

Going Out for a Bike Ride

An AOK Diary, 2002–3

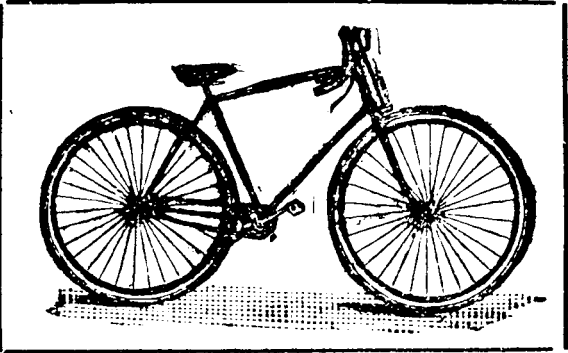
Pete McDonald

THE SPEEDWELL

HAS PROVED ITSELF THE BEST THAT MONEY CAN BUY BY
HOLDING THE MAJORITY OF DUNEDIN RECORDS—NAMELY,
OAMARU TO DUNEDIN, DUNEDIN TO HENLEY, WAIHOLA,
MILTON, AND BALCLUTHA.

SEND FOR CATALOGUE.

SOLE AGENT IN OTAGO
FOR THE BEAUTIFUL
ROYAL ENFIELD
AND THE WORLD-RENOUNDED
RUDGE-WHITWORTH
CYCLES.
WRITE FOR PARTICULARS



Repairs are executed as
years of experience may
suggest, and with des-
patch.

SEND THEM ALONG.
Largest Stock and Staff in
Dunedin.

W. A. SCOTT, 155 George St.,
DUNEDIN.

From *The Otago Witness* of 2 July 1896.

The road record for Christchurch to Dunedin,
held by J O Shorland, was 22 hours 13 minutes.

Picture credits, page 83.



Web version.

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This version of 'Going Out for a Bike Ride' is the same as the full version but with fewer illustrations and with different page numbering. (Figures 15, 17, 20, 25, and 31 have been deleted.)

The PDF file is available from:

<http://homepages.vodafone.co.nz/~pete.mcd/gob/GOBweb.pdf>

The file is 1.6 MB.



A few copies of the full version are available from the author
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Introduction

'I was fifty years of age when I commenced to cycle, and I cycled till my eightieth year. The first year I rode over 13,000 miles, the second over 12,000, and for many following years 10,000 each.' Mrs Isabel Georgina Homewood 'commenced to cycle' in 1894.¹

*

The Otago Daily Times AOK Rally is an annual three-day bicycle ride in Otago. The outing covers an ambitious distance and climbs some sizeable hills, but it is not a race. It is a relaxed ride, with the accent on enjoyment and taking time to explore the countryside. The organisers provide a sag-wagon – a support vehicle – to pick up riders who want to shorten the route. For several months before the AOK, Dunedin cyclists can join regular training rides. This diary first records the progress, over twelve weeks, of one man's training, and then it describes the event.

At the start of his training, he returns to cycling after some physically idle years during which his most gruelling exercise was strolling to work. His past involvement in cycling had been recreational: an occasional day on country lanes, a few undemanding off-road trips. He returns as a mountain-bike tourist rather than as a cross-country or downhill competitor. Maybe he will master rock-piles and teeter-totters in his next reincarnation; his present body has reached an age at which it simply wants to enjoy recreational mountain-biking, exploring from place to place, dawdling beside clear rivers, feeling the warmth of the sun, regaining an intimacy with the basic things of the earth, on tracks unthreatened by the flying automobile.

Going Out for a Bike Ride started life addressed to a casual audience of mountain-biking enthusiasts. Its goal was to capture the spirit of recreational mountain-biking, using routes in Dunedin and Otago as examples. The writing would have to entertain and proclaim what's fantastic about MTBing. Over three months, however, two sub-themes emerged, aspects that may interest outdoor-recreation academics and some geographers: first, the obscure and remote recording of New Zealand's legal roads; second, the access to rural land. No definition of 'rural land' will be offered, except the loose idea of semi-natural, uncultivated land that is not in a national park. (The question of mountain-biking in national parks is a separate matter, not dealt with in this diary.)

The discussions on cycling tracks will often digress onto walkways. This wandering off the subject will be allowed for two reasons. First, if we cannot increase the number of walkways across private land, there's little hope of increasing the number of cycle-tracks. Second, the growing emphasis on multi-use tracks is blurring the distinctions between walkways and cycle-tracks.

The diary references to places assume considerable familiarity with mountain-biking in and around Dunedin. The 1:50,000 map referred to is *Dunedin*, topographic map 260 - I44 J44 (limited revision 1997), published by Land Information New Zealand. The inclusion of a route in this diary does not necessarily imply that that route is a legal road or a permitted cycle-track. The opinions on access are merely that: opinions; other mountain-bikers might feel differently.

Diary

Sunday 20 October 2002 – A Nice Ride with a Variety of Views

It is four years since I polished my road-bike and stored it away, having decided that it is impossible to cycle on state highways without dying. Today will be my first bike ride since then. I haven't ridden a mountain-bike for ten years. Never tried one with front suspension. Never used V-brakes (let alone disc brakes). This is exciting, there's all the anticipation of playing with a new toy. This toy, my older son Paul's bike, is caked in Signal Hill mud, which I accept as a condition of the loan. With this loan, and a little pain, I will try to salvage some ambition from the ruins of middle age.

A glance at the AOK web page had advised me that my first ride should be a 'gentle half-hour ride on flat or gently rolling roads or streets'.² Are we talking about Dunedin?, I had wondered. Living at the top end of Opoho dictates a pattern to all rides, starting above the speed limit and ending, hours later, with a weary crawl. I decide to look for some of the mythical undulations. So it's a cautious tarmac whiz, experimenting with the snatchy brakes, past New World, under the motorway, and a right turn into the Leith Valley. The road is empty. The gradient is slight. The sun warms me. This is pleasurable. After a few minutes the houses thin out. To the left, beyond a grassy playground reserve, the Water of Leith flows around large rocks, as cleanly as any Highland burn. Am I really only four kilometres from the Octagon? Suddenly I am contemplating a right turn onto Patmos Avenue, which leads up to Mount Cargill. Why not? After all, the AOK website did say: 'After a couple of weeks, try some steeper hills.' Is the couple of weeks necessary? The first fifty metres looks gradual enough. Without my glasses I cannot see the contours of the next four kilometres on the map.

Ten minutes later my heart threatens to palpitate itself out of my chest. Another ten minutes, and I am envying the athleticism of the leaflet-writer who called this trip 'a nice ride with a variety of views'.³ Another ten minutes, and I'm half standing on the road, half slumped over the bike. My head is draped over the stem. I do not look cool, either literally or figuratively, and I do not appreciate the view.

Several five-minute rests aid me up the rest of the road-climb. The tarseal changes to gravel. A few metres further on, I teeter gladly left onto the start of the Telecom Track, making a mental note to pay more attention, in future, to the physiology of exercise.

A wooden sign says NO VEHICLES PAST THIS POINT, and a notice on the gate says PRIVATE PROPERTY. This is my first time here. Uh-uh ... Is this the right place? ... I hope so. Two hundred metres up the track, I arrive at another gate, which has the helpful signage that I was looking for.

The unsurfaced dual-track, variously called the Telecom Track or Sullivans Bridle Track, contours the western flank of Mount Cargill. It varies in slope, in this direction mixing level stretches with manageable rises, providing a welcome contrast to the slog to get there. Soon I'm cruising along on a shaded flat stretch,

among the pines. Five minutes earlier I was staring at tarmac and my legs were screaming; now I am looking ahead and picking a route around the soft ruts. A line of macrocarpas mark the site of Almadale Farm. Before World War 1 there were three small farms above Sullivans Dam.⁴ This is enjoyable. It is interesting riding. I am already a true believer in mountain-biking. But the pines soon give way to native bush and a confusion of possible ways ahead. The easy and relaxing track has ended too soon. Dunedin needs much more of this grandad-way, not just the occasional two or three kilometres.

The descent of the north end of the Telecom Track, down to O'Connell Road, is narrow, rutted, stony, boggy in places, overhung by gorse, and easy to miss. If you spend twenty minutes exploring the Transpower Halfway Bush – Oamaru Line B, you have missed the turn-off. I pause under the power lines and I gaze down over impenetrable vegetation to a clearly visible Pigeon Flat Road. Frustration replaces elation. Bamboozlement replaces enjoyment. Where the sodding hell is this bastard track? Where, more importantly, did I leave my glasses? I'm damn well not reversing the whole Telecom Track. Eventually I turn round to reverse the whole Telecom Track ... and, after a hundred metres, there's the wooden track-marker that I had cycled blindly past. A few metres away, an old iron gate shows the way.

An advantage of solo mountain-biking is that you can walk down the fall-off bits without anyone seeing that you are cowardly material for this sport. One glance ahead persuades me that tramping offers a sensible solution. My bike and I squelch past gorse barriers, glad to be moving again. We try to skirt black pools, but I cannot avoid wet feet, and the bike gathers clumps of marsh, reinforced with dead gorse. Now, ahead, the gentle downhill looks grassy and rideable, and so I place the machine in the shallow bike-rut and we wobble cautiously off, to achieve thirty metres of proficient teamwork until a cabbage-sized rock introduces me to the endo, a variety of involuntary dismount related to a forward roll. I am starting to understand another piece of leaflet advice that I had ignored: 'Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.' Bikes can be replaced, bones cannot.

Much of the descent is rock-strewn and, for me, too difficult to ride. A kilometre of prickly hiking lands me on the gravel of O'Connell Road. Nobody sees the swamp-monster that emerges from the regenerating bush. Easy riding along Pigeon Flat Road, rising slightly, leads conveniently to Leith Saddle. From here, gravity takes charge, and – well, I do declare! – the chain moves across onto the big chainring. The seven-kilometre sprint down the gravel of the Leith Valley Road is the afternoon's reward and is uneventful until I'm nearly wiped out by someone practising for the V8 Supercar Championship.

Before the final few furlongs, up Opoho Road, I dart into New World to pick up 450 grams of Kaye's Fudge Slice, a part of my nutritional programme. Then it's back onto the bike for ten minutes of sportsmanlike sadism. All my life's problems have completely gone. Perhaps not for good, but certainly for a few hours.

'How d'ya go, Dad?' asks Paul.

'So-so. Maybe not a textbook application of the art of training.'

At 10pm, before dropping off to sleep, I scribble a note on a scrap of paper: 'Take glasses.'

'Dunedin needs much more of this grandad-way, not just the occasional two or three kilometres.'



1. In 1817 a German inventor, Karl von Drais, developed a machine known as the 'swift-walker'. This drawing shows a swiftwalker and rider in New York, 1827. A city law was passed banning the invention from public places and sidewalks.

Thursday 24 October 2002 – Soundz Ace

What to do with the summer? The choice is a straight one between two three-day events: SPARC Risk 2002, a risk management conference, at \$300 excluding accommodation, and the AOK Rally, a bike ride in North Otago, at \$225 including campsites and grub. Easy. No contest. I will go for the one that feeds you. I fill in the entry form: 'I, Pete McDonald, being of sound mind, do hereby apply to cycle 258 kilometres in a circle.' (See map, page 34.) Then I write an email to my son Dave, who is 16 and lives near Lincoln:

Hi, Dave.

I am booking a place for myself on a three-day mountain-bike ride in North Otago. You don't need to carry camping stuff, it's taken on for you each day. The info says 'all you have to do is pedal your bike, at your own pace. We send you off in the morning with a cooked breakfast, greet you during the day with a healthy packed lunch and provide a hearty dinner at night.' Would you like to do it with me? If yes, we will have to buy you or hire you a bike.

