in a front page article in the (Launceston) *Daily Telegraph* under the heading "New Zealand Experts Views." Watson described in some detail the techniques used at the Blue Spur Mine, Otago.<sup>97</sup> A year later, John Watson was appointed to manage the same company's hydraulic gold-mining operation at Savage River.

Meanwhile, another syndicate had already started exploration of the Pieman-Corinna fields. The Corinna Hydraulic Sluicing Co. was reported in November 1893 as working the area.<sup>98</sup> The next month, the Lucy Company was investigating an area in the vicinity of Stanley River. The same month saw the amalgamation of the Corinna and Donaldson companies in order to secure 65 sluice-heads of water for gold-mining.<sup>99</sup>

The final seal of approval on the future of the Pieman gold fields came with the positive report of Montgomery, the government geological surveyor.

By early 1894 the Corinna Co had a surveyor and team cutting the line of the auxiliary race.

**Related Structures.** To assist in access to the mines behind the junction of Whyte and Rocky Rivers, in 1895 a contract for a "Suspension Bridge" over the Pieman River, and related "Iron-work (suspension rods etc)" was let to Green and Adams at one pound nine shillings per hundredweight.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 23/9/1893. P.1 C/8

<sup>98</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 25/11/1893 P1.

<sup>99</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 30/12/1893 P5.

<sup>100</sup> *Hobart Gazette*, 2/3/1895, P 668.

## The Pieman River Mines in Operation

### 1. The Corinna G. M. Co.

Located in the Middleton's Creek area, the mine re-worked one of the older leases from the alluvial finds. These had been sluiced by some of the old hands including Crotty, Strong, Conroy, McLean, Fitzpatrick, Fogarty and others.<sup>101</sup>

In 1895, the Corinna Hydraulic Gold Mining Co. which had a 1000 acres lease between the Whyte River and the Savage River, started sluicing on 27th March, 1895. The mine was near the junction of Sailor Jack Creek and Jarmans Creek. The water supply was sorted in three dams with a total holding capacity of 800,000 gallons. The main dam was at the junction of Chinaman Creek and Eight Mile Creek, about one mile west of Brown Plains. The pressure at the nozzles was 200 feet. The sluice boxes were 264 feet (80 metres) long and 3 feet wide. The bottoms of the boxes were lined with coconut matting covered with perforated iron sheets.

In early May 1894, tenders were called for the shipment of 15 tons of supplies to the Pieman, and also the construction of the head-race, supply-race and the required timber.<sup>102</sup> A week later the ketch *Welcome Home* under charter left carrying 40 ton of cargo. Some miners were also on board. George Webb the mine manager left for the site (on a steamer via Zeehan.) His priorities were the construction and positioning of sluice boxes. These were to be "of the latest approved pattern as used in New Zealand."

By the middle of May, camps were in place and the work in progress. The contractor was a under a bond to finish the race in 12 weeks. Sawyers were busy at their pits and a few trial shafts had been sunk.<sup>103</sup>

**Race and Tunnel.** By June 42 chains of the race were in place, and both approaches to the tunnel cut and a few feet driven from either end. 35 men were employed in cutting the race and tunnel, and more will be put on when the boat arrives with tools.<sup>104</sup> By July, 236 feet of the tunnel had been dug. The work was on the Whyte River side of the Elizabeth Range. A store had been built and several new shafts sunk. Six shafts, two chains apart had been dug along Sailor Jacks Gully.

The same month saw the arrival of "the hydraulic nozzles, valves etc from Dunedin.....consigned to the Corinna H. G. M. Co. "<sup>105</sup>

There were about 100 men employed now, and the Corinna Co had" 20 prospecting their large area of ground with good results."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Blake, P. 34.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 22/5/1893 P.3.

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 21/5/1893 P4.

<sup>104</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 4/6/ P3.

<sup>105</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 25/7/1893, P3.

<sup>106</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 27/7/1893, P3.



**The Race.** The *Daily Telegraph* reported, "This company is having about 10 miles of race cut which gives employment to a good many men.: Four miles to the main race were finished, with one mile to complete."<sup>107</sup>

By August, 20 prospecting shafts had been sunk. Tenders ad been called for" the Cutting and burning of 10 acres, and a 100 yards of tail-race, 900 yards of pipe-track. The *SS Dorset* arrived with a full cargo of wrought iron pipes, their delivery to be completed on a return trip. (*Daily Telegraph*, 8/8/1894).delivery of these to the site was delayed, as the pipe-contractors were still waiting in October "for their team of horses from the North West coast." (*Daily Telegraph* , 12/10/1894). By later in the month, the pipe track was complete and the pipes carted. (*Daily Telegraph* , 26/10/1894) Tenders were being let for the supplementary water-race from Brown's Plains, joining the main race at the 5 Mile peg. This made a total of 11 miles of race which had been cut by the Corinna Company. (*Daily Telegraph* 27/8/1894 P3) The aim of the supplementary water-race was to give all year round water supply for sluicing, off-setting the need to close down over summer due to a lack of water for sluicing.

By September, the main race and box race were being built, with 35 men working on the supplementary race. By October, 2 miles and 28 chains of the supplementary race were laid. The next month, problems were arising due to faulty levels being set by surveyor Watchorn. He was replaced by Power. The delay and expense in correcting the faulty survey line was later blamed for "the considerably increased expense " of the Mine.<sup>108</sup>

In October 1894, Petterd and other directors were at the Pieman River per *SS Dorset* to inspect the mine works.<sup>109</sup> The box-race was finished and the "ripples" (to extract the gold from the ore slurry) were in position. One dam was complete and another two were under way. The tunnel had been driven 176 feet; government contractors were employed road-making.<sup>110</sup> In October, the first reference is made to "No 2 Tunnel" which "holed through at 405 feet."<sup>111</sup> (This is probably the tunnel referred to in earlier reports.)

By November, the Corinna Company was the first to have water on, followed shortly after by the Brookside Company, and the Corinna reported that due to a late rain, there was water in the whole of the race. The Corinna Company's tunnel under the road (about three miles north of Corinna) was awaiting bends on the *SS Dorset* to complete the pipe; 13 inch pipes had been laid to the road.(see map)

The sluicing operation consisted of a fall from the head-race to the nozzle of 220 ft.. Two outlets were then in use, one going to the either end of the cutting.

The main piping was 14 inches reducing to 9 inch at the discharge pipe, tapering down to 4 inch. The nozzles varied from 4 to 1.5 inch.<sup>112</sup> The sluice-boxes were 264 ft in length and 3 feet wide. Iron flanges placed crossways acted as ripples to collect the ore, followed by " several lengths of perforated iron over coconut matting at the end, together with a side outlet for fine tailings which pass over blankets as a means of testing whether any gold is passing the

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<sup>107</sup> *Daily Telegraph* , *ibid*).

<sup>108</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/4/1895 P5.

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 15/10/1894, P3.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 15/9/1894 P5.

<sup>111</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 26/10/1894 P3.

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/4/1895 P.5.

boxes." (op cit) The tailings from the wash ran down the bed of a tributary creek which acted as a tail-race, with a fall of 200 feet into the Whyte River.

In mid December the Corinna Co. was laying off men until the autumn rains due to a lack of water.

At the village of Corinna, the Company had sold its store to McKimmie and Company of Zeehan at cost price and had made "a handsome profit from the business."<sup>113</sup>

By March, faces were being prepared so three continuous shifts could operate around the clock.<sup>114</sup>

The early optimism was fading; in May 1895. the mining reporter noted that the Corinna and Brookside mines were failing.<sup>115</sup> In June, the directors of the two companies, L. Jolly and W. F. Petterd, left for a tour of inspection.

The first clean up of the boxes started on June 25, after 1040 hours of sluicing. The chairman of directors, both of the Corinna and Brookside companies, came from Launceston to be present at the occasion. When the iron sheets were lifted, several nice little heaps of gold from 204 ounces could be seen. The clean up finished late in the evening on June 26. The total yield of gold was 80 ounces, valued £320 (\$640). It was estimated that 25,000 yards of gravels had run through the sluice boxes. (Julen P.11) The newspaper reported that the results to "shareholders in either case will hardly be up to expectations."<sup>116</sup> By June, "10 men were engaged in the mine, two on the races and one prospecting; eight were involved in the day shift to deal with the stones, stamps and (to) cut races, the nozzle alone being engaged on the night and afternoon shifts...."<sup>117</sup>

In July Archie Gaunt a mining reporter visited the Corinna area. Riding down the muddy track from Waratah, the water-race came into view.

"About four miles this side of Corinna you sight the Corinna Company's water-race, winding along like a snake. Two and a half miles from Corinna the pipe-track crosses the road, and the workings can be seen, with two nozzles throwing powerful jets of water under a pressure of 250 ft.." The pair dismounted and sent their horses on to Corinna with a third rider, while they then inspected the mine by "slipping and sliding down the pipe track" where they were met by the mine manager, George Webb. (*Daily Telegraph* 1/7/1895 p ?)

After spending the night in the manager's hut, they toured the mine. They were not impressed. "One glance at the workings was enough to show that.... serious loss must result." (ibid) Gold recovered from the first wash was worth 320 pounds. After allowing for wages of 215 pounds, a profit of 105 pounds was left.

The Corinna and Brookside were closed before the end of 1895. (Julen P.11)

## Later Mining

In the 1930's the area was resumed by a Launceston-based syndicate, West Coast Gold Mines, under leases held by C. T. Crabtree, with A. J. Davey as mine manager. Hydraulic

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<sup>113</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 17/12/1894 P3.

<sup>114</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 16/3/1895 P.5.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 20/5/1895 P3.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 28/6/1895 P.2.

<sup>117</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 1/6/1895 P.5.

sluicing began in 1935 and continued intermittently until 1938. (Blake described the workings at this time in some detail.)

In 1939, water rights from the water-race on Timbs Creek were held by Crabtree. The water

"is conducted by race from a dam on Timb's Creek and passes through a tunnel under Corinna-Waratah road to the bed of Hunter Creek. A storage dam was constructed on Hunter Creek but later collapsed and is not now in use. The water is again picked up at a lower point on Hunter Creek and conveyed by race to a dam on the hillside over-looking Middleton Creek. From there it is reticulated along the eastern hill slope....."<sup>118</sup>

### **Sailor Jack and White Creeks.**

Another site of earliest workings, first miners included Harry Middleton. Jansen Bros., P. Lynn and Olsen and Lawson. These claims were also acquired by Crabtree but do not appear to have been worked in 1939.