Dad

I click 'Send'. Huh. This could be an expensive email. Dave replies almost immediately:

Yo dad howzit? Bike ride soundz ace. I'd luv to do it. Stink! – mum wants the fone. Gotta get off the internet. ceya from dave

That settles it. We will both do the rally. He and I have eleven weeks in which to get into shape – except that he hasn't yet got a bike. The middle day of the 2003 AOK 'recreational bike ride' will cover a hundred kilometres, including a 780-metre climb. My one effort so far amounted to twenty kilometres, with a 300-metre climb. I need to accumulate some mileage, buy Dave a bike, and help him to suss out some training runs. So I go to Google and search for 'mountain biking' +Canterbury. After some fruitless sorties into commercial cycle-touring websites, I eventually unearth a scrap of advice for Dave: 'Biking the Canterbury Plains is BAD. It sucks bigtime. Flat and hot. The wind blows like kinda zap zap zap. If you ignore this advice, you need your head examined.' Hmm. How is he going to get fit without discovering unbroken horizontal boredom?

Saturday 26 October 2002 – Safety Clothing

I had read that prolonged cycling could damage the pudendal artery, leading to erectile dysfunction and even impotence.⁵ Also, less alarmingly, there is the need to reduce chafing and prevent sore spots. So I head into town to seek advice at R&R Sport, one of the AOK's sponsors. The service here is excellent. If you're not used to buying cyclephernalia, the expert staff will recommend suitable choices. 'Shorts for mountain-biking, please. Er ... the baggy type, I think, and padded.' Ha! No problem for my bike-monger, an aspirant member of the capitalist class, who ushers me into a little corner reserved for sheikhs and Bill Gates. Here, notable customers can buy the perfect shorts, for \$250. Isn't it



2. A 4-wheeled velocipede. Willard Sawyer manufactured 4-wheeled velocipedes in Dover, United Kingdom, from about 1841 onwards. His factory was possibly the world's first mass-production cycle factory. But on 5 August 1856 he asked the Town Council to cancel his lease: '... his living depended on the hire and sale of velocipedes; but since a decision of the [Magistrates'] Bench had declared them a nuisance, he was unable to obtain a livelihood, and wished to move to some locality where they were not regarded as nuisances.' (*The Dover Telegraph*, 9/8/1856.)

funny, in these circumstances, how we don't laugh out aloud. Goodness gracious, *two hundred and fifty dollars*. New Zealand Men's Clinic might be cheaper. Surely \$250 should get me a custom-moulded crutch pad and a slave girl to help fit it? I mean, get real, that's eight pairs of Warehouse jeans. Can I afford this well-dressed way of seeing the countryside?

I decide that even if Bill Gates can afford the genuine chamois, Pete McDonald can make do with the synthetic substitute, at half the price. So I hand over the money and take possession of the shapeless bundle of flimsy nylon. When I get home Paul reckons that the shorts are OK.

'Cool shorts, Dad.'

'Yes. I thought so.'

No, Paul, these are not for lending.

There is just time for a late-afternoon burst up Patmos Avenue to the Telecom Track. The ascent: I pass two young guys, but I try to keep calm about this. The descent: my research has informed me that a narrow trail, just wide enough for one slim person or bike, is called singletrack and that singletrack is the MTBer's Holy Grail. It is a fact that not once in all my life have I achieved a wheelie or a bunny-hop, but today, on only my second time down this gorse tunnel, I combine an endo and a face plant, in a flowing sequence too fast for the eye to analyse.

Saturday 2 November 2002 – Inadequately Clad

The weather today is probably not unusual for spring in Dunedin; yet on a bicycle, without gloves, and wearing style shorts, having misjudged the temperature, I wonder whether it is the coldest November day for a century. The freezing southerly is blowing me up North Road. Even while pedalling strongly, my body begins to sacrifice its extremities.

Near the summit of Mount Cargill Road I spot a sensible mountain-biker, obviously a seasoned Dunedinite, dressed in full winter regalia, including thick-looking tights and techno-gloves. I am too cold to stop to show off my frostbite.

As I crawl back southwards up the thankfully sheltered Waitati Valley, the rain turns to hail. At the Leith Saddle, drifts of hail are swamping the road. In these conditions, the normally energising drop down the Leith Valley merely provides a lesson in wind-chill and hypothermia. From somewhere in my mountaineering memory, I recall that the serious zone of the wind-chill scale reads: 'Fatal to life'.

It takes the whole of the grunt up to Opoho to bring some life back into my hands.

That night I dream that an iceberg floats up Otago Harbour, and the city becomes so cold that it is uninhabitable. I'm still frozen when I wake the next morning.

Tuesday 5 November 2002

Dave phones. I have advanced him ten years' birthday money, and he has bought an adequate bike. That really does settle it. AOK, here we come. Assuming of course that we get a place. I heard earlier today that all two-hundred-odd places had been allocated, only four weeks after the start of bookings.



3. A velocipede, or bone-shaker, of the 1860s. Organised cycle events in Dunedin go back to at least 1869, when several machines raced around the Caledonian Ground at the Fifth Annual Forsters' Fête. The race was run over two miles for a prize of £3 for first place and £2 for second.

Saturday 9 November 2002 – Manageable Gradients

Several matters are demanding time this weekend: the grass-cutting, the gutter-clearing, the rugby-watching, the training for the AOK, the lie-in. Despite steady rain this morning, I decide to tick off the training first. I repeat the previous Saturday's run to Upper Waitati. The mix of tarseal and gravel is hardly mountain-biking heaven, yet it is pleasant enough and it is mainly empty of cars. It includes 600 metres of climbing, but the gradients are moderate, not requiring either a King of the Mountains or special body armour and a full-face helmet.

After the ride, Paul informs me that one three-hour excursion a week will not improve my fitness. What a blessing it is, having a phys-ed student in the house. I plonk myself in front of the TV. The grass can wait. It is years since I have relaxed so deeply in the complete absence of Speight's Gold Medal Ale. This peacefulness seems to stem from a blend of feeling satisfied and feeling utterly shagged. Any training is better than none at all. And I am starting to feel more confident on the bike. 'You're wrong, Paul. My plasma lipoprotein concentrations are already lowering. I will peak in mid-January.'

Saturday 16 November 2002 – Flatties

In my younger outdoor days, the weather forecasts were not as accurate, as frequently updated, or as readily obtainable as they are today. Nowadays you can plan to go out in the worst rain of a foul weekend, and there's a good chance that the forecast will be correct. It is unexpectedly dry when I set out on what has become my weekend constitutional, up North Road. But at Upper Junction I look back over a city that is receiving the onslaught of an immense thundershower. Tall rain-shafts merge into one grey curtain, the width of the city. It's coming this way ... I've got five minutes in which to get ready. Two weeks ago I was dressed for Kaitaia; this time I am prepared. I stop and pull on a heavy Gore-Tex jacket. Five minutes later a torrential downpour tries to swill me back down the hill.

An hour later, as I am nearing the top of the Waitati Valley, it is still pissing with cold rain when the back tyre punctures. I replace the tube. Ten minutes later the tyre deflates again. An examination of it finds what looks like the point of a drawing-pin. Having used my one spare tube, I have to repair one of the tubes. Everything is soaking. My shorts and daypack are thick with grime sprayed up by the back wheel. Even my face and hair are gritty. My fingers are freezing. This is all extremely vexing. Next time remember to examine the tyre, dork.

Wednesday 20 November 2002 – The Mediums

It is a glorious early evening. A few sunlit pockets of dense white mist roll slowly down the sides of the Dunedin bowl. At a certain height they float out over the city, as if held up by some invisible horizontal barrier. Once away from the land, they quickly dissipate.

Until now I have not joined any of the AOK runs. I like to potter along at my own pace. But I have decided to seek some companionship, namely Greg Paris's Wednesday-nighters. My doubts about being fit enough have been removed by a time-served AOKer, Bob Clarkson, who said, 'Don't worry, you can join the Mediums.'



4. A high-wheeler of about 1881.

The high-wheeler was developed by Englishman James Starley. By 1870 he had been granted patent rights on his high-wheeler. High-wheelers later became known as ordinaries, to distinguish them from their successors, the low-wheeled safety bicycles. Using lightweight high-wheelers on race tracks, cyclists reached speeds of up to 38 km/h.

In 1884 Thomas Stevens left San Francisco on a high-wheeler, intending to become the first man to ride a bicycle across the United States. When he reached Boston, he decided to continue around the world. His story of this journey, *Around the World on a Bicycle*, was published in 1887.

At 6pm twelve of us set out from the Pets & Vets carpark, near the Botanic Garden, intent on attacking a now-familiar adversary, Mount Cargill via Patmos Avenue. This itinerary climbs 500 metres, is quite steep in places, and is almost unrelenting, and so it holds an element of flagellation, not unlike the self-torture practised by the early Christian holy-men. The route, therefore, has enough character to deserve a name, something like Fred's Crawl. Tackle it when you're feeling masochistic.

After a quarter of an hour of climbing, my calves begin to cramp because I am riding slightly faster than my normal for this hill. That's a snag you get with the group spirit, you push yourself harder than usual. Why the presence of a few comrades should override your normally reliable defence mechanisms, I do not know. It just does. I contemplate failure, as leg cramp can worsen. This would be embarrassing. Relax, mate. Pace yourself. I manage to carry on riding. As we crawl up Cowan Road, on the exposed southwest spur of Mount Cargill, a welcome breeze cools us. The cramp eases slightly, and I recover enough to admire the lumpy meringue of cloud that sits below us in the Leith Valley, floodlit by the evening sun. But your ability to talk at such times is limited, and so I reach the top without getting to know any of my fellow-travellers.

All these recreators now turn left off the dirt road and they burrow confidently into the City Forests plantation, following a twisting narrow track that heads west and which could easily be a possum trail, were there such things. It looks most improbable for bicycling. Mediums, where are you? I duck hesitantly into the pines. There's a springy surprise. Underfoot lies a thick cushion of pine-needles, and I discover that you can wobble, veer, slide, and tumble down the hillside fairly painlessly. Yet I feel out of my depth. This feeling of inadequacy is a natural reaction when you spend so much time on your back, underneath the bike.

Someone advises me to lower the seat, which I do. Now I can change direction – and avoid tree-trunks – by pushing against the ground with my feet, in the same way as a rider redirected Pierre Michaux's velocipede, or boneshaker, of around 1863. The velocipede reached Dunedin in 1869:

In July [1869] what was described as the 'velocipede mania' reached Dunedin. A machine manufactured in Dunedin was described as being driven along at considerable speed. A quotation from an Australian paper referred to 'the singular spectacle of a man trundling himself along at the rate of six or eight miles an hour ... altogether independent of horse-power – one of the greatest triumphs of modern ingenuity.' In Dunedin a one-mile velocipede race was won in seven minutes, and the winner 'did not seem to be in any way exhausted. Several gentlemen tried to propel it, much to the amusement of the onlookers. Notwithstanding the riders being held on either side by their friends, several spills took place.'⁶

Similarly, 133 years later, I trundle myself down the hillside, although I wouldn't describe my progress as a triumph of modern ingenuity, and, moreover, nobody tells me that you are supposed to do this with friends holding you on either side.

The Otago Witness

15 May 1880. A small meet of the Dunedin Bicycle Club took place on Saturday. Five members made the party, and these enjoyed a pleasant ride on the South Road as far as Saddle Hill and back. The roads were in very fair condition, notwithstanding the recent rain, and the only disagreeables were those which appear to be inseparable from a bicycle ride in this Colony. In passing through Caversham and elsewhere the street boys seemed to find sport in throwing sticks at the machines; sometimes they even sacrificed their caps to this pleasantry. The sacrifice of the caps is generally literal, for the enraged bicyclist, as a rule, possesses himself of these missiles, and is not over-scrupulous about returning them. The best bicyclist cannot retain his seat if a stick or cap catches in his wheels. Tricks of this sort often cause very ugly falls. We hope that when the novelty of bicycling wears off, these foolish practices will disappear.

We emerge from the forest just south of Sullivans Dam. We have followed a straightforward line, a shade too steep for my bikemanship but with no obstacles apart from the tidy trunks of radiata pines. I have not noticed this route on any of the Dunedin City Council mountain-biking pamphlets. I catch the end of a conversation about it: ‘... Yeah, it’ll be gone when the trees are felled.’ What a slap-in-the-face for MTBers that would be, to lose such a natural line. Especially as mountain-bikes are banned from most of the track on Mount Cargill. According to an item in *The Star*, slightly north of our route, local trampers are building a walking track from Mount Cargill to Sullivans Dam at a cost of at least \$110,000, the money having been donated.⁷

The thrash down Leith Valley Road involves a rapidity somewhat in excess of my norm for such terrain. It confirms that I belong to that disadvantaged minority, the gravel-challenged. On some of the bends, I notice a precarious drifting, not normally a part of my technique. But I survive to reach the carpark.

‘Thank you, Greg. I enjoyed that. The Mediums for me, next week.’

‘That was the Mediums,’ he says.

It’s nice to get to know a few people. Of solid build and average height, Greg is a remarkably durable guy who holds a doctorate in crashing.

Saturday 23 November 2002 – With a Definite Plot

The day dawns fine. It is time that I joined an AOK Saturday ride. Solo riding has its attractions, yet riding in a group can provide a strength in numbers and a source of local knowledge. The Mediums will be departing from the Commercial Tavern, Green Island, at 1.30pm. I need to get there from Opoho. After scrutinising the map, I set off at 11.30am, allowing time for a leisurely near-circumnavigation of Dunedin: the Leith Valley, Glenleith, Wakari Road, Three Mile Hill Road, Halfway Bush Road, North Taieri Road, Green Island.

‘What a slap-in-the-face for MTBers that would be, to lose such a natural line. Especially as mountain-bikes are banned from most of the track on Mount Cargill.’



COLLECTION OF OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM,
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

5. Members of the Dunedin Cycling Club, 1883. William Melville founded the club in 1881. His Cyclists’ Exchange and Sewing Machine Depot was a focal-point for cycling enthusiasts.

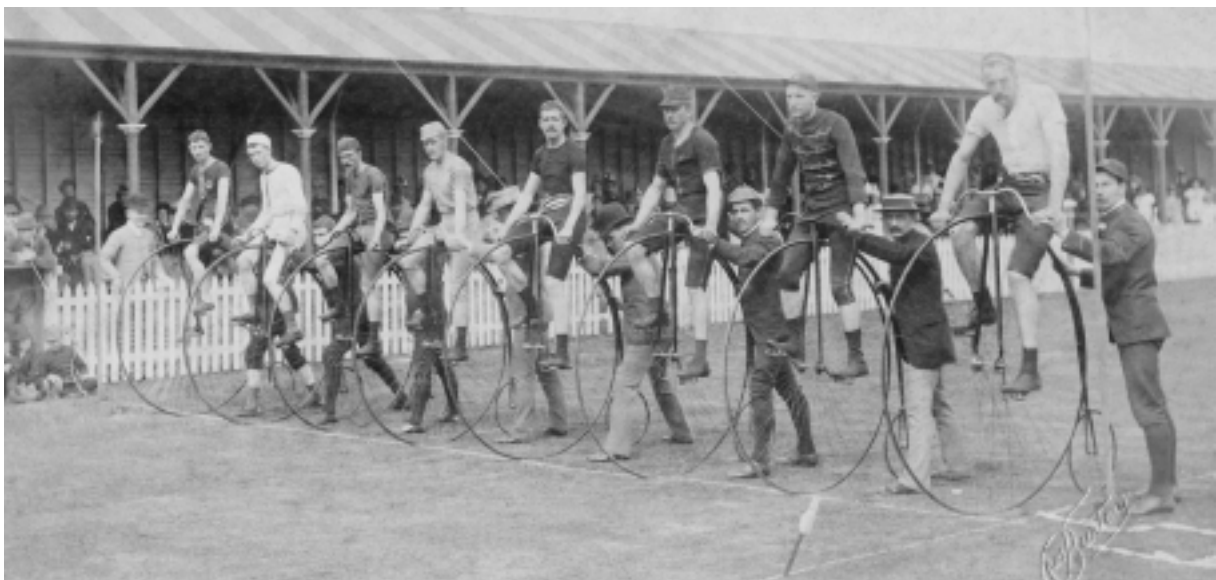
Another club, the Dunedin Bicycle Club, had started in August 1879. In 1883 it had forty-five members. Its object was ‘generally to encourage bicycling’. Riders wore a blue uniform, with the club’s monogram (D.B.C.) worn on the front of a polo cap. Runs were held fortnightly on Saturday afternoons. (*An Illustrated Guide to Dunedin*, p 37.)

Two kilometres along Halfway Bush Road I pass a NO EXIT sign, and the gravel road changes to a 4WD track. The way ahead is deeply furrowed; it looks as if it has been deep-ploughed lengthways by some multi-bladed drain-laying machine. Yet the soft mud of winter has dried up almost completely. Today this clay track provides a few kilometres of ridge balancing, above the thirty-centimetre-deep wheel-ruts. If you go too fast, a sudden kink in the ridges and troughs can catch you out. If you go too slow, balance becomes more difficult. So I concentrate, trying to judge an ideal speed. The whole way is rideable, even by me. Cor blimey, I ain't fallen off once.

The distinguished 19th-century historian and mountaineer, Leslie Stephen, wrote an essay titled 'In Praise of Walking'. He wrote that 'each walk is a little drama itself, with a definite plot with episodes and catastrophes, according to the requirements of Aristotle; and it is naturally interwoven with all the thoughts, the friendships, and the interests that form the staple of ordinary life.'⁸ Nowadays you could say the same of mountain-biking. Each day's ride is a little drama, with its ups and downs both of geography and of mood. So I come hammering down the last, easier section of Halfway Bush Road, full of the joys of gravity – and I overshoot a crucial left turn by one kilometre. The 1:50,000 topographic map shows a junction, about 300 metres northeast of the water tank; from this junction the map shows a road heading southeast, an obvious connection between Halfway Bush Road and Abbotsford. The map symbol indicates a 'Narrow road'. The orange dashes indicate 'Road Surface – metalled'.

Having realised my mistake, I turn round and grind back up the hill to where the turn-off should be. Zilch. Sweet fanny adams. Except for a locked gate with a grassy, ancient-looking farmtrack beyond it. No notice on the gate. No track-marker. I recheck the map. Is the farmtrack private or public? Shit knows. The presence of a road on the topo map does not imply that that road is a legal road. Why, then, is there no notice on the gate, indicating private land? You need to become a road-status researcher to complete the simplest bike ride. This uncertainty does not sup-

'Is the
farmtrack
private or
public?'



COLLECTION OF OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM,
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

6. The start of a race bicycle in Dunedin in the 1880s.

port and stimulate outdoor recreation. These thoughts churn dishearteningly. I am annoyed. It is ten past one. Either I risk trespassing – and, according to one critical observer, New Zealand has some of the harshest trespass laws in the world – or I miss today's AOK ride.⁹ For a country that places importance on outdoor recreation and which promotes outdoor tourism, this access situation forms an acute inconsistency.

Arrgh ... bugger it. I lift the bike over the gate and head off down the well-defined grass track. The smooth surface provides effortless cycling. Flocklets of sheep scatter to each side, although I'm trying not to startle them. At one point the gated track becomes faint, and the way ahead is not obvious. I meander down to the right, a gamble, and reach a hard-surfaced farmtrack that takes me past farm buildings. A kennel of dogs are performing Tchaikovsky's Canine Concerto, specially for me. I press on, listening for the inevitable 'Oi, you!' or gunshot. My luck holds and I clamber over a last gate. The back of the gate displays a notice: ABBOTSROYD FARM. PRIVATE PROPERTY. NO TRESPASSING.

Pheeew. Made it. (Subsequent enquiries have confirmed that the delightful route I followed is not a legal road.) But it is now 1.30pm. I pelt down North Taieri Road and coast into the carpark of the Commercial Tavern, where about twenty riders mill about.

In keeping with Leslie Stephen's 'little drama', the next couple of hours provides a contrasting interlude, the day's sparkle and pleasure: a tailwind cruise down Brighton Road, a glimpse of sunlit waves dropping onto white sands, a steady and winding climb up McIntosh Road, the ridgeway of Scroggs Hill Road, with expansive views over the Taieri Plain to the Lammerlaw Range, a supersonic descent of Saddle Hill Road, and then home by way of the Chain Hills.

Back at the Commercial Tavern we go our separate ways. Immediately a moderately strong headwind slows me to a crawl. My legs suddenly feel very inadequate. I notice an abrupt reduction in horsepower, partly caused by a lack of fuel. No problem; there is a dairy in Green Island where \$1.80 buys a large chocolate-coated ice-cream.



FROM TUAPEKA: THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE, W R MAYHEW, 1949.

7. Patrick Dungan and a child on a three-wheeled velocipede in front of his store in Weatherston's (now Wetherstons or Wetherstones), near Lawrence. Dungan died in 1884.

I arrive home at half past five. Hmm ... six hours of riding, without the aid of any stimulants apart from ice-cream. Things are looking OK, for the AOK.

I spend the next four hours flat out on the sofa, soaking up the afterglow.

‘Good ride, Dad?’ asks Paul.

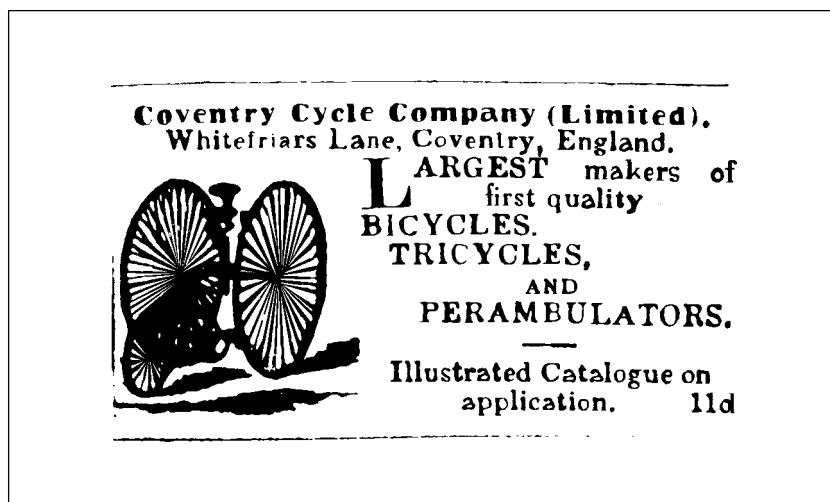
‘Yep. There’s a definite psychobiological interaction between my beta-endorphin levels and my emotional stability.’

Sunday 24 November 2002 – Legal Roads

After yesterday’s puzzlement, I need to learn more about legal roads (sometimes called public roads). Was the farmtrack a legal road? It varied between a hard-surfaced track and a barely discernible line across a field. So I need to understand both formed legal roads and unformed legal roads (also called paper roads). Two minutes of Googling through dotnz lands me at the site of Public Access New Zealand (PANZ), a pressure group ‘formed in 1992 to counter a major shift towards privatisation of public lands and waters.’¹⁰ A document on this site informs me that legal roads, whether formed or unformed, may be established or revoked; ie, their status may be ‘open’ or ‘stopped’.¹¹ PANZ warns me to use them or lose them – if I can find them. Getting down to the nitty-gritty, the statutory record of the existence of formed and unformed legal roads lies in record maps and road legalisation maps held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). You can view these maps at the relevant LINZ office, for an inspection fee.¹²

This might be fine for the local MTB activist, with the time and money to also delve into land appellation, cadastral maps, district plans, and certificates of title. But for the casual recreator or mountain-bike tourist, using the 1:50,000 topographic maps that are widely sold to the public, these access complications hinder route-planning and form an archaic gap in the information age.

‘... these access complications hinder route-planning and form an archaic gap in the information age.’