### **2. New Donaldson G. M. Co.**

This company's activities are less reported than the Corinna. The camp was three miles north of the Pieman and was reached "by a good pack-track from the Donaldson Landing."<sup>119</sup> In August 1894, the men were splitting timber for shafts and for a blacksmith's shop. Stands of Huon, celery-top, blackwood and hardwood for fluming were reported in existence on the Donaldson River. (*Daily Telegraph* 12/10/1894 P3) In January 1895, the manager took charge. The men "were erecting huts (and) have cleared a camp ground." Several tracks had been cut and the men were "now splitting palings and shingles." (*Daily Telegraph* 14/1/1895 P3) The tail-race was being fixed extended surveyor Power (elsewhere Powell). The hut and office were nearly finished. (*Daily Telegraph* 19/1/1895 P.5) Approaches to the mine were difficult; a new track had failed and the manager was forced to upgrade the sledge track. (DT 9/2/1895 P.5)

The manager of the New Donaldson was John Daily Telegraph, who, like Watson of the Savage River Co., gained experience at the Blue Spur Mine, Otago, having the reputation as "the "father of hydraulic sluicing in New Zealand."

The major reason for the failure of the New Donaldson was the badly under-estimated length of the water-race. At first this was to be 8 miles, but when surveyed covered 14 miles, and when finally laid, covered 16 miles, double its original length!<sup>120</sup> The race had a fall of 8 feet per mile.<sup>121</sup> Begun in the middle of winter, conditions for men cutting the race were appalling. In July, "in running the race over the button- grass, the men are in some sections work knee deep in water. The tail-race cutting will be done with water....A good belt of pine enables the timber for the boxes to be cut on the ground..<sup>122</sup> By July the mine was described as "struggling" against adverse circumstances in trying to open up the property at this time of the year....(as) the contractors experience difficulty keeping their men on the job. This is rendered harder by the fearful state of the pack-track and the cost of provisions. Only last

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<sup>118</sup> Blake, P. 37.

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/4/1895 P.5.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 11/3/1895 P3 & 22/3/1895 P3.

<sup>121</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 16/3/1895 P.5.

<sup>122</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 9/7/1895 P?)

week a fine horse with a full load, fell over a precipice and was killed. For several miles stores have now to be carried on men's backs.<sup>123</sup>

In March, "good prospects" were predicted at Guthries Creek. The race construction was out to tender and a small hut was being erected. The manager reported on "a magnificent bed of pine for making sluice boxes."<sup>124</sup> By December operations were stopped, the incomplete water-race was left.<sup>125</sup>

### 3. Brookside G. M. Co.

This company took over old leases of Lincoln and Brook near Clubfoot Creek.<sup>126</sup> In January 1895, the manager, George Bottriell, reported that he was ready to start the pipe-track and open out the box-race. The sledge road and tail-race were finished. He had engaged a blacksmith to come at a day's notice when the ripples arrive he can put them in at once. The sawyers had nearly finished sawing, and then he would start on the boxes. Clearing was still going on, but "the timber being large takes a lot of burning off." He intended having a "kiln of charcoal burnt so that all will be ready when the pipes arrive." (NB This probably refers to the need for the blacksmith to hot-rivet the pipes together.)<sup>127</sup>

The contractor had made a start with the race and the manager expected to have 40 men employed by the next week. This prediction came true, as the next report refers to "52 men at work today along the head-race, and more going on tomorrow." (*Daily Telegraph* 28/1/1895 P. 3) The tail-race contract had been completed, and tenders were to be opened for 80 feet of race for sluice boxes. The manager reported, "The smithy is finished and the forge will be fixed tomorrow; a shed for the charcoal is also finished." The pipe-track was to be started ready for laying pipes as soon as they arrive.

By late January, "the buildings were all finished, including a small powder magazine for storing explosives." (*Daily Telegraph* 2/2/1895 P.1) 60 men were employed and "the head-race goes ahead well." The blacksmith had been put on "and was now making tools etc for his own use."<sup>128</sup>

In February, the dam on Clubfoot and Two Mile Creeks was in place. 50 men were still employed. Delays had occurred owing to "the country being on fire (causing) some damage to the fluming." The tail-race was paved and boxes were being built in the race. The pipes arrived and were to be carted, and they were to be laid on as they were delivered. "The cistern will be finished in a day or so."<sup>129</sup>

By March the old mullock heaps left by Brooks were being sluiced away. The boxes, ripples, tail-race all are working well.<sup>130</sup> A large slip on the head-race of the Brookside mine was reported in April. The tunnel was laid out and dug through the spur. Three shifts of men

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<sup>123</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 29/7/1895 P.?.

<sup>124</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 11/5/1895 P.5.

<sup>125</sup> Julen P.13.

<sup>126</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/11/1894 P3.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 19/1/1895 P.5.

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 9/2/1895 P.5.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 27/2/P3.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 13/3/1895 P3.

were working day and night from each end, and in nine days they were able to hole through., with a total length driven of 250 feet.

The workings consisted of an intake pressure of 90 feet, the piping reducing from 14 to 7 inches, and the discharge pipe tapering to 4 inches, with 4 to 1.5 inch nozzles. The sluice boxes were 72 feet long and 2 ft 6 in. wide, covered by the usual coconut matting and perforated iron. The tail race of 140 feet was "cut through schist rock and discharged over a natural cataract about 30 ft in height" toward the Savage River.<sup>131</sup>

Mr Jolly also witnessed the clean up at the Brookside Company's mine. This mine was on a ridge west of Club Foot Creek. The mine was connected by a track to the main road 4½ miles from Corinna. The workings were close to a site where a former sluicing party had obtained 140 ounces of gold from a narrow cut in a face. The water for sluicing came from Timbs Creek. The water race was 4 miles and 56 chains long (7.5 km). The pressure at the nozzles was 90 feet and the sluice boxes were 72 feet long and 2½ feet wide.

The mine had worked for 1260 hours before the clean up. About 18,000 yards of gravels were run through the boxes. The gold saved weighed 34 ounces, worth £136 which was much less than the money spent in the three months of sluicing. (Julen P.11)<sup>132</sup> By late 1895 the Brookside was also proven a failure and closed down.

## Later Mining

This site was also leased by Crabtree in 1939 but apparently not worked.<sup>133</sup>

### 4. Savage River H. G. M. Co.

The Savage River Hydraulic Gold Mining Company's 40 acre lease was west of the Savage River. The mine was close to the river, about 2 miles up from the Pieman. This company was also known as the Beaconsfield company because the office was in Beaconsfield and most of the shareholders lives in that town. The Manager, John Watson, was formerly the Manager of the Salisbury and Beaconsfield Hydraulic Gold Mining Company. Sluicing began with three shifts on May 16, 1895. The water was taken from Guthries Creek where a dam was constructed with a holding capacity of 1 million gallons. The water race was only 1 mile long. The pressure at the nozzles was 140 feet. The sluice boxes were 84 feet long and 2½ feet wide. The tailings were discharged directly into the Savage River.<sup>134</sup>

The Company was formed in April 1894. Its directors were J. E. Nichols, F.C. Parsons, S. Statton, T. H. Waldock, J. O. Watson, (Manager of the Salisbury and Beaconsfield Co), J. A. Windred and John McCormack, formerly of the Blue Spur Hydraulic Gold Mining Co., New Zealand.<sup>135</sup>

Equipment for this mine also arrived on the *SS Dorset*, and included pipes from the Salisbury Foundry, Launceston. The river was to be cleared of logs to allow small vessels

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<sup>131</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/4/1895 P.5.

<sup>133</sup> Blake, P.38.

<sup>134</sup> Julen P.13.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 4/7/1894 P. 4.

"right up to the mine." This was fraught with danger as the pipes "are above the gunwales and top heavy. The boat sank four or five times coming up on Saturday."<sup>136</sup>

The head-race was finished and a dam was under construction. (*Daily Telegraph* 17/12/1894 P3) The men were to be paid off "except for a few to make the pipe track" and carry up the pipes.

Problems appeared in February 1895; the dam contractor was sacked and the work was to be completed by wages men. The pipes were at the mouth of the Savage River. The dam to hold 1.25 million gallons was nearly finished; a nozzle and reducing pipe had arrived per *SS Dorset*. Heavy rains in March broke the sluice, but men were sluicing in three shifts. Pipes were still being moved in May; men were also splitting palings for a hut. The sawyers had plenty of timber if the race broke. (*Daily Telegraph* 20/5/1895 P3)

Delays and lack of results came to a head in October when, after a meeting of directors at Beaconsfield, all hands and the manager John Watson were discharged. (*Daily Telegraph* 1/10/1895 P3) The site was left with the new manager Parsons and one man prospecting. Parsons had been manager at the hydraulic mine of the Pioneer and Grand Junction Cos. at Mitta, Victoria.<sup>137</sup>

### **5. Brooklyn H. G. M. Co.**

The Brooklyn Hydraulic Gold Mining Company's mine was also west of the Savage River. The water race was about two miles long and the water supply came from No Name Creek and True Lover Creek. Work began in March 1895 when tenders were called for the head-race. However the workings appeared to have been only minimal. In June the manager reported being unable to start sluice 'On account of the pipes not fitting', but he intended to "keep going with picks until the balance of the pipes arrive." The head-race and dam were "standing well."<sup>138</sup>

The mine was about 1 mile from the Pieman River. Sluicing operations started at a site where the prospects were  $\frac{1}{2}$  a grain of gold to the dish (960 dishes from the source). The mine was not a success.<sup>139</sup>

### **6. Nicholson H. G. M. Co.**

The Nicholson No 1 Hydraulic Gold Mining Company's lease was also in that area, probably north of the Savage River Company's lease. Before mining began, bulk samples of the proposed mining site were taken from Corinna to Launceston by the steamer *SS Dorset* The samples were treated in Launceston and gave excellent results. The manager of the mine was Mr W. P. Kirwan, an old miner from New Zealand with experience in hydraulic gold mining. The obituary of this mine was the same old story - by then well known in the district - not enough gold to pay the wages.

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<sup>136</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 1/1/1895 P3.

<sup>137</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 31/7/1895 P4.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 1/6/1895 P.5.

<sup>139</sup> Julen P.13.

The sad news of too many mines folding up promoted the management of the Donaldson Hydraulic Gold Mining Company to stop all their opening up work and not to give the property a trial. A water race from the Donaldson River to the mine was left uncompleted.

The 600 acre lease between the Savage River and the Donaldson River was then taken over by a new company, the New Donaldson Hydraulic Gold Mining Company. The camp for the workers was about three miles from the Pieman River. It was reached by a good track from the Donaldson Landing. Sluicing operations were carried out at Sunday Creek (Sabbath Creek?) and Guthries Creek, but the results were not payable.<sup>140</sup>

## 7. Lucy Spur H. G. M. Co.

The Lucy Spur company spent the most money of any company on the Corinna goldfield. Most of the money was spent on an ambitious water race from the Meredith Range, a very costly affair. The race was 22 km long, 1.2 metres wide and 60 cm deep. Included in this distance was 24 chains (482m) of fluming at an average height of 1 metre, and a tunnel 13 chains (260m) long, including approachings. There was also a syphon, 11 chains (220m) long, made from iron pipes 75 cm in diameter.<sup>141</sup>

Initially the Lucy Spur and Razor Back G. M. Co. were apparently a joint company. The latter was based on the Whyte River near its junction with the Rocky River. Here a tunnel was proposed by Geologist Montgomery, cutting off a loop in the river and allowing mining of the river-bed.<sup>142</sup> The proposal was commented on by a mining expert Alfred Ransom (AMICE) of London who was sent to report on the feasibility of the tunnel and found it "perfectly practicable."<sup>143</sup> 50 men were already "gaining good gold" in the river above the Razor Back.