8. Advertisement from the *Otago Witness*, 10 January 1885. Not all machines were imported. Referring to the ‘velocipede mania’, Scott Crawford wrote that ‘bicycling was to be the first physical activity craze that reached Dunedin and the production of bicycles by local engineers was the first time that there were indications that sport / recreation interests might generate a financial spin-off.’ (‘A History of Recreation and Sport in Nineteenth Century Colonial Otago’.)

The topo maps do not distinguish between formed legal roads and formed private roads. Furthermore, when what appears to be a narrow road on the map turns out to be unformed and invisible, you cannot assume that it is an unformed legal road. The maps even carry a prominent warning in red: 'ATTENTION: The representation on this map of a road or track does not necessarily indicate public right of access.' To cap it all, some of the unformed legal roads shown on the cadastral maps may not even appear on the topographic maps.

New Zealand has extremely few ancient footpaths and bridleways, relics of bygone days; but it is fortunate in having a generous provision of legal roads. Our rural legal roads – whether they be narrow metalled roads, green farmtracks, 4WD routes, or completely unformed roads – often provide our *only* walking or cycling access across countryside. They are paramount to the future of recreational mountain-biking.

My hurried and superficial research leaves me with more questions than answers, more confusion than illumination. I am tempted to visit the Dunedin LINZ office, for the authentic information on yesterday's farmtrack. But today is Sunday and I won't have the time next week. Is there any prospect of showing the legal status of roads on the 1:50,000 topo maps? Would it be cartographically possible? Why must recreators pay a fee just to determine the status of a road? Could Parliament instruct LINZ to start work on very simple maps of legal roads, formed and unformed, to be viewable free on the LINZ website? Such work would take decades, but the long-term benefits would be priceless. In the meantime, could the waymarking on the ground be improved, particularly when roads, public or private, are gated?

Monday 25 November 2002 – Habit

Telecom Track. Towards the end of the run I still feel reasonably fresh. The haul up to Opoho does not require a scraping of the energy barrel. To the south, over the ocean, the low rays from a hidden sun catch broken cliffs of altostratus. A buttress of yellows and reds hangs in the sky, brilliant against a dozen shades of grey. Strong patches of blue show through. What a great place we live in!

Having been certain a month ago that one bike ride a week would satisfy my appetite, I now find myself needing two doses or even three. This conduct is well-documented in the international



9. John Kemp Starley on a Rover bicycle. He exhibited his safety bicycle, later named the Rover, in London in 1885. The Rover was initially received with scepticism by cycling enthusiasts, but a series of carefully staged races proved it to be superior to other contemporary designs.



10. Alexandra Cycling Club, Alexandra, 1890.

journal, *Addictive Behaviors*. I have relapsed. I thought I had kicked the exercise habit, having enjoyed several years free of sweat, but no. The craving promises to dominate this summer.

Wednesday 27 November 2002 – Local Knowledge

Nine of us meet at the Pets & Vets carpark at 6pm. These riders hold a unique store of local knowledge about routes. Tonight provides another example when we thread our way from north Dunedin to Ravensbourne, mainly off the roads. A short section beside the harbour takes us past boats and rich sea-smells, and then through the long grass of the Boat Harbour Reserve. Then my companions introduce me to a new subdivision of the adjective ‘off-road’, namely ‘on-railway’. We bounce awkwardly along on the coarse ballast, putting great faith in the sensitivity of the human ear. Until tonight I hadn’t viewed mountain-biking as an extreme sport.

The steep climb from Ravensbourne to Signal Hill, by way of Rimu Street, at first on tarseal and then on rock-studded clay, should appear on every young athlete’s training schedule. Beyond a certain age, you are entitled to omit such toil from your programme.

From the Signal Hill 4WD tracks, we divert onto some new single-track loops to entertain ourselves on rocks and roots and hairpin bends. Volunteers from MountainBiking Otago have been labouring here, improving Dunedin’s main MTB park. The tracks are graded Easy, Average, and Hard. I can manage the Easys. Over the last six weeks, my general fitness and leg-strength has improved. But in more-technical MTBing, effort and strength is no substitute for skill. On the harder tracks, the correct line eludes me; fate takes me where I would prefer not to go. I walk some sections, rather than risk impregnation with gorse or the handlebar stem.

Mountain-biking is both a casual, informal recreation and an Olympic sport. The needs of its various groups differ, with some overlap. For many Dunedin MTBers, Signal Hill provides an essential and long awaited facility. It has resulted from cooperation between volunteers and the city council, after about ten years of discussion, uncertainty, and mild political controversy. There should never be any need for another Battle of Signal Hill.¹³

By the time we reach the top of McGregors Hill, I have pushed my bike much of the way from Ravensbourne. Yet never mind; the drop northwards to Cleghorn Street provides a fairly smooth run, long spongy grass in places, a welcome discovery. Back on the tarmac, near the summit of North Road, a short discussion leads to a sensible decision. Three supermen turn right, heading uphill for the Organ Pipes, Mount Cargill and dusk. Four other riders turn left, heading downhill to town and the chippy. At last, I’ve located the Mediums.

The Organ Pipes track is an official walkway, managed by the Department of Conservation and off limits to cyclists. The city council’s *Track Policy and Strategy*¹⁴ bans mountain-bikes from Mount Cargill, ‘the most prominent peak above Dunedin ... especially eye-catching in the evening sun. It provides the ultimate in panoramic views of the harbour, the hinterland, and for many kilometres north and south along the coast.’¹⁵

*

‘Mountain-biking is both a casual, informal recreation and an Olympic sport. The needs of its various groups differ, with some overlap.’

Dave and I have been keeping in touch by email. I have encouraged him to train. He is managing the occasional hour or two of inhuman tedium on the Canterbury Plains. I worry whether he is doing enough, whereas he shows a touching concern for his old man, tonight's email from him seeming to evidence some recent telepathy:

Yo dad. hope u hav'nt been pushing ya self too hard with the biking you've been doing, u don't want to hert ya self before the trip. Anyway going out now, and big party tonite. dave.

Sunday 1 December 2002 – Ridge of High Pressure

A huge high to the east of New Zealand is blocking a low over the Tasman Sea. A ridge of high pressure lingers over the whole country. That's the nice thing about highs: they are enduring, slow-moving things, often several thousand kilometres in diameter. The TV weather person, the Metservice isobaric map, and the view from my kitchen window all agree: it's a humdinger of a Sunday.

There are times in Dunedin when the weather is fabulous. When the sun heats the city, and a warm north wind blows, and long banks of glittering mist spill over Mount Cargill and creep southwards to eventually burn up over the town – then it's time to head for the heights. Today I aim for the Swampy Ridge Track, a 4WD route at 600 metres above sea-level. It was once a part of the old Snowy Ridge Trail out of Dunedin, an important drove road that avoided the impassable tangle of the lowland bush.

You can halve the length and height-gain of this route by using a car. Or you can maximise your training mileage by leaving the car in the garage. As I don't own a car, the decision is uncomplicated. I set off from home at midday, wearing shorts and T-shirt. I carry a daypack containing a sweatshirt and a jacket, a map, and a banana. A bottle of water sits in the bottle-cage; it contains 800 ml, which will not be enough, but I will keep my eyes peeled



11. A Columbia Century of 1893. In the 1890s, American wheelmen and wheelwomen were trying to ride 'centuries', ie a hundred miles in a day. The Pope Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut produced a bicycle called the Columbia Century.



FROM EAST OF THE ROCK AND PILLAR,
HELEN M THOMPSON, 1949.

12. Cycling club, 1894. James Tisdall, who is in this photograph, 'was a keen cyclist and is credited with having made the trip from Middlemarch to Dunedin in three and three-quarter hours'. (Thompson, *East of the Rock and Pillar*, 170.) At that time the road from Middlemarch to Outram was probably little more than a bullock track.

for a clean trickle, high on the hill. As I leave the house, the air itself radiates early-summer exuberance. The noon sun is driving the temperature into the twenties, and I wonder whether I'm being overcautious, taking the extra clothes.

An hour's trek around Dunedin's northern perimeter lands me at the Bull Pen carpark on Flagstaff Whare Flat Road. There are just three parked cars. Two motorcycle trail-bikers circle around noisily. I head northeast up the gravelly 4WD track. It quickly presents a stiff climb, part of which I walk. I am soon back on the bike, enjoying easyish riding. After two kilometres I reach a way-marked junction: left for Swampy Ridge, right for a link to the Pineapple-Flagstaff Walkway.

The perils of turning right here are well described in *Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides*: 'This is the sole domain of pavement plodders and the haunt of old ladies (with thermos flasks and woollen mittens) who lie in wait for lawbreaking mountain bikers, with the intent of shoving their ivory-handled walking sticks through the offending spokes and then trampling the hapless rider under slipped feet.'¹⁶

The dangers of turning left, also, are adequately announced, on a wooden track-marker: THIS TRAMPING TRAIL ACROSS RUGGED EXPOSED HILL COUNTRY IS SUBJECT TO SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS AND IS RECOMMENDED FOR WELL-EQUIPPED EXPERIENCED PARTIES ONLY. The Reverend John Christie of Waikouaiti, writing in the 1880s, called this route the Mountain Track, a name still used for its northern half. He wrote:

This track, opened up by the pioneer settlers, was much shorter and more suitable for them than the native footpath [around the coast]. It was free from bush, so that horses, sheep and cattle could be driven to market by it. Though superior to the Maori track, it was not free from drawbacks. Travellers often lost their way, and were benighted on account of the thick fogs that lay on the hills in dull weather, and lives were sometimes lost. The names of several persons are mentioned who entered that region but were nevermore seen or heard of. Skeletons have been found at different times among the mountains in the neighbourhood of this old route, which are supposed to be those of lost travellers ... Some may also be astonished to learn that the first Goodwood [near Waikouaiti] settlers carried their groceries on their backs from Dunedin by the Mountain Track, a distance of nearly forty miles ...

One of the reasons of mishaps to travellers in those days was the pernicious custom of taking a supply of spirits with them. When they became tired or bewildered they applied to their flask for vigour and enlightenment. This method of refreshment was not likely to improve their wits, or make the path plainer. A man may lose his way and stumble with all his senses in their normal state, but if his brains are muddled with liquor the best made road is full of peril. The Mountain Track was the only inland communication for Europeans between Dunedin and Waikouaiti till 1863.¹⁷

The Otago Witness

CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

26 March 1896. A physician who has given much thought to the subject of cycling says that so long as the cyclist can breathe with the mouth shut he is certainly perfectly safe as far as heart-strain is concerned.

'One of the reasons of mishaps to travellers in those days was the pernicious custom of taking a supply of spirits with them.'

I take the left turn, to head north along the broad tussocky ridge. The track is completely dry, despite the wet November and despite the name, Swampy Ridge. The appeal of this track, for me, is that it is all rideable. It is seldom complicated by rock obstacles or bicycle-eating holes. Occasionally I dismount and walk, but because of the uphill gradient, not the technicality. Whereas contorted singletrack might symbolise most mountain-bikers' preferred terrain, this route, full of history and taking a natural line across the hills, well achieves my MTBing ideal. Here is where the Romans would have built their road. More correctly, where their slaves would have built it.

Near Swampy Summit a cool wind blows, and a fast-moving gauze of mist envelops the track. Not the cold drizzle of extensive rain-cloud, but the harmless droplets of a solitary hilltop fog-bank. The tiny drops dampen me only slightly.

I pass Swampy Summit, 739 metres, at 2.40pm, throw on a sweatshirt, grab a banana, yell hello to a couple of other mountain-bikers, and keep moving. Three hundred metres beyond the summit, my bike and I pop out of the base of the mist ... Wow! The sun blazes. To the west, below me, two thousand hectares of Silver Stream bush merge and crumple, sage green in the slight haze. Closer and of more immediate interest, the visible stretches of the gravel road point into the distance, a four-kilometre drop to Flagstaff Whare Flat Road. This is the life ... The Path of Purification ... no more worries about my spiritual welfare.