The Rocky River G. M. Co was formed to work the area. By late January, the tunnel was driven 187 feet. The Lucy Spur Co reported initial prospecting in February. By March, No. 4 Shaft was sunk to 38 feet; No 5 to 41 feet; No. 6 to 27 feet and No. 7 to 23 feet.<sup>144</sup> By March, 2 miles of head-race had been let to tender, plus 13 chains of tunnelling. The tunnel was to be 280 ft long; 100 feet was already driven.<sup>145</sup>

A visitor reported that the survey of the head-race to bring water from Rocky River was nearly completed, and would have a total length of 8 miles. "A tunnel 13 chains in length including approaches, is underway, and the work will also embrace 11 chains of syphon piping and 21 chains of fluming at an average height of 10 ft." (*Daily Telegraph* 5/4/1895 P5) A tunnel 280 feet long in which the sluice boxes were to be placed at the head of the tail-race was planned, and 100 ft had been dug. (op cit). By July the manager, T. Dunn, reported "The work for the tunnel has been considerably delayed as the rock has come in very hard, and only 20 feet has been driven in a week....Work on the fluming is progressing satisfactorily,

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<sup>140</sup> Julen P. 13.

<sup>141</sup> Julen P.14.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 14/1/1895 P4.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 18/1/1895 P3.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 21/3/1895 P3.

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 22/3/1895 P3.

but the syphon work is getting along slowly. The sledge track is bad and the pipes heavy, hence the delay."<sup>146</sup>

### **8. Frenchman's Spur H. G. M. Co.**

The Frenchman's Peak lease was first secured by Jolley a Launceston stock and sharebroker, for a Launceston syndicate. In April 1895 Mr Jolly considered that the work done on the property warranted him to offer it to Mr D. C. Griffiths, assayer to the Bank of England, then in Tasmania in the interest of the Thornily Exploration Syndicate Ltd of London. On June 15 the English syndicate bought the lease for £3000 and the Frenchman's Peak Hydraulic Gold Mining Company was floated in England.<sup>147</sup>

"Before the sale, the property was so thoroughly and systematically prospected that not a shadow of doubt exists as to its payable nature. The English Co. is not anticipating 1000 ounces of gold a month but is not likely to meet with any disappointment"<sup>148</sup>

Ireland sank 12 shafts at regular distances, from 25 to 41 feet in depth; he claimed that the gravel found was "payable throughout."<sup>149</sup>

The mine obtained the water supply from the Rocky River by a 12 km long water race. The first clean up was in September 1896, but it was not payable and the mine was forced to close down.

The mine-manager was Mark Ireland, an experienced alluvial miner from the earlier rush.

### **End of the Rush**

Thus ended one of the maddest and most disastrous mining booms that ever took place in Tasmania.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 27/7/1895 P8.

<sup>147</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 28/5/1895.

<sup>148</sup> Mining Notes by "Freelance", *Daily Telegraph* July 29, 1895.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 2/4/1895.

<sup>150</sup> Julen P.14.



## Chapter 11

### Corinna, the Abandoned Village

With the failure of the hydraulic boom, Corinna again shrank. However, the Pieman hinterland still held miners working claims. The licence for the *Star Hotel* was not renewed after 1898, while the Corinna Hotel which was now owned by Lydia Webster (Gam's widow) and her new husband, John Fraser, was without a licence after 1900.<sup>151</sup>

After the death of Gam she and the family had continued to operate the hotel, as well as the Pieman River punt. "The bell for the punt would ring at all hours and brothers Charles and John would get out of bed to answer the late calls and pull the punt across the river."<sup>152</sup>

The couples' wedding occurred in 1898 followed by the birth of twins in 1899. After this, the family moved to Waratah.

Amy Davis, the widow of Thomas Davis, remarried at Corinna in 1898 to a 44 year old prospector, Walter Campbell Smith.<sup>153</sup> A third marriage at Corinna in 1898 occurred between Mary Corinna Foster and William Chubin, a 29 year old New Zealand born miner.<sup>154</sup> Another wedding occurred in 1899 when Constance Foster married a 30 year old miner, William Fergusson.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Julen P18.

<sup>152</sup> Sims P. 172.

<sup>153</sup> Sims P.174.

<sup>154</sup> Sims, P.179.

<sup>155</sup> Sims, P.176.

## Chapter 12

### Whyte River Gold - The Last 'Boom.':

At the turn of the century, a series of operations including tunnels were carried out in the area where the Whyte and Rocky Rivers meet. These are described in detail in a number of reports, including geologists Twelvetrees (1900), Reid (1921) and Blake (1939). The mine was reached by a suspension bridge over the Whyte River. The mine featured extensive tunnelling with at least three main adits

#### Operations 1900.

In 1899 an extensive tunnelling operation was carried out under mine manager Wilks. Twelvetrees reported the following works.

No. 1. 150 feet above the Whyte River, driven south with long cross-cuts east and west.

No. 2 Twenty feet above the Whyte River driven south and to a depth of 796 feet, plus several cross-cuts.

No. 3. driven NW from the Rocky River 290 feet ; cross-cuts to intersect those from No. 2.

The Company intended constructing a tram-way along the Whyte River valley to Corinna. This does not seem to have occurred. Additional workings in the area were reported by Blake; exploration continues today.

#### Dredging

The junction of the Whyte and Rocky Rivers was the first location where dredging for gold, osmiridium and tin was attempted. This was tried by the Whyte River Gold Dredging Company N/L from 1901 to 1903. The plant was constructed in Launceston, cost 5,000 pounds, and was fitted with 25 buckets of 3.5 cubic capacity plus three grabs.<sup>156</sup> See photo

#### An Osmiridium 'Boom'

A brief revival for Corinna occurred with interest in osmiridium mining. As the main field was the Whyte River, Corinna only befitted marginally from the boom. A township was established at the Whyte River, and was later called Luina. Jack Foster, (son of John Foster) worked the Rocky River field with his nephew Benjamin Gray in the 1920's, after which he moved to Wonthaggi in Victoria.<sup>157</sup>

Meanwhile, discovery of mining fields near Queenstown and Zeehan saw a rejuvenation of interest at the Pieman Heads, manned by the legendary ferryman, Johnny Arberg.

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<sup>156</sup> Blake, P. 42.

<sup>157</sup> Sims P. 175.

## Chapter 13

### Drovers and Ferrymen

#### **Pieman Heads & the West Coast Cattle Trail: 1882 - 1930**

Originally the settlement at Pieman Heads was established to supply the early mining site of the Heemskirk but the settlement outlived its original purpose. The Heads, however, continued to operate as a collecting point for Huon pine washed down by floods. With the later opening of the mines at Balfour, references also appear to miners heading north from Zeehan across the Pieman, and again needing the use of the ferry. Despite the initial failure of the Heemskirk fields and the growth of other permanent mining settlements at Zeehan, the Pieman Heads was an essential crossing point for a new function created by the mining boom further south at Zeehan, Dundas and Queenstown. This was the supply of beef cattle walked overland from the North West coast to the miners at Zeehan along the west coast cattle trail.

The two essential components in the success of the trail were the supply of cattle from the far north-west, and the demand for meat at the new mining settlements including Zeehan. The route taken by the drovers, plus the location and skill of the ferrymen who were positioned on the mouths of the three main rivers over which the mobs of cattle had to pass, explains this interdependence. The ferrymen and their huts and stock-yards were situated on the heads of the Arthur, Pieman and Henty rivers. Some of the minor streams had bridges for the cattle. The ferries were also used to ferry heavy horses from the Zeehan mines to pasture on the North West Coast.

A fortuitous meeting in 1992 brought to life the early days of stock droving along the west coast of Tasmania. This arose from an interview by Peter MacFie with a former stockman who rode the trail, the late Jack Cowan, in later life, a Devonport butcher.

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A description in 1893 of a journey on foot along the west coast trail by a party including Austin Allom, gives a vivid description of the route used by the stockmen and their herds. Reported in the Daily Telegraph, the party departed from Smith's Boat Harbour carrying their swags. Along the route between the rivers the visitors found that drovers were supplied with huts. On the coast route from Montague to Zeehan, reference is made in a walking trip down the coast in 1893 to a well-stocked drovers' hut at Sandy Cape. The party were forced to ford several streams in flood.<sup>158</sup>

#### Towards the Pieman

On the 19th we made an early start. The bad weather has gone and the day is clear and warm, with a light easterly wind. Our route is by the sandy beach, along which we jog, carrying a good swag, as we take 10 days' provisions besides the tent, axes, picks, and shovels and prospecting dish. The first stoppage was caused by the Pedder River, about 2½ miles out, which we found in flood. Owing to the huge seas that continually rushed in at the mouth there was extreme difficulty in getting across. But we managed to do so after waiting about two hours, keeping a good look out for quicksands. Beautiful strips of sandy beach were met with,

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<sup>158</sup> Austin Allom, "A Trip to the West Coast," Daily Telegraph, 30 September 1893, p. ??

and after crossing three other streams, at the last of which we had to strip off everything, carrying our swags and clothes on our head, we reached the hut at Sandy Cape which is used by the drovers. Wet through, cold, and hungry, we thought it best to remain for the night, although it was only 3 p.m. Having refreshed ourselves with a billy of tea, we had a little turn before dark to take in all there was to be seen. On the point at Sandy Cape the first granite is seen that has been observed on this trip. The country is undulating, in places marshy with here and herds of cattle dotted over the higher ground near the coast. Strips of bush occur now and then, composed of peppermint, ti-tree, etc. The Norfolk Range, with Mount Norfolk nearly abreast of us, is again seen bounding our horizon to the eastward. We scan the coast in the gathering twilight from the extreme verge of the Cape. The sea is now exceptionally calm and the mighty Indian Ocean almost at rest. Very beautiful is the solitary and peaceful scene before us. The little wavelets quietly lap the rocks. No other sounds are heard save the pleasant rippling and swishing of the water up and down the sands, and the distant lowing of cattle.

On the return trip, the group again stayed at the Sandy Cape hut before heading overland to rendezvous with the yacht *Nellie* at Woolnorth.

The Lagoon River was reached early in the afternoon, but we found that we have to put up with short commons in the way of food until we can rejoin the *Nellie* to-morrow. So we turn to our evening meal with a good heart. This consisted of a small piece of bread divided into three portions, with a plentiful supply of onions and salt, washed down with a pannikin of strong tea minus the sugar.

On the 25th, after an early breakfast of onions and tea, we are shown an inland track, which will take us to the coast a few miles south of Sandy Cape. Crossing the Lagoon River by means of a very substantial bridge about 150 ft in length, which is seldom used, we continue over clear, undulating country, and splashing through half a mile of swamps get out on the beach. The rivers which gave us so much trouble on the outward journey were now easily forded. Arriving at the drovers' hut at Sandy Cape, we have reason to be grateful for the thoughtfulness of the cattle drovers, as they had left us a plentiful supply of bacon, flour, butter, etc. It is needless to say that we were soon in good fettle to proceed, and towards dusk were again on board our little craft in Smith's Boat Harbour. She had for a companion the ketch *E. H. Purden*, which had arrived on the day we saw her at Sandy Cape.

Arrangements were made for the *Nellie* to start for Woolnorth as soon as possible, picking me up then if by any accident I should fail to appear on here sounding the whistle off Green Point. Charlie follows us with Mr Evans' bullock dray. As we proceed on the journey Mr Evans spoke earnestly of the management of the Lands Department in respect to the taking up of land for pastoral purposes on the West Coast. There are strips of country fringing the coast which are very suitable for running cattle. Those vary in width from a quarter to half a mile, the rest of the country inland being valueless for that purpose. Between Smith's Boat Harbour and Whale's Head a track of such country was pointed out to me. Mr Evans complains that an applicant for 500 acres at Whale's Head is allowed to monopolise the whole line of coast for five or six miles. It is said that this arises from the indifference of the department as to land marks in this part of the country, and to the absence of surveyed boundaries. I was assured that many are deterred from taking up land on the coast from this cause. At mid-day we reached ... Rebecca Beach. A few miles north of Whale's Head. Tethering our horses, we stopped for lunch.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Allom, op cit.

## West Coast Ferries and Tracks

Establishment of ferries on key points of the largest rivers was part of a policy of track development aimed at opening access for prospecting parties.

### The Start of the Government Ferries.

First references to the West Coast track and the Arthur River ferry appear in the Government Gazette of 1881 -84. In 1881 an initial tender was let for 100 pounds, 600 pounds in 1882, and continued in 1883. These tenders were let for the road from Circular Head to the Pieman River. This entailed "Bridging streams and improving tracks " from Circular Head to the Pieman via Montague.<sup>160</sup>

In 1884 a tender was accepted for the Arthur River ferry.<sup>161</sup> By 1890, tenders, which were renewed on a yearly basis, were accepted for the Arthur and Henty Rivers.

By 1900 the ferrymen at the rivers were:

Corinna -J. D. Fraser & J. Arhberg.

Henty - T. P. H. Jones.

Arthur- H. Gardiner.

## Ferries on the Pieman

The Pieman was the only one which had two ferries operating on the one river. These served mainly separate functions; the Heads was mainly a cattle crossing with miners a secondary purpose, while at the Corinna Ferry the priorities were the reverse. At the Heads the cattle crossed in summer, at Corinna they were ferried over in winter.

### The Pieman Cattle Punts

At the Arthur River and the Pieman, punts were provided for cattle to cross in the winter floods, although stock were swum across at the Heads when possible The first reference to punt is one for the Arthur River in 1897 when 200 pounds was provided

### The Corinna Ferry

In 1891 the first reference is made to acceptance of the tender for the Corinna ferry from T. P. Devlyn (the post-master), at an annual rate of 26 pounds, including maintenance. In that year a tender for the construction of the punt for the Pieman River was let to Wilson and Tolman for just under 164 pounds.<sup>162</sup> Devlyn continued to operate the punt at Corinna until 1903.

### The Pieman Heads Ferryman

Johnny Arhberg was the ferry man at Pieman Heads from 1899 until his death in 1937. However, earlier reports reveal that a ferryman at the Pieman in 1893 when Austin Allom, a journalist with the Launceston Daily Telegraph , stayed at the ferrymen's hut. This was situated half a mile from the Heads. The ferryman then was Mat Higgins, a former champion runner.

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<sup>160</sup> Tasmanian Government Gazette, 1883, p. 191.

<sup>161</sup> Tasmanian Government Gazette, 1884, p. 1175.

<sup>162</sup> Tasmanian Government Gazette 1991, p. 1758.

We came to a halt for some time on the northern bank of the Lagoon River, which was found difficult to cross owing to the heavy seas at the mouth, bank of one of the finest, if not the finest, of the rivers of Tasmania. The barking of a dog attracts our attention to a couple of huts on the opposite side of the river. We coo-ee, and, much to our surprise, are immediately answered. Throwing down our swags, we await for ten minutes the coming of a boat, but as no one appears we hail "Boat-a-hoy!" "Boat-a-hoy!" is at once repeated in the distance. We now recognise this as the finest echo we have ever heard. As no one comes to us we have no alternative but to "boil the bill," and after two hours' waiting a boat was seen pulling across, which quickly landed us on the other side. We gladly accepted the offer of a boat for the next day to pull up to Corinna, a distance of 14 miles. Before dark we strolled towards the mouth of the river, which is here upwards of 250 yards wide. The sandy beach on the southern shore is strewn with timber, principally Huon pine (*Daorydium Franklinii*), the grandest and most useful of Tasmanian soft woods. The surf, which is continually breaking on the formidable bar at the entrance, is a fine sight.

Returning to the huts we gather a little information. The huts were built some years ago, and have served as a bush inn when the banks of the Pieman rang with the sound of the bushman's axe, and large quantities of Huon pine were shipped to the other colonies. Here we had some conversation with Mat Higgins, formerly the champion pedestrian of the colonies. He told us how he defeated Bird, the great English runner, and others in a half-mile race in 1 minute and 59 seconds. Over the fire and our pipes some of his other contests were fought again, and many details were related as to the running matches of former days.<sup>163</sup>

### **Johnny Arhberg, Pieman River Ferryman.**

Appointed as government ferryman in 1899, Arhberg remained for 38 years. Born in Stockholm on 1859, he is reported to have jumped ship and taken to prospecting in the Pieman area in the late 1890's. Appointed at an allowance of one pound per week and a gallon of white paint for his dinghies, Arhberg was a "useful cog in the machinery of the country's progress."<sup>164</sup> Johnny collected a number of small dinghies at the Heads. In 1905 he requested "2 pairs of 8 foot oars for ferry boats; 20 pounds of white lead and 1 gallon of boiled linseed oil."<sup>165</sup>

In 1910 a new 12 foot Huon pine dinghy was built for Arhberg by Mr Abel of Zeehan. The new boat was 12 foot by 4 ft 6 in beam, with a false keel of 3 ft. The letters "PWD" were painted in 4 inch letters. The boat was "a first class job in Huon pine, with a rudder, oar and tiller" and was "well-painted." at a cost of 13 pounds.<sup>166</sup>

### **Conflict over the Ferries.**

In 1903, in complaining over a lack of a subsidy for the Corinna ferry, compared to the Pieman, punt-keeper Devlyn commented on:

the ferries at the Pieman Heads and Arthur River(which) have large cattle traffic, horse and passengers ditto, scarcely any free service, and yet...with good traffic and income the ferryman

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<sup>163</sup> Daily Telegraph 30/9/1893, p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> F Smithies in Examiner 7/8/1937, Launceston History Room. State Library of Tasmania.

<sup>165</sup> PWD 43/6 1/6/1905. AOT.

<sup>166</sup> PWD 43/6 ,19/2/1910. AOT.

are paid by the Department (of Public Works) and in addition the cost of living is much less than here."<sup>167</sup>

In 1903 James Turnbull became Corinna store-keeper and punt operator. From 1903 until Turnbull left in 1907, conflict existed between he and Johnny Arhberg the most appropriate location of the Pieman punt. In 1910 the Zeehan Town Clerk recommended that Arhberg's salary be raised by 1 pound per week.

"He has to devote the whole of his time to the work and he frequently provides food for the men passing through to the Balfour field who are without means to pay for provisions."<sup>168</sup>

Although the Corinna ferry had many free "official" users, Johnny also had many non-paying passengers.

you will see by the report of last month there was 90 passengers but only 43 paid for ferrying." The income for the month was 2 pound 17 shillings and 6 pence. A table shows 90 people and 9 horses crossing at the Heads, or 81 of the travellers were walking.<sup>169</sup>

Arhberg also used the track from the Pieman Heads to Zeehan to collect stores and occasionally deliver an urgent message. In January 1913 he complained of being in debt from collecting stores from Zeehan to Pieman Heads.<sup>170</sup> Smithies recalled that when he was delayed at the Pieman in 1924 because of bad weather, Arhberg carried an emergency telegram to Zeehan.

Riding his old horse all through one dirty night , by way of desolate button-grass plains, along sea beaches on one of the wildest coastlines in the world, and across several small rivers, he carried letters and telegrams to a man 12 miles down the coast who was leaving at daybreak the next morning for Zeehan, to allay the fears of those who might be anxious as to our whereabouts....<sup>171</sup>

### **The Ferryman's Hut at the Heads.**

As mentioned, the huts of the 1890's were built for piners and early mining exploration. Arhberg appears to have lived in one of the early huts built by the piners. His first small four-roomed dwelling was about half a mile from the mouth of the river.<sup>172</sup> He lived by shooting and snaring wallaby, for which he kept a few kangaroo dogs. He also had a few fowls at the Heads. His horses, like the other domestic animals, were well-fed, and hand-fed in the winter.

In 1912, Grubb, the PWD inspector recommended replacing Arhberg's hut with a new house, to be built from materials salvaged from a galvanised iron store on the western shore at the Pieman Heads. This store was unoccupied for many years and was owned by the Mt Lyell Railway and Mining Company.<sup>173</sup> In early 1913 this was agreed to , and a four-roomed

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<sup>167</sup> PWD 43/6 30//3/1903. AOT.

<sup>168</sup> PWD 43/6 22.1.1910. AOT.

<sup>169</sup> PWD 43/6 1/2/1910. AOT.

<sup>170</sup> PWD 1/1/1913. AOT.

<sup>171</sup> Examiner op cit, 7/8/1937.

<sup>172</sup> R. E. Hingston, *The Saturday Advocate*, 24/4/1976,.P.10. Launceston History Room. State Library of Tasmania.

<sup>173</sup> PWD 43/6 1/11/1912. AOT.

cottage, 24 ft by 28 ft was approved, to be covered on the outside by galvanised iron, and lined with three- eights matchwood, at a cost of 35 pounds.<sup>174</sup>

In the end, demolition of the iron store was rejected by the Company. Instead, the Department agreed to allow Arhberg to supply framing material from "a large building " he was demolishing at Corinna. According to one report, this was Gam Webster's "Corinna Hotel."<sup>175</sup> The building was to be "lined with three eights tongue-and-groove pine and good floors."<sup>176</sup> By August Inspector Grubb reported that he had

.....finished building this cottage of four large rooms and one small store room and also passage. 10 ft walls, 4 by 2 studs, pine floor, lined throughout with three eight T and G pine. Total size overall 32 by 25 feet. Roof and sides all iron and large chimney (iron) (sic) and bricks inside. Huon pine foundation blocks.