I reach home at a quarter past four. The bike hardly needs cleaning.

'Ow d'ya go, Dad?' asks Paul.

'Very pleased. The buttock musculature is recovering. And, hey, take a look at this gastrocnemius.'

'Enhanced body image, already?'

'Yes, Paul. The Adonis Complex.'

'Have you considered cosmetic implants?'

Tuesday 3 December 2002 – Bike Maintenance Night

R&R Sport Dunedin lay on a bike-maintenance evening for AOKers. It is an opportunity for people to obtain expert advice, check their bikes, and fix any gremlins.

Wednesday 4 December 2002 – Routine

I join the Wednesday-night Cruisies, a sensible fringe group who know that there's more to life than slogging up Mount Cargill. We climb unhurriedly up North Road. Then we head for Sawyers Bay, via a breakneck descent of the narrow and winding Upper Junction Road, which provides classic road cycling, enjoyable on any type of bicycle. It helps to make this circular route a natural training circuit.

The second half of our clockwise circle, heading for Ravensbourne, might one day provide a lazy sea-level dawdle, the perfect contrast to the first half. But at present State Highway 88, hugging the harbour, provides a single carriageway where seventy-kilogram cyclists mingle with forty-four-tonne trucks. Some of these trucks are gunned along as if they were on an autobahn. There have been moves nationally to allow heavier trucks. Local Government New Zealand, which represents the road-controlling

The Otago Witness

CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

26 March 1896. [News from Australia.] The *Coolgardie Goldfields Courier* mentions that on February 5 a local firm despatched a bicyclist on a business errand from Coolgardie to Cue, by way of Lake Darlot, a total distance there and back of about 1,200 miles.

authorities, has lamented the fact that the public perceive trucks negatively. Apparently, many people don't understand the economic and safety benefits of heavier trucks.

In places there's a useful track beside the railway, but it looks unofficial and cyclists who use it might be trespassing. The north side of the harbour is crying out for a multi-use track. It is a beautiful harbour. But you cannot promote outdoor recreation and outdoor tourism if you treat walkers and pedallers like second-class citizens.

Yesterday the government released the New Zealand Transport Strategy, which says that the needs of cyclists will be catered for and that walking and cycling will be promoted for short trips. It

'The north side of the harbour is crying out for a multi-use track. It is a beautiful harbour.'



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13. From *The Otago Witness* of 2 July 1896.

also says that ‘to achieve the goals of the New Zealand Transport Strategy, the personal security concerns that people have in relation to walking, cycling, cycle touring and public transport will need to be addressed.’<sup>18</sup> The Cycling Advocates’ Network (CAN) has welcomed the shift in policy but has also commented that the Strategy does not contain obvious implementation mechanisms. The CAN chairperson, Jane Dawson, said: ‘The acid test for us will be whether more people are using their bikes to get around in a few years’ time.’<sup>19</sup>

Other countries face the same challenge. Gary Fisher, the American mountain-biker, phrased his reservations about urban bicycling even more sceptically than Jane Dawson: ‘For city bicycling to catch on we need a revolution in our society’s infrastructure. Right now a city rider needs to be a road warrior, and the bike needs to be cheap and ugly so it won’t get stolen. That’s not a bike-friendly culture.’<sup>20</sup>

But I digress. Enough of the gloom. Tonight’s ride is a relaxed two-hour workout, easier than the other rides that I’ve been doing lately. Takes little out of me. I feel noticeably fitter than six weeks ago.

‘Good ride, Dad?’ says Paul.

‘Very. I felt quite strong.’

‘Your bone density improving already?’

‘Yes. No broken hips for me, son.’

#### **Saturday 7 December 2002 – No Scorching**

Time for something different. I need to do some longer rides, to better prepare for the AOK Rally. On the map, I pick out Penguin Beach, near the tip of the Otago Peninsula. The map shows a road to this beach, from the albatross colony. Much of my journey down the peninsula will follow sealed roads. These carry little heavy traffic, bar the occasional truckload of sheep, and they include some twisting hilly lanes that beg to be cycled.

I leave the house at 8am. The morning is warm and dry, despite a forecast of rain. Once through the city, I head up Highcliff Road, which climbs steadily up the well-defined spine of the peninsula. The road is well engineered to rise only gradually, it could have been designed for cyclists. Below me to the north, lush pastures, broken by shelter belts and wooded gullies, drop steeply to the harbour. Paddocks of knee-high grass await grazing; the herds of sheep and cattle, visible here and there on the hillside, have not kept up with the recent growth. As I gain height, the whole harbour opens out below me, the finest view of the Otago Harbour short of that from a hot-air balloon.

The road provides a continuous viewing-platform. Pity that it was ever sealed. How unfortunate that there’s no linear cycle-track slightly higher up, towards the crest of this ridge. Dream on, pal ... there is little political will to establish new public cycle-tracks over private ground ... the necessary legislation does not exist. Even if it did, there would probably be no money to pay for the work. Never mind no cycle-track, there’s not even a skyline walkway along the peninsula, twenty-seven years after the New Zealand Walkways Act of 1975.

The road rises to 300 metres. Just after the hamlet of Pukehiki, it crosses the watershed and ... Voilà! I am gazing down southwards to a rugged coastline of desolate beaches and pre-

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‘Never mind no  
cycle-track,  
there’s not even  
a skyline  
walkway along  
the peninsula,  
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years after the  
New Zealand  
Walkways Act of  
1975.’

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cupitous grassy headlands. One kilometre further on, I turn right onto Sandymount Road to detour down to Hoopers Inlet and Papai Inlet. The tarseal ends. The gravel crunches under the tyres. I take care on the fast drop to sea-level. At Hoopers Inlet a loan oarsman skulls a racing shell across the flat-calmness. The clunk-swish of his rowing echoes around the otherwise silent inlet. It is high tide, and large flocks of waders feed in the shallows, undisturbed either by him or by me. To the east rises Mount Charles, at 408 metres the peninsula's highest point, named on 24 February 1770 by Captain Cook.

A short gasping climb up Weir Road and a freewheeling downhill bring me back to the tarseal and the harbourside at Portobello Bay. Until 1908 the bays road was a toll road. In his *Dunedin: A Pictorial History*, David Johnson listed the charges as a half-penny per head for cattle, three pence for a score of sheep, three pence for a ridden horse, and sixpence for a bicycle.<sup>21</sup> He added that on one occasion, for a tangi at Otakou, 363 bicycles went through the barrier.

There must have been some rampant price inflation happening, because the toll for a bicycle seems to have risen tenfold, judging from the figures in *Otago Peninsula: A Local History*:

Before the road was surfaced and when there were only horse drawn vehicles the cycling clubs made much use of it ... The toll charge was five shillings for wheeled vehicles, and since that included bicycles there was consternation among the cyclists, and many made their protest by choosing the low tide and walking their machines round the gate on the beach. Farmers had it in for cyclists, who they would have shot like stray dogs among their sheep; they really thought their horses would shy at the sight of a man on a bicycle and plunge into the harbour.<sup>22</sup>

Knight adds that the cycling clubs appealed to the Portobello Road Board for a reduction in the toll charge. The clubs promised 'not to do any "scorching" '. The parties reached an agreement. Dan-



HERITAGE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION,  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND CENTRE,  
CHRISTCHURCH CITY LIBRARIES  
<http://library.christchurch.org.nz/Heritage/Photos/Cyclists.asp>

14. Mr and Mrs Preece on a trip to Dunedin, about 1896.

gerous corners would be signposted, warning the pedallers to reduce speed and if necessary dismount. The toll charge would be reduced to one shilling. Even after this, the cyclists continued to protest until the toll gate was removed altogether.

The day remains warm, with light winds and high cloud. I push on along seven or eight kilometres of relatively flat road. Here is rural New Zealand typified: shabby batches, lifestyles sections, brightly painted homes with cottage gardens, welcoming backpackers, neat bed-and-breakfasts, a new, unfinished motel. Here too is history: in 1831 at Te Umukuri (Wellers Rock), the Weller brothers of Sydney established a whaling station that became for a few years, until 1840, one of the larger European settlements in New Zealand. On 13 June 1840 at Otakou, the Otago chiefs Karetai and Korako signed the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>23</sup> In 1845 Archibald Anderson, a settler from Wellington, established the peninsula's first sheep farm at Kelvin Grove, facing Te Rauone Beach. The Scottish settlers arrived in Port Otago on the *John Wickliffe* in 1848.

I reach Taiaroa Head at 10.45am. A dozen visitors have stepped out of their cars to gaze at the cormorants and gulls on the guano-plastered cliffs.

My plan is to follow Tarewai Road to Penguin Beach. When I check the map, I notice something I hadn't previously seen: 'Locked gate'. Buzzer it. Foiled again. The gate is fifty metres away, so I go to look. It is open. Notices say: PLEASE ENTER. PAY ADMISSION AT BUILDING. YES! WE ARE OPEN. VEHICLE ACCESS ONLY. NO WALKERS. Huh. Charming. There's no mention of cyclists. I presume that they, like walkers, are excluded. I've pedalled hard for nearly three hours to discover that this road, a metalled road on the map, is apparently private. How much will the entrance fee be? The notices do not say. I had been looking forward to visiting this isolated beach, a haunt of yellow-eyed penguins and little blue penguins; but my interest has instantly evaporated. Here is an ecotourist enterprise – a green, conservational venture – that is unwilling to accommodate walkers. Even on this remote fingertip of Otago, we design our lives for the motorcar.

Hunger is nagging at me now, as well as frustration. I belt back to Portobello for a bottle of pop. I eat my two bananas sitting on the seat that faces the harbour and the seagulls. If you're a Dunedin cyclist, you too have probably sat here, soaking up the sunny micro-climate. There's time to reflect. Today I have seen numerous signs indicating walking tracks, a credit to Otago Peninsula Walkers and the city council. Yet many of these walking tracks are not marked on the 1:50,000 topographic map. (I later counted twelve that are not marked.<sup>24</sup>) And cycle-tracks? Twenty-six years after the coming of the mountain-bike, I have not spotted a single sign indicating access for cyclists.

The Otago Peninsula has a distinctive flavour, a blend of beauty and history: both natural history and human history. To taste that flavour to the full, to savour every tang of it, you must park the car and wander. Walk or pedal. Slow life down. Think about the two hundred sites of Polynesian activity, many of them Moa Hunter.<sup>25</sup> Discover charming ruins of stone and wooden houses. Sit and lunch beside dry-stone walls that predate the introduc-

The Otago Witness

## CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

30 July 1896. A Miss Coad was charged at Christchurch with riding a bicycle on a footpath in Sydenham. The offence was admitted, but it was contended it was only a little one, and the plea of sex was urged. The constable, however, stated that he had several times cautioned the lady, who had dashed through pedestrians in a manner that was not at all safe. Mr Beetham said he did not see why he should make any distinction. If ladies claimed equal rights, they must accept equal liabilities. She would be fined 10s, with costs 7s, the usual penalty.

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'Even on this remote fingertip of Otago, we design our lives for the motorcar.'

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tion of barbed wire in the 1870s. Notice the cliffs of blue-grey basalt. Saunter down to beautiful beaches. Get far away from the sound of the traffic. Avoid the tarmac, if you can.

Yet here I am, lunching beside the peninsula's main road. On mountain-biking access to the peninsula, my feelings are mixed. Today's ride, mainly on tarseal, is an outstanding road-spin, a roadies' favourite. But there is no linear off-road route from St Kilda to Taiaroa Head, and probably never will be. The logical connections between the oceanic bays and beaches exist as walking tracks but not as cycle-tracks. Whereas the potential off-roading is huge, the actual off-roading is fragmentary. (Arguably, even the walking tracks, despite their attractions and much voluntary work having been carried out on them, exist as a bitty and disjointed collection, often interrupted by tarmac. Ideally they would exist as a web, interconnected by track, not tarmac.)