This is a good serviceable cottage not only for the ferrymen, but will be well appreciated by people travelling to Pieman Heads and Balfour.<sup>177</sup>

### **Documentary Evidence.**

The appearance of the later cottage is recorded in a c. 1930 movie, and plans of 1938. A plan for the cottage has also survived, but with measurements on a separate sketch. (See appendix) Another sketch map of the Heads shows the hut inland from the sand-bar on the river bank. (see appendix)

In November 1935 the house at the Heads was inspected for the PWD by Overseer P. Foy. The report found:

“Roof iron rusted very badly  
 2 new windows (needed ?) in front  
 Chimney smoked terribly interior of kitchen black  
 Hearth very bad a bag of cement would do the job.  
 The 5 rooms want scrim and papering also passage.  
 Rooms in front of house are 10 foot high at back 8 ft 6 in, sloping.”

This report also gave the dimensions of the rooms. (see drawings attached.) The house consisted of a large kitchen-living area, three bedrooms and a small pantry.

The renovations were expected to cost about 100 pounds.<sup>178</sup>

**Johnny Arhberg's Other Duties.** In addition to his role as ferryman , Arhberg acted as recorder of rainfall figures from the Pieman Heads. Other records reveal him as a collector of

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<sup>174</sup> PWD 43/6/5/2/1913. AOT.

<sup>175</sup> R. E. Hingston, op cit p. 10. Launceston History Room. State Library of Tasmania.

<sup>176</sup> PWD 43/6 , 21/2/13. AOT.

<sup>177</sup> PWD 30/8/1913. AOT.

<sup>178</sup> PWD 43/6, 15/11/1935. AOT.



Huon pine logs which were washed down and beached on the sand-bar at the Heads. These were collected for a contractor, H. Conder in 1919.<sup>179</sup>

### **The Corinna Cattle Punt.**

The Corinna punt was leased to R. McKimmie and Co from 1/6/1897.<sup>180</sup> Devlyn appears to have done the operating, and may have been working on behalf of McKimmie. The punt served a dual role carrying miners, cattle and the telegraph linesman and his pack-horses. The Commonwealth Department of Post and Telegraph at Zeehan claimed in 1903 that their electrician, James Turnbull (who kept the Waratah-Zeehan telegraph wire operating.) was the only other person at Corinna who could operate the ferry. "He uses the ferry more than any one else crossing his pack-horses. Without attention the old wire rope would not last long. At flood times the rope has to be risin (sic) out of the water to prevent it being caught by trees coming down."<sup>181</sup> By 1907 Arhberg reported that Turnbull had left and that "there is nobody living in the town."<sup>182</sup> Johnny Arhberg was then given operation of the punt at Corinna.

By 1914 the original punt had sunk. F. C. Henry of Strahan wrote to suggest..."having the cattle punt raised and put into working order." as the "government men" were working nearby,. and pointing out it was "dangerous to swim the cattle."<sup>183</sup> The "Cattle Truck at Corinna" was inspected and found to be three parts under water. "Size of the punt, Length 26 ft, Width 10 ft. Depth 2 ft. The punt will require to be generally repaired. Two new gate, the decking will have to be re-corked. Nicholas the butcher said that even if repaired "he would not travel cattle via Corinna."<sup>184</sup> Use of the punt for cattle in winter is however, recorded. In 1921 Inspector Hardstaff reported, 'Mr J. Arhberg informed me that he had just took four 4 (sic) boat loads of cattle over on the punt just recently.'<sup>185</sup>

The regular use of the West Coast cattle trail via the Corinna punt is indicated by the Cartledges travelling from Temma to Zeehan in April 1924 to attend a horse race only to find the course washed out:

The committee acted in time to stop almost all the owners of visiting horses from making an unnecessary journey. The only exception was that of Messrs. J. H. and C. E. Cartledge, of Temma, (Mt Balfour), father and son, who rode the rough journey via Corinna, of 30 miles in order to take part in the meeting. The son rode a fine upstanding trotter named Jim Logan; the father a stalwart hack....<sup>186</sup>

The damaged state of the punt caused the Inspector to instruct Arhberg to take the punt down to the Heads with a dinghy until they were repaired.

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<sup>179</sup> PWD 35 /63, 3/2/1919. AOT.

<sup>180</sup> Map N4/6, DEP.

<sup>181</sup> PWD 43/6 13/5/1903. AOT.

<sup>182</sup> PWD 14/8/1907. AOT.

<sup>183</sup> PWD 43/6, 9/12/ 1914. AOT.

<sup>184</sup> PWD 43/6, 31/12/1914. AOT.

<sup>185</sup> PWD 43/6, 17/5/1921. AOT.

<sup>186</sup> Weekly Courier 24/2/1934 p. 36.

The punt remained the Heads until 1933 when question were asked about relocating it back to Corinna.<sup>187</sup>(A new punt was built instead. )

In 1935 Arhberg was found to have helped ferry 130 cattle across. at an allowance of 50 pounds p.a. plus a toll on the cattle. By contrast, Mr McKaige, the Arthur River ferryman received 75 pounds p.a., and also collects fees for a "considerable quantity of cattle passing backwards and forwards over the river." . At the Pieman, "in the previous two years no cattle had crossed at all."<sup>188</sup>

**Cattle Yard at Pieman Heads:** F. Smithies movie film, c. 1930, and a still photo shows stock-yards built from split posts at the rear of Arhberg's cottage. Evidence of a cattle yard at the Heads also occurs in a complaint from "D. Nicholas, Wholesale and Family Butcher, Main St. Zeehan" over "repairs (which were ) needed for the cattle yard, Pieman Heads.....no money has been spent for the last 16 years."<sup>189</sup> Repairs were still needed on the cattle-yard in 1919, as was "re-decking of the bridge across the big crick (sic)."<sup>190</sup> The main yards were on the northern bank to hold stock over-night before being swum across the Pieman. This allowed men, horses and cattle to recover.

### Stock-men and Cattle at the Heads.

Information on the movement of cattle comes from a number of sources, including the late Jack Cowan, who drove on the stock route in the 1930s, and in 1992 lived in retirement at Devonport.

#### Jack Cowan, Stockman and Butcher.

Interviewed in April 1992 by Peter MacFie, the late Mr Cowan also recalled the yards at the Heads. (See over Chapter 14.) In the 1920's, Jack lived in Zeehan where his father was a prospector. Their next door neighbours were the Nicholas family, the Zeehan butchers.

As a lad Jack formed a close friendship with Dave Nicholas, (sic) the Zeehan butcher who had a 1000 acre farm at Granville Harbour. Jack would visit the farm and...participate in driving the young beef stock down from the North West Coast via Balfour to the Pieman River. There would be a complete days rest for the cattle before swimming the river.....

Towards the end of World War I there was a great shortage of iron ore in Australia and Jack had to get a message to Johnnie Arhberg to proceed to Corinna to convey a party of Directors of the Hoskings Mining Co wishing to develop the Savage River iron ore deposits.....Jack remembers that day well, just a lad of 13 years when he and his pony Lyall, left Zeehan at 7 am, rode to Granville Harbour, then taking to the beach. He swam his pony across the Surprise and Duck Creeks, and continues across the button-grass plains following the marker pegs to the mouth of the Pieman and Johnnie Ahrberg's shack, arriving about 5 pm.<sup>191</sup>

In 1924 the Weekly Courier carried the report of the whereabouts of Fred Smithies and H. King travelling on motor-bikes. They had camped at the Heads with two drovers "J. H. and C. E. Cartledge also en route per horseback to Zeehan."<sup>192</sup> Smithies himself reported how the

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<sup>187</sup> PWD 43/6, 18/12/33.

<sup>188</sup> PWD 43/6, /4/3/1935. AOT.

<sup>189</sup> PWD 35/63, 2/9/1912. AOT.

<sup>190</sup> PWD 1/8/1919 AOT.

<sup>191</sup> Firth, p. 27.

<sup>192</sup> Weekly Courier 3/4/1924,p. 27.

ferryman's cottage became a crowded house when " Dave Nicholas of Zeehan arrived with two Burnie residents Messrs. McGrath and Munn, so that for the last few days of our stay our party was somewhat enlarged."<sup>193</sup>

The Cartledges who "swam their horses over the Pieman, came on to Zeehan (bringing) mail from the motor cyclists to their relatives..."<sup>194</sup>

In 1934, there was a further push for relocation of the Pieman Ferry to Corinna. This was opposed by the Circular Head Council as "Pieman Heads is the outlet of stock from Circular Head to the West Coast."<sup>195</sup> In 1935 D Nicholas of Burnie "the principle user of the Pieman Heads ferry", intended "using this ferry a good deal shortly by crossing stock..."<sup>196</sup> This claim was later disputed by the PWD who were advised that "no cattle have crossed the Pieman Heads since 1937, and there is very little other traffic."<sup>197</sup>

### Passing of the Ferryman

By the 1930's the decline in mining and the opening up of the Burnie-Zeehan railway resulted in the Pieman Heads being rarely visited. Arhberg's failing health resulted in a call for him to be replaced. In 1935 Johnny was described by (police) Sergeant Everett of Zeehan as "too old and feeble for the job he is obtaining supplies of liquor in the camp and is often drunk, there is some danger of him burning himself and the building. He is of very little use to the people wishing to make a crossing with cattle. The camp is kept in a filthy condition and not fit for occupation."<sup>198</sup> In 1937, Johnny was diagnosed as having cancer and moved to Wynyard Hospital where he died on 1st of August, 1937.<sup>199</sup>

A F Grainger became the new ferryman. A new jetty was erected at the Pieman Heads, and the ferryman was given the task of "clearing around the buildings and cutting a Tourust (sic) track to Conical Harbour."<sup>200</sup> In 1940, after the death of Arhberg, the last cattle-man to use the Pieman Heads crossing was G. A. Kay of Alcomie, a "large holding at Temma. All cattle that had crossed the Pieman in recent years came from his farm."<sup>201</sup> Kay opposed the closure of the ferry stating that he "may want to use it in the near future."

**Closure of the Ferry.** In 1941 when James Ingles was the ferryman at the Heads , the government decided to close the Ferry.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> The Weekly Courier, 27/3/1924 ,P.40. S L.S.

<sup>194</sup> Weekly Courier 27/3/1924p. 36.

<sup>195</sup> PWD 16/5/1934. AOT.

<sup>196</sup> PWD 43/6, 7/10/1935. AOT.

<sup>197</sup> PWD 13/6/1940. AOT.

<sup>198</sup> PWD 43/6 10/8/1935. AOT.

<sup>199</sup> Arhberg correspondence file AOT.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid 27/5/1937.

<sup>201</sup> PWD 43/6 9/9/1940. AOT.

<sup>202</sup> PWD 43/6, 5/4/1941. AOT.



## Chapter 14

### The West Coast Cattle Trail Remembered

Jack Cowan (aged 86)

Retired butcher

Interviewed at Devonport, Tasmania

by Peter MacFie

1 May 1992

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#### Tape 1 Side A

PM We'd just talk about your early days of childhood down there, and your recollections of the area and especially the tracks in and out of the Pieman.