It is too agreeable a day for me to return via the bays road, which can be busy with light traffic. So I take the highroad again, notching up another 300-metre climb.

I arrive home at 2pm. Amounting to maybe sixty-five kilometres, this ride has formed a useful progression in my training.

Later in the afternoon the cloud thickens and lowers. The sky becomes overcast. The southerly arrives. The rain arrives. I've beaten Sod's law, and the sofa feels warm, dry and satisfying.

#### **Saturday 14 December 2002 – A Century**

John Fridd, the founder and co-organiser of the AOK Rally, has hatched a training ride for today that will cover a hundred kilometres. Starting and finishing at Mosgiel, we will loop clockwise through Waldronville, Brighton, Taieri Mouth, Waiholā, Berwick, and Outram. The forecast predicts a fine day except for a few showers, but with blustery westerlies, up to fifty kilometres an hour. A check through the kitchen window confirms this: there's some white stratus over the ocean, there's a cloudless blue sky overhead, and the tall eucalypts along Opoho Creek are waving furiously. Much will depend on exactly how nasty that wind is. Our scenic tour might become a tough ride. On the other hand, in the afternoon we might gain a tailwind.

I wrote that last paragraph twelve hours ago, at 8am. If you are training for an AOK Rally, and wanting a hard proving ride, with Aristotle's troughs and peaks of despair and elation, then wait for a day that reproduces the conditions I have just described.

Let's return to the start of the ride, sorry, race. My morning's fate is sealed when circumstances force me to join the A group, also known as the Tuffnuts, who leave Mosgiel at 10.30am in a mass start. (The Mediums left an hour earlier.) We head up past Scroggs Hill and down to Brighton. I cope with the uphill, but I've yet to master big-ringing it down loose gravel, and by the time we reach Brighton, just fifteen kilometres into the event, I am lagging behind and in no condition to admire the seascape. Now we hurry southwest along the coast road, into the strongly gusting westerly, as near as dammit a direct headwind. There will be no respite for the next seventeen kilometres, until Taieri Mouth. The eleven of us form a tight peloton, which contains ten Olympic hopefuls and one recreational rider. The pros take it in turns to ride hard at the front. After fifteen minutes the bunch drops me. I am now in a private windswept character-examination, the last

The Otago Witness

#### **CYCLING.**

NOTES BY DEMON.

6 August 1896. ... not many months ago a lady of between 60 and 70 rode up from Invercargill to Dunedin and back again, the journey taking two days each way.



rider behind thirty others. I wonder whether I will see anyone else all day. Unknown to me, one or two Mediums recreators are not far ahead, either sightseeing or suffering their own lonely distress, depending on which story you believe. Several times, ferocious crosswind gusts try to sweep me into the ocean. By the time I reach Taieri Mouth, where the Tuffnuts are waiting, I have paid for a lifetime's sins in just one hour.

I am grateful that they waited for me. Mateship is alive and well. Or maybe they were stopped for a mandatory drug test. Someone describes the next leg, which is a good job because I'm in no state to read a map. The route will now turn inland, climbing a gravel road to a height of about 300 metres. I must conquer the lactic acid for another twelve kilometres, to reach Waihola and lunch and the prospect, shortly afterwards, of a tailwind.

The pack soon vanishes vigorously around a corner, leaving me to my own head-down grind. It is an undulating climb, if that's not a contradiction in terms. It deceives. It reminds me of the ascent of a mountain in Wales called Elidir Fawr, notorious for its false summits. Now I am passing Mediums stragglers, and their struggle is my spur, I'm ashamed to admit. Once I'm over the summit, the true strength of the wind becomes apparent when I have to pedal hard to gain any speed downhill. Yet in the distance is the Taieri Plain. There will be no more long climbs. The mind-battle is nearly won.

It is after 1pm when I coast, shell-shocked, into Waihola. Seven or eight Mediums are still resting, I am relieved to see. Our printed route-guide advises us that at Waihola we can lunch at the Tavern or at the Black Swan restaurant and then relax by the lake. Maybe next year. I sink onto a seat under the information board and grab a sandwich from my backpack.

Twenty minutes later, a few riders – the Mediums vanguard – head down State Highway 1. This provides my first chance today to experience recreational cycling. I grab my bike as if at a triathlon transition and I latch onto this grouplet. Half an hour later, beyond the western end of Lake Waihola, we turn right onto Berwick Road and into tailwind happyland, the psychological climax of the trip, according to the requirements of Aristotle and John Fridd.

Now there's a chance to notice the landscape. We are passing the Waipori-Waihola wetlands, an area of outstanding ecological, historical, and cultural significance. For centuries this place formed an abundant food-basket for Ngai Tahu of the Otago coastal settlements: eel, whitebait, and flounder; waterfowl and other birds; and fibre resources. Lake Waihola's rate of infill has increased thirty-fold since Europeans arrived. Based on present land use, climate, and sea-level patterns, it will fill with sediment within 400 years.<sup>26</sup>

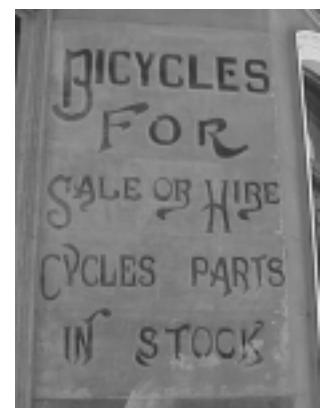
After Outram just eighteen flat kilometres lie ahead. My right knee is stiff and sore, giving the leg the mechanical usefulness of a long frankfurter. I also detect the onset of numbum syndrome. I tuck in behind George and Gaylene. George is blessed with a steady, reliable pace. His pedalling rate is like a metronome. Locking on to the perfect pacesetter is like engaging autopilot. I drift off into a land of busy bridledways and Elizabethan love sonnets. Then it's 4.40pm and we're back at Mosgiel railway station.

A beer at Nellie's goes down well. After a day's bike ride, everything has twice its usual value.

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'For centuries  
this place  
formed an  
abundant food-  
basket for Ngai  
Tahu of the  
Otago coastal  
settlements ... '

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16. The old store, Outram, 2003.

### Friday 20 December 2002 – AOK E-news

Several AOK news-emails have arrived in quick succession, reflecting the great deal of organisation that John and Tina Fridd put into the AOK Rally and its associated recreational rides. John is looking for a truck-driver holding an HT licence, to drive the baggage truck. He also needs some help preparing six large hard-board panels, the rally signs that will warn motorists of cyclists ahead. Wednesday's e-news also carried a note of reassurance: 'DON'T BE PUT OFF BY THE TWO 100KM DAYS. We've arranged extra sag wagon support for the two 100k days – there will be a 37-seat bus running between St Bathans (60km mark) and Naseby on day 2 and a minibus between Duntroon (again 60k mark) and Kurow on day 3. So both days you only have to ride 60km if you get tired.'<sup>27</sup>

### Saturday 21 December 2002 – Photo Albums

AOK Saturday ride, on the Peninsula, and AOK Beach Party, at St Clair. I join the Mediums. We head out along the bays road against a moderate northeasterly. Then we toil stragglingly up Castlewood Road, where our founder slows down to smell the rosehips and pigsties, so the story goes, and we return by way of Karetai Road and Chisholm Park golf course. An invigorating ride, short for a Saturday, but a reasonable compromise between muscle-tone and Christmas.

Karetai Road is a rare gem, a steep 4WD approach to a gleaming ocean beach, and you can cycle it without defying the law of trespass. The track's deep ruts demand concentration. I couldn't have hacked these ruts two months ago, but now: excellent fun. And quite a buzz from being able to cope.

A chilly onshore wind foils the pétanque and bucket-and-spade plans. We find a sheltered spot for the chillybins, behind the St Clair Surf Club. The photo albums come out, records of the first three AOK rallies. The fifty or so Dunedin AOKers hold, individually and collectively, a wealth of cycling experience. I get to know David Jackson, who toured Central Otago twenty years ago on a heavily loaded ten-speed sports bike. He comments that even in those days, with less traffic, cycling on the state highways was too dangerous to be everywhere pleasurable. The mountain-bike is minimising that danger and opening up dramatic new possibilities.

History is repeating itself. A hundred and ten years ago, the safety bicycle offered exciting new mobility. St Clair will have been a regular meeting-place for Dunedin's wheelmen and wheelwomen. The latter met Victorian prejudice. They 'faced disapproval from all sectors of society, and ... encountered considerable hostility'.<sup>28</sup> In New Zealand, street harassment of female cyclists was common:

... every woman who cycles in the public ways creates a furore among the men of the vicinity. Larrikins chase her, well-dressed persons yell for her to 'get off and push', other women make spiteful remarks, and there is a widespread inclination to make the ride exciting.<sup>29</sup>

The situation seems to have been particularly bad in Dunedin. The teasers, pesterers and hooligans were 'bringing discredit not only to themselves but to this city'.<sup>30</sup> A deputation approached the mayor to find out if there were any bylaws that might curb the harassment.<sup>31</sup>

### Sunday 22 December 2002 – Recreational Paperwork

The weather forecast for the next couple of days looks reasonable. I decide on a Christmas treat: to Pulpit Rock in the Silver Peaks, a tussock-capped deeply incised range of hills some twenty kilometres north of Dunedin. This outing, done from Opoho, will total about seventy-five kilometres, two-thirds of it off the tar-seal. According to *Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides*, the expedition can take between six and ten hours.<sup>32</sup>

For the third time in four weeks I cannot tell from the topographic map whether the metalled road that I would like to cycle along is a legal road. Furthermore, even if Mount Allan Road is a legal road, to approach Pulpit Rock from it I need a permit from Wenita Forest Products Ltd.

Wenita explains the need: 'Uncontrolled public use of our forests is a concern to us due to the safety issues it raises, the potential risks to the forest and the problems associated with conflicting activities being carried out at the same time.'<sup>33</sup>

Safety issues? The danger that a cyclist can present to other users of the forest roads? Surely not. The danger that other users or forestry operations can present to a cyclist? Maybe. But I think I'm capable of recognising harvesting machinery when I see it and of identifying a trail-bike when I hear it.

The potential risks to the forest? For Christ's sake! We are all pyro-idiot.

The problems associated with conflicting activities being carried out at the same time? Problems, problems. Why so negative? Consider this: in the UK, Forest Enterprise, a division of the Forestry Commission, is reportedly the country's single largest provider of *open access* and outdoor recreation facilities. Two trail specialists from the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) visited Wales in September 2002. According to their report, tourism to Forest Enterprise centres in Wales accounts for approximately three billion US dollars, about 7 per cent of Wales's GDP.<sup>34</sup>

You mellow with age, however, and I am aware that permit-issuing and visitor-controlling have become a national pastime for Kiwis, justified by impeccable theories of sustainability. Sometimes it's best to go with the flow. So I phone Wenita's Mosgiel office. No-one in. It's Sunday. What do you expect? Lord above! You can't just expect to get a permit immediately, when it suits you, when the weather happens to be excellent.

I email them, still hoping to arrange a permit for Tuesday. Although Wenita has concerns about uncontrolled entry, the company's management plan is positive about commerce being 'a compatible partner with conservation and recreation interests'.<sup>35</sup>

### Monday 23 December 2002 – Preparations

I phone the Wenita office again. The two people I speak to respond helpfully. Can I call in their Mosgiel office this afternoon, to pick up the permit? No, sorry, not without a journey involving four

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'For the third time in four weeks I cannot tell from the topographic map whether the metalled road that I would like to cycle along is a legal road.'

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The Otago Witness

### CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

13 August 1896. Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria guards against a tendency to stoutness by taking a long spin on his bicycle every morning.

buses or an hour's bike ride. Have I got a fax? Yes. Huzzah! The permit arrives five minutes later. I am very grateful, especially considering the short notice and the closeness to Christmas. There is no charge. Tough shit, though, if you haven't got a fax; stay at home and watch TV.