JC Yes, yes. Well, we perhaps a bit of talk a bit about before, before you had it switched on. We used to ride on horseback from Zeehan to Nicholls's farm, Heemskirk. We'd ride over button grass plains. Go down through Surprise Creek, Duck Creek, and get onto the beach and ride the beach for about, oh, I wouldn't know now. Ten or twelve miles I suppose. And then you go over a button grass plain, and to get to the Pieman, they used to have high pegs all, just 2 by 1s. driven in the ground about every half mile, and that kept you on the track you see. And you got to the Pieman. Well, you got to the Pieman (River), Johnny Arberg was there, he was the ferryman. He used to ferry us across the river.

PM What with?

JC With a row boat. Just an ordinary dinghy, and then they'd get one beast to go in the river, and they would be all there and they'd jam in, follow one another across.

PM How big a mob are we talking about?

JC Oh, we'd bring about forty to sixty I suppose, each trip. Then they would put them on their farm, and then fatten them there, and then they'd bring them into Zeehan and supply Zeehan, Strahan and Queenstown with their meats. But they, they had a very good property out there. I often like the idea of going back and, where we were, be again, but getting a bit too old, as you get on, to see how things have gone. But I remember one period there that Alan Nicholls, he had a horse – a mare – he thought

a terrible lot of, and anyhow, his father was Dave Nicholls, and we got the cattle down to the Pieman, and this horse had a cold, and Alan didn't want to put it in the river. His father said "Oh, she'll be right, she'll be right, she'll be right." She only got halfway across and she drowned, and Alan he never got over that horse for years, or months anyhow. He never got over the effect of losing her. Because if he'd left her there, she would have got over the cold, and she would have been right. But the old man used to control him.

PM He knew best?

JC Yes, he knew best. But then they used to have the dinghy and they'd row the dinghy back and have the horses on a long rope, you'd see, and the horses, they'd lead the horses across the river and the cattle'd follow the horse. They'd come out on the other side and they'd collect them and drive them over this button grass plains. How I came to be... How I came to be... A fella named Thomas was the manager for the Hoskins people, the people at the iron ore people. There was iron ore there. They were coming in down the coast and going up the Pieman River. Instead of the way they are taking it out now, you see. And I can remember this Thomas came to my father this morning, to see if I'd take a letter to John Arberg, up the Corinna, to pick up these Hoskins people, to come down and have a look at this big mountain of rock that is in the mouth of the river, and they were talking of blowing it out and bringing the boats up there to take the iron ore away, you see. Anyhow, I agreed to go. I knew the way well, so anyhow I just came about 7 o'clock in the morning, a little pony I had. Lila I called her, and anyhow, one of the Nicholls's farm, I thought I'd spend half an hour with them, but they were all back on their own property. Wild perhaps. Anyhow, I decided to ride on, and I rode on and got as far as coming off the track onto the sea. I had to swim a creek. Well, the creek was always there, but the day I went it was flooded and I had to swim this little pony across the creek and I got wet to the ... Anyhow, I had to.. Duck Creek, I got to Duck Creek, and that was flooded too. I had to swim that. Anyhow it was about...

PM What time of year are you talking about?

JC Oh, I couldn't tell you the time of year. It must have been well in the winter I suppose, because of course there is a lot of rain on the West Coast, or did them days. But anyhow, I arrived at Johnny Arberg's about 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening and I'd been riding since 7 o'clock in the morning bar half an hour I suppose at the farm at Nicholls's, and I got to Johnny Arberg's and he wasn't in his hut. I got a shock there, so I put the pony... I knew where to put the pony. I put her away and give her a feed, and I shut around the place. And anyhow, some time later, Johnny turned up.

PM Did they have a stable or something there for the stock?

JC No. He had a horse. Johnny Arberg had a horse, you see.

PM Did he?

JC Yes, and he always had a good sort of shed anyhow to put him in. I put my horse in there, anyhow he turned up a half an hour or so after, and when he sees me, he knew me and talked and said 'I've got to get back and get me skins.' That was the season it was, you see. Anyway, he was getting the skins, but when he sees my pony's footmarks in the sand, he knew there was someone about, so he planted his skins. Anyhow, he went back and got them and came. Anyhow, I left the next morning to ride back home again.

PM Did you spend much time talking to him?

JC Oh, overnight. All night, during the night. We always had kangaroo stew. Oh, he was a great cook he was. Another time, later in my life, the last fifty years or so, Fred Custerton – Hobart Custerton – he wanted to get out and get a log down there to cut in and make a boat. Anyhow, we decided to go this way. He took his truck down as far as Corinna and we went down and arrived down the Pieman. Anyhow, Johnny Arberg was down there and we stayed overnight there with him. Again, he had this stew – kangaroo stew – the wife, she went down with him. Mrs Custerton, and boy and my son and I, and we had quite a really good weekend out of it.

PM Did he have any stories to tell?

JC Oh yes, some stories to tell. I remember one story he used to put up. He couldn't swim you see, anyhow he got washed off his boat, and he was put up the tale, and when he went down to the bottom of the river, he walked up the side of the bank. [laughter] That's one of his tales. He used to come into Zeehan and he'd get on the beer, you know, and he'd stay for days and he'd always finish up he'd get on the beer and he'd decide to go home. They'd put him on the horse, and the old horse would go, take him home. By the time he'd get up the road about ten or fifteen miles, he'd sort of sober up, you see. But if he fell off the horse, the horse would stay with him. Wouldn't leave him.

PM What was the name of his horse?

JC I couldn't tell you now. Arab it was. 'Donkey' I think they called it. Half Arab horse. Donkey. Donkey, that was the name of the horse. I don't know how he lived on his own, for all those years. But they always reckoned there was something behind it, like he had to clear out of Germany where he came from. I don't know if did or not. But yes, a lonely old life.

PM He never married or anything?

JC No. Not that I knew. Nobody knew anything about him. But he always came to Nichollses every time he came in. Of course, that was his home to him, and they'd put him up and he'd go two or three days on the beer and then decide he'll go home again. Terrible life he had.

PM What can you remember about the track itself in those days?

JC Oh, it wasn't real... It was just a track, and that's all. Over button grass plains it was, miles of it.

PM Why did they go that way instead of going through Corinna?

JC Well, it is shorter.

PM Of course.

JC Shorter.

[Interruption]

JC I couldn't tell you the names of the people...

PM [unclear]

JC They were three... A man and a wife, and two batchelors. They was the only people I ever contacted. I was only in there twice. We kept this, from this side of the river, or from both sides on the Pieman. On the Zeehan side of Pieman, but they used to bring the cattle as far as the Pieman, and we used to take over then. Johnny Arberg would row us across the river and we'd take charge of them, with their assistance, and then they'd get them across the river and then it was in the hands... We used to take the cattle then into Granville Harbour. Then they used to keep them out there for perhaps three or four months and then old Nicholls would bring them in and supply Queenstown and Zeehan and Strahan. They had a butcher shop in Zeehan themselves, Nichollses did. They supplied all that area. Things were booming in them days, like Zeehan was a population of three or four thousand people, and a pub on every other corner, and that sort of thing.

PM Where were the cattle bred?

JC Bred more on this end of the coast. Around Stanley. Smithton, that way like. Woolnorth, and down in that way, and walked through there. Cartledge, they used to bring them as far as the Pieman River and then we'd bring them up that side and bring them through there. I remember one morning, Alan wanted to get away with the cattle, and he had a horse there – the horse I was telling you about – always easy to catch. They ran in a 500 acres paddock you see, them days. He'd walk out into the



paddock and sing out to his horse as the saying is and he'd pick it up. But this morning for some reason or other she wouldn't let him catch him. And it was a week. And of course he had stock into Zeehan, waiting for their meat. There was a whole lot of meat. There was no meat in the town [Chuckle] Of course, with a 500 acre paddock with a horse that didn't want to be caught, you had a problem. Anyhow, we got her in the end, and so got away with the cattle.

PM Arrived in Zeehan with them alright?

JC Mmm. But he was very cut up when he lost his horse. My word he was!

PM What breed of cattle were they?

JC I wasn't familiar really with the breeds them days. Like you know, not like I am now. I was only a youth, a kid. A beast was a beast, as far as breed was concerned.

PM what age are we talking about?

JC I was fifteen.

PM What would the date be then, roughly?

JC Oh, that would be about 1916-17. I was born in 1906, so it would be more, 1920 it would be I suppose when I started working round with Nichollses. But they lived next door to us you see, and I was actually more in there place with their boys as I was at home.

PM This is at Zeehan?

JC At Zeehan, yes. There was Alf and Dave and Dick, were the brothers. Nichollses. Dick came up here then worked for Harold Lucas. He had the butcher shop here, where Turners are now. Anyhow, he got me... Actually I came up here with him.

PM Your father was a prospector?

JC My father owned the Janya Mine in Zeehan, yes. Comstock. It was the richest silver ore. He had it in the war period when prices were very good, like, them days, and it was the richest ore on the north-west coast. In lead and silver. But what happened there, the water got them beat you see. And they put a oil engine in down underground. Used to pump the water out, and of course the fumes from the oil engine got onto his lungs, and then they went... They went down the gulley and drove a tunnel, just on a mile long. Which cost them £1 a foot them days to drive it, and anyhow they got within a few feet of the lode, to get into the shaft where the load of ore was, and he died. And of course my mother was left then with five kiddies and we never... We never had... She never had any idea about mining, well see, in mining, you've got to do so much on your lease every year, and if you don't

do it, you sort of lose it. And a fella named Tom Vinson, at one of the mines down there. I don't know which one it was now. One of the mines, and of course he is waiting on the bank. As soon as the twelve months is up, he took the mine over. All she got out of it was... And they drilled the extra few feet and got it and worked the mine for years after. All she got out of it, she loaned the government a big pump. That they had to pump the water out of the shaft. When the bridge went down between Zeehan and Waratah, on the main railway there, the Re Bridge went down. There had been a football match at Waratah and the train just got across the bridge and she collapsed. Anyhow, she loaned this big pump to the government while they rebuilt the bridge. And that is all she got out of the mine. They returned it to her when she was finished, but...

PM So what happened to the family then?

JC Oh well, we came up to the north-west coast then. Mum came up here. She had sisters up here and came to Devonport and lived at Devonport. And that is when Dick Nicholls got onto me and then I worked for Lucas then, with Dick, for four or five years and Lucas decided to sell out, so anyhow, he said to Dick, he said "I'm going to sell the property. Sell the shop". Dick said "What does that put the price on, I wouldn't mind buying it." So he said to me, "What about coming in with me?" Well, I said "I can't afford to do anything."

He wanted £800. He wanted £1000 for it, that is right. He said "I'll tell you, I will go to Burnie tomorrow." The trains used to run along the coast on Sundays. He went to Burnie to see his brother, Dave, on the Sunday. Dave said to him, "Offer him £800 for it Dick" he said. So he came back the next morning, on the Monday morning, and said to Harold Lucas "We'll give you £800 for it". So Dick said to me, "If we buy it, I will take you in with it, and if we do alright, which we will do, you can pay me your share back, as we go along." So that was fair enough. I could give nothing at all.

So anyhow, he said to Harold on the Monday morning "We will give you £800 for it" and he said "I will consider it" he said. So, the sales were at Latrobe in them days. All the stock was sold at Latrobe sale yards and anyhow he went up to Latrobe. Harold Lucas went to Latrobe to buy his stock. Any anyhow, he liked his beer so he went into Charley Turners, the Royal Hotel, had a few beers. And of course Charley Turner was ex from Waratah and he told him what he was going to do and what he wasn't going to do and Charley said "I will buy it off you" so he give him £800 for it so he came home that night from up the sale on the Monday and he said to Dick "I've sold the business, Dick, to Charley Turner at Latrobe" And Dick said "Well, what about us?" "Well, he signed up, I can't go back on the signature." Anyhow, Dick said "What we'll do, is we will open a shop on our own." So we went down the town

there, where Charlie Paton had his shop there and we tried to lease a shop there, but we couldn't get a lease more than six months at time, you see, well, you couldn't open a shop, so we decided then we wouldn't go ahead with it. Then Dick went up and bought a farm at Sheffield and Charlie Turner came to me and said "What about, will you come and work with us?" So, I had no other option, so I just went back with him. one of them used to always say to me, "As soon as I get on our feet and get straightened out, I will make you a share of it. We will make it into a company."

But he was kidding me on, kidding me on for years and years. And my word he done well there. He made a fortune.

PM Were you ever interested in prospecting like your father?

JC No. Well, I did when I was a kid. I always had me few bags of ore to sell every year. Me holidays from school, I used to go up around the mines and do a little bit around the tips, like, where they used to tip their ore. There always used to be a certain amount you know wash up the river and you could pick it up. I'd always have three or four bags of ore to sell every Christmas. Arthur Slaw used to buy them off me. He was the man who used to buy for the Germany crowd, he used to buy for. It was very interesting the way they used to take the ore you know to get the samples with it. They'd, if you had fifty bags of glean ore, they'd take one bag in five, say, and tip it out. They'd have five bags out of twenty, or something like that. Mix it all up, and then they would cut a corner. Take a corner. Work a corner. If you had a small... And then they would send it away and get it assayed. And they would pay you on that assay.

PM On the average?

JC On the average of it, yes. Oh yes, very interesting days they were.

PM Talking about the cattle again, how many times a year would they have taken the mob down?

JC Oh, it was a long time ago. I should say three or four times a year. That's about all they would take. See, they'd take sixty or seventy cattle down each time. Would come across, then they would rear a few on their own farm as well, you see. They had a thousand acres there. One time, they cleared quite a lot and they had a big fire. I can remember as a kid out sitting on the camp and flames were off the top of trees eighty or ninety feet high. It was real city. Never forget it. Dave Mays. A fella named Dave Mays was out there at the time.

PM Was that to clear the bush?

JC It was to clear the bush, yes. All wonderful timber, by gosh. I often used to say, when they put that road through. Instead of going alongside the railway line, all the way through Zeehan like they have now, I said why don't you go through Corinna, and drive down through that way and you open up all that wonderful land. Wonderful agricultural land, and also timber. Myrtle and sassys and all the timber in the world. And one man down here, a week, or, last year or before he went down and when he came back he made a remark about it, and I thought to myself, yes, I made that remark fifty or more years ago. But yes, you can see now they should never have taken the road. They should have opened up new country. Well, now they are trying to get the road through right from Stanley through that way aren't they. They've got part of it done, but they should have, in the first place, and all that new country back through there. Wonderful... Well take stock back and clean it off round Stanley and Smithton there. Back in, those stock you know.

PM They must have had stock yards or something either side of the river?

JC Yes, we had stock yards on either sides. To hold the cattle on the bank there. You couldn't just bring them today and swim them straight across. You know, you had to assemble them there.

PM You would have had to wait a few days if the river was up I suppose?

JC Well, yes, depends on how the river was running. You wouldn't go down when it was flooded. You'd pick your days.

PM Did you have to wait on the tide or anything?

JC No, no, I never had any trouble with tides. Always made a morning, it was good. I was always started early in the morning. Get there early in the morning and start the cattle coming and then bring them over. Then they'd be all over and settled in again before the mob came on us again.

PM What did they do for feed?

JC They'd feed them on the way bringing them through, you see, on the stock route. They'd feed them all the time. And like there'd be a certain amount of feed around where they were, and they'd hold them, we'd put them in the yards of a night. Yard them up of a night. They'd let them feed around the place. Men on horseback. Four or five on horseback and just keep them so they wouldn't wander away. And when we were on this side, we did the same thing. We'd bring them out and we'd put them in the stock yards for an hour or two and then let them out and feed them and Alan and his father and I, and they made holding stock. I remember one experience, I had gone along there with Alan Nicholls, on the bridge, there were sea lions on the

bridge there. Anyhow, the horses were very frightened. Anyhow, this pony I was on, she took fright and anyhow, it ended up she took fright. Alan galloped alongside me to take the reins to try and hold her. Anyhow, at the same time this sea lion did its roar, and he's off! I can remember it, for a long while. Several years ago, I am holding onto the saddle and Alan's hanging onto the bridle of the pony and she's going for her life. Yes, great experience!

PM She pulled up eventually?

JC Oh yes. She did eventually. Horses ...

PM What?

JC Gone Beach.

PM Was it just the odd sea lion, or were there a few of them there?

JC There was three of them that day. But Alan used to quite often see them. He'd shoot... He often used to see them, but this day, this one did the roar, and of course, when we saw the sea lions we took our horses well away from where the beach was, but if you go to the Pieman, the Pieman came down and then you had the button grass between the Pieman and you come across the button grass plains and get on the beach, and you drive along the beach eight or ten mile. And then you walk the beach again over button grass, over these two creeks and get to Nicholls's farm.

PM Do you remember, when you stayed, did you stay in the house?

JC Oh yes, in the camp, yes. He had an old gramophone there. With the little round records, you know.

PM [Cylinders?]

JC Some of the records. That is about the only available. No television in them days. He was a very interesting old man, my word he was. But I often wondered. He had a terrible lonely life. Something must have went wrong with him somewhere. Cleared out. There were rumours about him. That he'd murdered someone or something. Got in some trouble, but I wouldn't say that about him.

PM Can you remember any of the tunes that were on the cylinders?

JC No, no. No. Beyond me now.

PM Stretching your memory a bit?

JC It was just music as far as I was concerned.

PM How many little outbuilding did he have?

- JC Oh, he had dog kennels, and he had places for his horses. Oh, he'd have ten or a dozen around, like little bits... Humpies. They was palings, and that sort of thing. Palings. A lot of stuff was washed up on the beach there. They was all... Tons and tons of huon pine logs. Washed up. I suppose they were all carted away. They have got into it now. They can get, with these four wheel drives they can get almost anywhere with them now and they've cleaned it all up now I'd say.
- PM How many ponies did he have? Horses? Just a couple?
- JC Yes, he had two I think. Two. Yes, he had two. He had the half Arab horse, and he had a sort of a pack horse. Pretty big half bred. Half draught horse, used to pack his skins in. Bring his skins into Zeehan. Used to pack them and bring them in to Zeehan.
- PM Was he after possums or wallaby or what?
- JC Possum and kangaroo, wallaby. He'd hunt all year round, like, he'd snare all year around. Nearly no-one knew he was there, almost. But what he ever done with the money, I don't know. He'd have two or three days on the beer a couple of times a year, perhaps. That was about it. But whether he used to send it over, but they found him with a cancer in the end. A doctor went down... The doc used to go down... It opened up towards the last part of the century there, and a doctor went down from Wynyard I believe, and was down there staying. He could see he wasn't very well and anyhow they kidded him after a long while to have an x-ray on him. He wouldn't leave the place of course, but in the end they got him away. Found he had a cancer. I think they put him in the hospital in Burnie or Wynyard, he died.
- PM Talking about dogs, did you use dogs when you were droving?
- JC Oh yes. Oh yes, we always had dogs to drive with. Very good dogs too. They knew what was wanted.
- PM Tell us about them.
- JC Oh well, I mean, they'd swim the river the same as the cattle. So the cattle would always take... We'd take one or a couple in the boat with us. Anyhow, they would swim. They'd move the cattle. As soon as they were alongside of the river they would start on the cattle. They knew, and the same on the other side. Let them get away far enough that the others could get out, and hold them there until they all got up, and then they'd just, round and round. Gawd they were ones for work. Because that was all they knew. That's the only job most of them done, was like on that, round the cattle. Yes, they had a big... A spaniel-looking dog he was. He was a wonderful dog. Almost talk.

PM What sort of breeds were they?

JC I couldn't tell you. I didn't worry about breeds when I was a kid. They had this big blue dog they had there. I think sticking them... I remember this big mare that Alan had, my word she was a beautiful big mare. She was almost human she was, and when he lost her my word it took him a long while to get over it. He had a girlfriend in Zeehan – May Gardener – and I would always... I always had the job of letting her know when he was coming to down. I used to go and tell May that Alan would be in on such a such a day or night. Anyhow, he'd always make sure. He'd go out and have his little bit of fun, but he would always make sure his horse was well...

PM Looked after. How far, time-wise, was it then, the ride from Zeehan to the Pieman?

JC I'd say, to the Pieman, to ride continuously it would be a six hour ride. By my time, though I left home at 7 o'clock in the morning. I rode to Nicholls's farm, Heemskirk....

PM How long did that take?

JC I was there, I intended to be there for lunch, so it must have been three, three and half hours, four hours to do that job.

PM You didn't stop?

JC I stopped there for about half an hour I suppose, thought they might turn up. I should said I got in at Johnny Arberg's about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Between four and five. Of course, the pony wasn't only ... She was only a pony, like she wasn't a big horse.

PM What became of her in the end?

JC She turned out to be a trotter. I ended up by trotting her. Yes. They used to give her about 350, 400 yards in a mile. She'd be right out in the front. Monty [unclear]. He used to ride a horse called My Kitty, and he'd have to give her three of four hundreds, and she wasn't a bad little trotter, she wasn't. But it was all straight gaits in them days. No hobbles and those things. Only a sport. But I don't know what happened in the end. Oh, Payne got her. What was his name? Payne is his surname. I just can't think of his Christian name.

PM Someone in Zeehan?

JC In Zeehan, got her. When I left down there.

PM How many dogs did Johnny Arberg have?