It has rained today, but at 7pm a last check of tomorrow's forecast gives: 'Fine weather, late showers. Northerly winds. Expected high 24°, Expected low 9°.' Most of the route will be new to me, and I expect to be slow. I plan a dawn start. My daypack becomes heavier than I'd like, with more food than usual and a Gore-Tex bivvy-bag. I call on Roger, my next-door neighbour, and drop off a route outline.

'I should be back by six. Don't panic until midnight.'

'OK. Let me know if you see any deer.'

The ultimate MTB experience, for me, is to be found in taking on real mountains, either going from A to B or following a logical circle. Tomorrow I will be tackling a Dunedin classic. Perhaps it is fortunate that I don't take the trouble to calculate the total height to be climbed.

#### Tuesday 24 December 2002 – Pulpit Rock

I leave the house at 5.30am. No wind. Pleasantly cool. Streetlights still on. Half an hour later, when I'm nearing the top of Three Mile Hill, the sun rises from some mist behind my left shoulder, while the moon sits brightly ahead on the right. The low sunlight highlights every tree and fence and blade of grass. Two stoats play on the road. How different the world is at dawn! Wearing a sweatshirt I am overheating, but I leave it on for the downhill.

At 6.45am I leave the Taieri Plain, crawling up the zigzags of climb number two (Taioma Road) and into new territory. Soon the tarseal ends; it won't reappear for eight hours. Now, for the second time today, I lose nearly all the height I've gained, dropping to the railway line at Taioma. On this steep descent, I make a mental note: walk up this, later on.

The gravel road crosses the railway line and Mullocky Stream. Curses! Nearly back to sea-level. If you look westwards here, you can glimpse the Wingatui Viaduct, after which the railway disappears towards the Taieri Gorge. On the early routes into the interior, Janet Cowan wrote in *Down the Years in the Maniototo* that the 'most likely routes to Maniototo were very difficult. The Taieri River was at times dangerous with the floods and its gorge so precipitous that a traveller would have to keep to the mountain tops above it.'<sup>36</sup>

Immediately after Mullocky Stream, climb number three rears up and forces me to drop the chain back onto the granny ring. After its initial rise, Mount Allan Road weaves restfully along the forested ridge. Soon, though, you again abandon all the height-gain, dropping steeply to the ford at Big Stream, which could be better named Little Stream. Eight o'clock. So far, OK. Ahead lies climb number four, 650 metres.

Sometimes the best places in the hills are halfway up. An ugly spiked gate carries a notice: TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED. Beyond it, the young Big Stream is cutting a pedigree V-shaped valley. Pines clothe the steep valleysides, right down to the rocky streambed. A grassy track squeezed tightly beside Big Stream provides four kilometres of exquisite grandad biking. Potter along

The Otago Witness

### CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

13 August 1896. It is all very well for a man or boy to go 40 or 50 miles in a day, but it is not fit for women who have their daily work to do ... [In a long section on the pros and cons of cycling for women.]

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'Pines clothe the steep valleysides, right down to the rocky streambed.'

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here in early morning in early summer, when the light is strong and the grass is new and the legs are still fresh, and watch a hare parading on the flats under the eucalypts. Rare native fish have been recorded in Big Stream. You might spot a New Zealand falcon (karearea), perhaps diving onto a baby stoat at 160 kilometres an hour. These falcons, a threatened species featured on the twenty-dollar note, have been seen in this forest. You might be so enchanted by this place that you sail straight past the vital right turn – easily done – and lose half an hour interpreting the map.

So time flies, because of this mistake, and it is 10am when, after walking up a rutted clay 4WD track, I emerge suddenly from the dappled light of the forest into the fierce sunshine of Long Ridge. The sunglasses come out. All around stretch open tops and deep-cut forested valleys. Far to the north, the Rock and Pillar Range still boasts a few snow patches.

On the map, the seven-kilometre 'vehicle track' along Long Ridge looks as if it might provide a fast route to Pulpit Rock. But not for me, today. Yesterday's rain must have been heavy: every one of innumerable low-points holds a muddy pool, and every muddy pool seems to hold a stone or a groove. My wheels display a natural liking for awkward underwater ruts. I ride, walk, ride, walk, ride, walk ... The sun blazes. I have drunk nearly all my water and am rationing the last cupful. A ferocious thirst slows me. I ride, walk, ride, walk. It is hard to appreciate the eye-drawing curving ridge ahead. (Maybe this ridge is more rideable in descent.)

On the final rise to Pulpit Rock, a tiny trickle of water, half the thickness of a straw, cascades smoothly into a rocky hole in the track. The miniature tap takes a few minutes to fill my water bottle. Thank you, God. When I reach Pulpit Rock, it is 12.40pm; I have been incompetently slow on the ridgeway. A cheese sandwich comes in useful, while I check and recheck the map. Barring any wrong turns, I have cracked it, Dunedin's guaranteed cure for insomnia.

From Pulpit Rock my oval route heads briefly north towards Point 777, and then turns west to follow a 4WD track down an unnamed ridge. In thick mist this area would pose tricky route-finding, but today it delivers a dream downhill, nearly all rideable. The ridge passes to the south of Mount Allan, and then smooth dry forestry roads speed me back to the Big Stream ford. I arrive at the ford at ten past one; in half an hour I have dropped the 650 metres that took three hours to climb.

I clean the bike in the ford, drink for the homeward climbs, refill my water bottle, and lie content in the hot grass. The sun is burning my unprotected forearms. The air throbs with heat, there are no sea breezes here, Mount Allan Forest is meeting one of the hotter days of early summer.

At this point, the description in *Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides* is a model of brevity: 'From there head back out the way you came in.'<sup>37</sup> I won't need the map again today. I relax, freed from the effort of route-finding. The only complications from now on will be the weary leg-muscles, the sun, and the thirst. (Looking back I should have stayed there longer and drunk three times as much.)

Some dogged self-discipline forces me up from this idyll. Climb number five is 200 metres at a gradient that I would normally ride. I walk it, but this surrender doesn't seem like a total defeat.

The Otago Witness

## CYCLING.

NOTES BY DEMON.

20 August 1896. All riders should learn back-peddalling as soon as possible, and should never attempt riding down hill until they have learned to keep the machine under perfect control ... Never attempt to coast a hill unless you can see the bottom.

The sun is now so hot that I dodge from shadow to shadow, along the edge of the road. Climb number six, after Mullocky Stream, is less than 200 metres and doesn't take long to walk. My water soon runs out, yet again. Somewhere along here a belt of eucalypts borders the road. A million leaves glisten and perspire, releasing their explosive aromatic vapours, an intoxicating dose of aroma therapy.

Taieri Plain, 3pm, tar bubbles pop loudly under my tyres, tat, tat, tat, tat.

Climb number seven, Three Mile Hill, heavy smell of melting asphalt. I ride it, but with a ten-minute rest halfway; there are times when even great fulfilment cannot spur a tired and dehydrated body.

Half past four, New World, two litres of Cadbury Creamy Vanilla Ice-cream.

Climb number eight, Opoho Road, only a hundred metres, I ride it.

Home, 5pm. I've been out for eleven and a half hours. A slow time, but OK for an old geezer. I have climbed 2,100 metres.

The only dangerous part of the day was mixing it with the high-velocity halfwits on Three Mile Hill, yet you don't need a permit for that.

#### **Monday 30 December 2002 – AOK E-news**

An AOK news-email arrives. The planning for the 2003 AOK Rally continues. John Fridd has been busy painting warning signs conforming to Transit New Zealand requirements. Tina Fridd has started getting together the masses of food. She is looking for a couple of extra-large catering pots. The field for the Rally now numbers 239, of ages from twelve to seventy-two. Four overseas riders will be taking part, from South Africa, Switzerland, and Germany.

#### **Tuesday 31 December 2002**

A nasty mix of hay fever and eczema has hit Dave, forcing him indoors to nurse his mucous membranes. This will disrupt his training for the Rally. The knowledge that there will be a support vehicle becomes an important consideration at the back of our minds.

#### **Thursday 2 January 2003 – Vegetated**

Paul Coffey, Dunedin city council's Community Development Team Leader, has sent me an interesting leaflet about the Silver Stream water-race tracks.<sup>38</sup> The water-race was completed in 1881 to augment the city's water supply. It consisted of twenty-nine kilometres of winding open-race, timber sluices, tunnels, weirs, and steel pipes. Several groups of trampers, founded by the late Steve Amies, have reopened a network of tracks once used by workers.

One glance at the bushy photographs in the leaflet tells me that this is an area to mountain-bike in the summer, after a long dry spell. For places like this, you snatch the perfect day. Today. The sun has baked the hills, and me, for eight days. The bush-clad valley will provide an escape from the heat.

Before this escape, though, there is a one-and-a-half-hour sweltering ride from home. By the time I reach Powder Creek carpark, I am recalling a phrase from Australian weather reports, 'hot and

*The Otago Witness*

### **CYCLING.**

**NOTES BY DEMON.**

20 August 1896. Last week was a time of rejoicing among cyclists, and there were wheels in abundance every day. For some days there was excellent riding surface, and for a while the cyclist imagined himself in the middle of the season, and, duly thankful for the spell of fine weather and the abundance of summer-like clouds of dust, made the most of the advantage laid open to him. A few riders ventured out, despite the cold, keen wind, on Saturday afternoon, and report the roads to be in excellent order. New mounts are strongly in evidence just now, and by next Saturday I expected to see our roads, if they are in rideable order, almost swarming with riders anxious to try the strength and pace of their new machines, and others just as anxious to test their last year's mount against the outcome of a season's improvements, and all eager to discuss the respective merits of various makers, English and American machines, and the latest improvements to reach our shores.

dusty'. It is a relief to leave the gravel and pass the locked gate, in the footsteps of the water-men and the taniwha Matamata. I take the wide main track past the pumphouse, crossing two fords. Easy cycling leads through grassy glades with large kowhai trees. I am following the Racemans Track, a relatively flat track beside the Silver Stream. It will provide a straightforward out-and-back route. All the tracks are well signposted at track junctions, with unobtrusive posts, the best signage I have seen in ten weeks of biking. City Council, take a bow!

After crossing a small side creek, the track narrows and the bush thickens. Soon I'm ducking and weaving along a single-track that will appeal to lovers of supplejack and jungle warfare. Consider wearing goggles here. This is 'dense kanuka forest, with its understorey of broadleaf, marbleleaf, lancewood, five finger, coprosma, pepperwood, kowhai seedlings, flax and ferns'.<sup>39</sup> Today the track's surface is as dry as the moon, even at the low-points. Roots corrugate it mischievously, thank heaven for front suspension. And thank heaven nobody was here when a large landslip wiped out part of the track, quite recently. The Racemans Track ends at the top weir, about six kilometres above the Powder Creek carpark. The ride is delightful, but short. The dead end seems an anticlimax; mountain-bikers cannot easily continue from here, making the Racemans into part of a day's circuit.

Reversing the Racemans, down a very slight gradient, seems noticeably easier than riding up it. A couple of walkers suddenly appear in front of me, on their way up. I brake hard, slowing almost to a stop. We pass, saying hello. No hassle. But cyclists need to take care on blind bends here. The Racemans is a dual-use track, available to both walkers and mountain-bikers. The shared-use idea is becoming increasingly accepted. Not that it hasn't been around, in various forms, for a long time. About a hundred years ago the Tuapeka County Council passed bicycle bylaws, one of which required a cyclist when passing approaching horses to dismount and stand by his or her machine. In Octo-

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'The Racemans is a dual-use track, available to both walkers and mountain-bikers.'

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FREDERICK JONES. PERMISSION OF THE ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND. MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE REUSE OF THIS IMAGE.