- JC Oh, I really couldn't say how many dogs he'd have. He'd have at least four or five I reckon. Yes, he'd have four or five there. He did nearly all snaring. Wouldn't be any shooting or anything like that. It would be all snaring he done.
- PM I wonder why he kept the dogs then, if he was snaring?
- JC Oh well, great company, you know.
- PM I suppose.
- JC Great company, and he had plenty of feed for them, as far as food was concerned. He had plenty of kangaroo and wallaby and that sort of thing. I'm just trying to remember now what I've seen about the place there. I'd say he'd have four. I'd say he had four dogs.
- PM Hounds of some sort?
- JC Yes, hounds they were, yes. Hounds. Beagles and this sort of stuff. At that age, a dog was a dog.
- PM Was there any talk about Tasmanian tigers at that time?
- JC No, I can't remember any time him making that mention, to be honest truth. It was, and I can't hear.
- PM Did you ever get tipped out of the boat?
- JC No, I never got tipped out. Johnny Arberg was the only man ever got tipped out, but I never got tipped out. There would only be three of us used to go across of a morning, to get to the other side. And then Dave and Alan retrieved the cattle on this side. On the Nicholls's side.
- PM So whose bringing them from the north side again? You said Cartledge?
- JC Cartledge, he used to look after them.
- PM With a couple of offsidiers?
- JC Yes offsidiers. I couldn't tell you who they were. I know Cartledge was the main man, them days,
- PM Then there'd be you, Alan Nicholls?
- JC Alan. Dave Nicholls, and Dave Mather. And Johnny Arberg. But once you got the cattle moving, like you know, they... You had no trouble with them. They were that used to being driven from this end, like they'd all stick together.
- PM By the time you got them?



JC By the time we got them, we never had any trouble at all with them. And I don't think ever we lost a bullock. I don't remember losing a single... I can't bring it back, whether we ever lost a bullock. Not in the river, or on the road. They were always in good condition, like they were fed on the drive.

PM Where would Cartledge have picked them up?

JC Oh, I reckon he must have bought them round in that Irish Town area. Down that area you see. He got them together, and when he got enough he would make the drive.

PM Well, thanks for that.

JC There wasn't much in there...

PM It all adds to the picture, doesn't it?

JC Well it does. I often wonder... I'd like to go back and go through the same old route in again, but I've left it too late in my life

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

End of Interview

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## Chapter 15

### Hunters & Tourists Move In

#### The Rebirth of Corinna

The tourist potential of the Heads had been noticed even while Johnny Arhberg was alive. In 1924 Fred Smithies visited the old village when staying with Arhberg at the Heads. They examined:

the pathetic remains of (Corinna) which was once a thriving township , but of which their remains only the ruins of a couple of buildings -one on each side of the river. These have almost disappeared in the wild tangle of undergrowth which is rapidly obliterating all traces of human occupation.<sup>203</sup>

The empty buildings attracted the interest of several parties. In the late 1930's. B. J. Bayley wanted to " lease the place as I think the majority of tourists would sooner spend a little time at the Heads than (Corinne) and with a few additions...it could be made quite a decent place." (PWD 43/6, 1937 ) (ibid, 27/9/1937) An estimate on the cost of renovation was made, totalling 195 pounds. The new ferryman James Ingles, intended to "provide accommodation and meals for Tourists if the...work was carried out on the cottage..."

This work was eventually done. (ADD)

#### Renovation of the "Old Camp" at Pieman Heads

G. McLeod , who ran the car and motor boat trips to the Pieman requested that "a hut at Pieman Heads be repaired before the next Tourist season."

In September 1937 G McLeod was given permission to use the "first old house that was erected at the Heads for the Ferryman." as an accommodation house for tourists. This had been used for the last 25 years as a stable.<sup>204</sup> McLeod wrote:

There are several matters that I particularly wanted him to help with before the Tourist Season starts, the main thing being repairs and renovations to the Government house at Pieman Heads. Mr Ingles who was looking after Rowe's boat at Corinna has taken over "Old Johnnies'" job and is a very capable man being a first class man with a boat and a good obliging chap in the camp.

He has just laid out about £45 on furnishings and food supplies etc. and is preparing to cater in every way for tourists. The pay for the job is only £75 per annum and I think if the Government want to keep a good man there they should try to help him along a bit. They have just got him a new boat built but it is a long way to row up and down every week and at the cost of about £30 they could have it fitted with a small engine. If he had to buy this himself it would take his pay for nearly 6 months and I know that he has already spent most of his cash on supplies etc.

As you know the house is in a very bad way and is not fit for people to stay in. Hardstaff and I went into the matter unofficially of course last time he was down and we came to the conclusion that £100 spent on it would put it in first class order and then Ingles would I am sure keep it so. The whole of the inside wants covering with 3 ply (cheaper than scrim and

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<sup>203</sup> The Weekly Courier 27/3/1924 P. 40

<sup>204</sup> ibid, 11/10/1937.

paper in the end) and all the windows want renewing, lino on the floor a verandah on front, separate storeroom at the back and painting.

The boat shed also wants a coat of paint and the boat needs a little repairing - painting a Ladies & Gents convenience, and perhaps if there is enough left over the old original ferryman's camp could be repaired suitably for an extra camp.

Hardstaff asked for this work to be done and was notified that the Government Valuator Mr Stokes had been instructed to report on it. I expect him to be here next Friday week. If you could help this matter along it would materially assist the locals in catering for the tourists. (Ibid, 21/9/1937)

In 1941 discussion over the fate of the house led to plan of the government cottage being drawn (see attached). The accompanying letter records that "in 1938 the government expended 133 pounds in repairs to this cottage..."<sup>205</sup>

In 1945 a tin house at the end of the jetty had the chimney removed by hunters and was being used as a "drying shed for skins". K. G. Crawford became the new lessee on condition he "put in a new chimney, copper and bunks."<sup>206</sup>

## The Rebirth of Corinna

### The Start of Tourism

Improvement of the Waratah-Corinna road brought the motor car to Corinna. A motor service delivered mail. In 1932, the changes were noticed by Johnny Arhberg who stressed the need for a new punt at Corinna : "...the motor cars are now coming to one and a half miles from Corinna. Mr Green, storekeeper of Brown's Plains, (8 miles from Corinna), leaves Burnie every Wednesday morning in his motor-truck.....If the government would help me get a new Evinrude 2 H.P. motor outboard.... and find me in Bencin (sic) (benzine?) I would go up to Corinna one or two trips a week to cross any passengers."<sup>207</sup>

The government had left two boats at Corinna for prospectors when the store was closed in 1917 to avoid having to make the trip to the Heads in order to cross the Pieman. (ibid, 14/12/1931)

The constable reported that the old government store was "hidden by blackberries" and needed clearing. (ibid, 6/2/1933)

### Corinna's First Tourist Operator

In 1937, George McLeod of Waratah, reported

I have now got the two launches and six small boats down at Corinna and am at present extending my accommodation facilities in readiness for the coming season besides having another launch almost ready to take out. There are already a few more prospectors getting out and there are a few more talking of going over the other side of the Savage at Brown's Plains as soon as the Government complete the track and cage which they are doing. The two men who prospected that country last summer are confident that it will be a new gold field.

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<sup>205</sup> PWD 43/6/5/4/1941. TSA.

<sup>206</sup> PWD 43/6 , 3.8.1945. TSA.

<sup>207</sup> PWD 43/6 26/2/1932, TSA.

Prospects look good for a very busy summer both as regards mining and tourists and providing that the road job if not stopped everyone should be satisfied. However I know that you will do your best to keep it going and only wish we had a few more who would keep themselves as well informed and interested in the welfare of the "Coast" as you do.

By 1940 Bayley was operating an accommodation house at Corinna. E. T. Emmett, Director of Tourism, agreed with him that there was a need for a tourist outlet at the Heads as "there is nothing to amuse people at the latter place; whereas at the Head there is good fishing and open country for walking excursions, and beaches."<sup>208</sup>

G McLeod was running a tourist trip down to the Pieman Heads for 30 shillings per trip. (ibid) McLeod had a "tourist camp at Corinna, and has boats on the river with which he caters for tourist trips, including trips to the Pieman Heads."<sup>209</sup>

In 1939, on the suggestion of Mr McLeod, the tourist operator, 50 pounds was allocated by the State Government as unemployment relief for a number of projects, including "...cleaning up at Corinna, including cutting blackberries and cutting bracken fern." The allocation followed a positive report on McLeod's tourist venture at Corinna.

The Inspector reported:

I visited Corinna and Pieman Heads last week-end at the request of Mr G. McLeod, of Waratah, to see the building he has erected for accommodating visitors, and to look into various matters before the Scenery and Preservation Board.

Mr McLeod is putting the little money he can spare into establishing a tourist business at Corinna, and can now accommodate up to a couple of dozen visitors. The accommodation is rough but the housekeeper has everything very clean and is a good cook. McLeod allows the housekeeper and her husband to have the place free of rental, and the man looking after the boating and other odd jobs. As they are running the place very satisfactorily, from his point of view, he wonders whether the man (Whiteway) could be given a little work during the winter.<sup>210</sup>

Apart from cleaning up the Corinna town reserve, other tasks were to:

"(1) Cut a few trees that hide a waterfall a little below Corinna, and clean up the debris, put a small boat landing there, and cut a track for about 100 to 150 yards to the top of the fall.

(2) Cut and mark across the open country, a track from the existing landing-place to the top of Mt Donaldson. 10 pounds.

## **A New Punt at Corinna**

In 1935 a new punt was built for the Corinna crossing' to cater for cattle, miners, tourists and the new motor cars which were now reaching Corinna. The punt was constructed at Corinna by H. R. Wright of Ulverstone, (from where the P. W. D. was now running the Waratah-Corinna area. )

The punt offered by Mr Wright "could carry about 4 cars at a time."

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<sup>208</sup> PWD 43/6 14/6/1940. TSA.

<sup>209</sup> PWD 43/6 14/6/1940. TSA.

<sup>210</sup> PWD 43/6 25/6/1939. TSA.

The punt was all Huon Pine with galvanised bolts, with a caulked deck and uprights to the sides of 5 by 5 in), 4 ft 6 in high , three rails along the full length of the punt and a landing wing five ft wide on both ends, on hinges that folded up, four hinges to each wing.

The punt's dimensions over-all were "30 feet overall 124 ft wide and 5 ft deep, with five sets of keels in the bottom that the planking was nailed to. All were caulked, with two coats of tar at a cost of 130 pounds, excluding the blocks to put up the wings "which you will have to have if you are punting across cattle." <sup>211</sup>

In June 1935 Wright the punt builder found the Pieman in flood, "up to the fly-wheel of the engine and nearly up to the foot of the hills at the old Post Office." About 225 ft of half inch and 125 ft of three-quarter inch galvanised wire rope was needed, plus piles to stay the punt.<sup>212</sup> In addition, 4 six inch sheaths to carry the rope were ordered and 4 four inch double-iron blocks (or pulleys) were ordered.

During 1938 the punt was loaned to a gold mining company to carry its drilling plant up the Pieman, only to founder with the plant on board. The punt was "thoroughly repaired" before being returned to the government.<sup>213</sup> In 1941 the "big punt" at Corinna had been looked after by James Massey for the previous three years.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> PWD 43/6, 20/8/1934, TSA

<sup>212</sup> PWD 43/6, 42/6/1935. TSA.

<sup>213</sup> PWD, 20/7/1939. TSA.

<sup>214</sup> PWD 43/6 ,10/2/1941. TSA