**18.** Cycle patrol raised to thwart the 'horse fiend', Christchurch, 1896.

ber 1903 the first case involving a breach of the new bylaw was brought before the magistrate at Tapanui. The offender was convicted, but the *Tapanui Courier* felt that the particular clause of the regulations which led to the prosecution was 'totally impracticable'.<sup>40</sup>

Several times, strange clicking noises alert me to a chain or wheel that is trying to chop up the dead undergrowth. I stop to extract the grass, twigs and branches.

The carpark reappears all too soon.

I ride up to the old Whare Flat School. The topographic map shows a maze of roads to the south of the school, and it's anyone's guess where the legal roads end and the private ones start. But I'm used to this infuriating fuzziness now. I turn right, onto Longridge Road. At a locked gate there is a notice: CITY FORESTS LTD. FLAGSTAFF FOREST. WALKING [AND] CYCLING ACCESS PERMITTED WEEKENDS PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND WEEKDAY EVENINGS AFTER 6PM. NO ACCESS TO AREAS SIGNPOSTED 'OPERATIONAL AREA'. So this road, an entrance to what has been described as Dunedin's premier riding area, is closed on 250 days a year. In other words, from an MTBer's viewpoint, the access situation sucks. The City Forests viewpoint seems to be that recreation and forestry work cannot take place simultaneously in the same forest. Andrew Corney commented on this in his 1998 dissertation, 'Mountain Biking in Dunedin: It's All Right Here?':

A [MountainBiking Otago] submission to the 1994/1995 DCC annual plan requested recognition of the recreational use value of Flagstaff Forest. The club felt that mountain bikers, as ratepayers, have a right to access resources owned by the DCC and its subsidiary companies. After this submission had been lodged City Forests requested the club to respect their wishes and not ride during weekdays ... this process of letter writing did not produce any considerable advances in the quality of access to this desirable mountain biking area.<sup>41</sup>

I am sure that the City Forests policy is defensible. I know little about forestry. But I suspect that the debate over admittance to forests is more complex and two-sided than meets the eye.

Never mind. No problem today. It's a public holiday. I can legally tire myself out on this 350-metre climb to the Bull Pen. *Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides* calls this 'an easy ride back'. The DCC leaflet, *Fat Tyre Trails*, says: 'Pick the middle chain ring and plod up the long climb ...'<sup>42</sup> The hot day has taken a lot out of me. My middle chainring is not required.

### Wednesday 8 January 2003

Dave and his still new-looking DiamondBack arrive on the bus from Dunsandel. His training has been restricted to the Canterbury Plains. We cycle up Opoho Road and spend an hour on Signal Hill, where he shows me how to catch air and I teach him how to crash. Later he stretches his cycling legs on North Road. These hills are the first that he has met; there's just a week for him to fall in love with hill-climbing.



#### Thursday 9 January 2003

Dave's bike has a slightly buckled rear wheel. These things happen when you use your bicycle as a pogo stick. We take it into Cycle Surgery. They fix the wheel and charge only \$10.

#### Friday 10 January 2003

The long fine spell has broken. Dunedin lies under a dense amorphous layer of cloud whose base roughly defines the 300-metre contour. A light rain falls. My routine training circuit, up Mount Cargill Road and back through the Waitati Valley, will be sufficient. Dave and I crawl up North Road and then vanish into a mist reminiscent of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. We arrive back encrusted in enough grit to block the shower drain.

The weather is ideal for armchair MTBing. Curiosity gets the better of me, and I buy a mountain-biking magazine that comes from one of those English-speaking countries occupied by millions of rich MTB dudes. Out of 180 pages, 125 pages carry advertising or product reviews. This commerce has always existed in cycling, ever since Dunlop reinvented the pneumatic tyre. 'During their brief heyday in the late nineteenth century, bicycles arguably became the western world's number-one consumer luxury.'<sup>43</sup> Nowadays, the marketese goes something like this: 'Zzoka seats have led the field for years, and now the ergoquilted orthonomic pudendal-safe SitRite 2003 series has been added to the range. Top of this race-matured line is the SitRite 2003 Detonator XTR, as used by Fred Glomerulus. Hollow titanium rails and Zzoka-Lite™ micro-absorbing upper material give a scant weight of 196g, without sacrificing the duomorphic declivity.'

At the last minute I rush into town and call into Browns bike shop, not too bothered about declivity, but anxious to obtain four new brake-blocks for some long downhills in Central Otago. This store, like all Dunedin's bike shops, is packed with goodies. The brake-blocks are works of art and cost about twenty-six bucks. I am reminded that, even back in the 1890s, about half of all bicycle-related spending – in the USA, but possibly similarly here in New Zealand – was on accessories, sundries, and repairs.<sup>44</sup> A cyclist-rhymester composed this comment, which appeared in California's *Riverside Daily Enterprise* on 25 August 1896:

Hey diddle diddle  
The bicycle riddle,  
The strangest part of the deal;  
Just keep your accounts –  
Add up the amounts;  
The 'sundries' cost more than the wheel.

#### Sunday 12 January 2003

We head for the Peninsula, braving a damp southwesterly. The cold wind pushes us up Highcliff Road. The Portobello suntrap is absent, but the dairy provides two hot mince pies. The bays road, we discover, is not sheltered from stiff southwesterlies.

#### Monday 13 January 2003

Yesterday's southerly remains. The day is cold, grey, and wet. Dave heads for a gluggy Signal Hill for the higher ecstasies of technical mountain-biking, while I stay at home to titivate my

bottom bracket. Yesterday it developed a squeak. There's nothing worse than a squeaking bicycle. I pack the bearings with Andrew Hague's superfine waterproof grease. I also swap the front and back tyres, the back one having lost much of its tread.

At five o'clock we cycle through pouring rain to John Fridd's place, to drop off our bikes. John will be taking them to Kurow, solving a transport snag. We are grateful for his help. It's a relief to see the bikes on their way.

### Wednesday 15 January 2003

Living on the flattest expanse in New Zealand has not provided Dave with the ideal training for the hills of North Otago. He may be hard pressed to complete the two longer days of the Rally. He and I talk about this and we reach an agreement: if either of us hop onto the sag-wagon, the other one can feel free to keep on riding.

### Thursday 16 January 2003 – AOK Rally, Day 1, the Waitaki Valley

When you drive from Dunedin to Kurow, you can turn left before Oamaru to take a shortcut by way of Tokarahi. This shortcut is slightly elevated, being on a raised bench above the Waitaki Valley. There's a commanding view northwards, across the greywacke gravels of the wide river plain: the south-Canterbury hills that

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'There's a commanding view northwards, across the greywacke gravels of the wide river plain ...'

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21. The route of the Otago Daily Times AOK Rally, January 2003.

Note: parts of the Day-2 route, from Oamaru to St Bathans, cross private land. Mountain-bikers wanting to follow this route need to obtain permission from a number of landowners on both side of the watershed.

define the northern side of the valley string out like a long post-card. This is the quintessential Otago landscape, even if it is in Canterbury ... I am a passenger in David Jackson's car. It is 8.30am. The sun is still low. The air is dry and clear. Beyond the braided river, the smooth beige hills hang below a broad sweep of blue sky, all bare lines and sharp shadows.

The three of us – David Jackson, my son Dave and I – arrive at Kurow at 9am, an hour before the scheduled start of the Rally. A check-in desk sits at the Hay Family corner. The luggage truck is there too, and several support vehicles, including a St John ambulance. Riders, friends, and members of the twelve-strong support crew bustle about. Bicycles decorate the township, which nowadays is a farm service centre and commuter town.

We register, collecting an *AOK Rally 2003 Route Guide* and various labels.<sup>45</sup> Then we hand in our camping gear to the luggage truck. The whole process takes only three minutes, thanks to efficient organisation. There's half an hour to spare; we check our bikes, fill our water bottles, listen to the safety briefing (we must ride single file on state highways), and join the crowd for a mass photograph. At 10am John Fridd changes briefly from rally co-organiser to lead rider, escorting the Rally out of Kurow, north-west towards Lake Waitaki. The oldest rider is seventy-two, the youngest is twelve. The clothing is a colourful mix, not entirely in keeping with standards of the past, for in 1882 an Oamaru Bicycle Club was founded and it adopted a uniform of navy-blue jacket, knickerbockers, stockings, and cap.<sup>46</sup> For eighteen years these cyclists shared the roads with horses and the occasional traction engine, until the first motorcar arrived in Oamaru on 29 June 1900.<sup>47</sup>

After about a kilometre we pass a rider who has had a puncture. Ugh. Oily hands already. And the day is hot already. My forehead is running with sweat already. Will Dave and I cope well with the punctures and the sweat, for three days? We will know by Saturday night.

Twenty minutes later we reach Lake Waitaki. For the next few hours, one or other of the lakes of the Waitaki River hydroelectric system will be a constant companion. The pace is relaxed but purposeful; everyone is keen to leave behind the fourteen kilometres of State Highway 83.

The lakes were not of course always here. In December 1890 George Mannering and a friend descended the Waitaki River in a frail planked canoe. All the river flows were natural. Lake Ben-



FROM PIONEERING IN SOUTH  
OTAGO, FRED WAITE, 1948

19. Balclutha Cycling Club, about 1898.

more and Lake Aviemore did not exist. (The world's first public power station employing an electric generator had begun operation in London in 1882.)

Mannerling, better known for his alpine climbing, told of his two-day river journey in his book, *With Axe and Rope in the New Zealand Alps*:

To describe the mad plunging of the river through the gorge is not an easy matter. Here and there, perhaps, a long even stretch is met with, but for the most part the river makes a succession of bends bounded by rocky cliffs on either hand, now and then masses of rock crop up through the water, against which the stream is banked up by the force of its mad career to a height of ten or twelve feet; immediately under the sides of the rock there are vicious-looking heavings, eddies, and whirlpools, which, if one chances to get into them, twist the boat about like a feather when blown upon the water's surface.<sup>48</sup>

That gorge now lies under Lake Benmore. The Waitaki River and its tributaries have been harnessed. A series of natural and artificial lakes supplies eight power stations, which generate about 22 per cent of New Zealand's annual electricity.

Forty-five minutes after leaving Kurow we say good riddance to the state highway and we cross the Aviemore dam, a convenient viewpoint. Below the dam, the Waitaki River curves away as a wide and deep-blue band. Two thin lines of trees mark the water's edge. Beyond this linear oasis, the parched hill-country looks more suited to cactuses than trees. All is pale brown. In the other direction, northwest across the lake, a heat-haze blurs the distant hills.

After the usual mixed feelings about the millions of tons of concrete and earth, we enter a part of Canterbury that is grand enough to be a part of Otago. The minor road around the north side of Lake Aviemore will provide twenty-two kilometres of pleasant untechnical cycling. The sky is blue. The sun is hot. John Fridd, route-mastermind, has arranged a tailwind. This section will gently loosen our legs.

A few kilometres of country road can swallow up several hundred cyclists. When I look ahead and then behind, I see only three or four other rallyists. There is no sense of crowding. The kilometres pass almost effortlessly. We are still on tarseal; the gated farmtracks will come tomorrow. This gets me thinking.

'D'you know something, Dave. None of the North Otago main roads were tar-sealed till 1929.'

'You're full of useless information, Dad. D'ya think the dirt roads were pretty cruisy?'

'Aye. In the summer. Once bikes had pneumatic tyres.'

By the 1890s many New Zealand cyclists were undertaking journeys of considerable length. In January 1893, for example, the dress reformer Alice Bum and her husband biked from Oamaru to Hokitika. The *New Zealand Wheelman* claimed her to be the first (New Zealand?) woman to ride a hundred miles in a day.<sup>49</sup>

Only once are our legs worked hard. This is after the end of Lake Aviemore, on the short but sweltering rise to the Benmore dam-top.

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'... the parched  
hill-country  
looks more  
suited to  
cactuses than  
trees.'

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We reach the lunch spot at Loch Laird, below the dam, at 12.15pm. Everyone has sought the shade under the shimmering willows. I love this continental climate.

The AOK lunch-makers, Tina Fridd and her crew, design their lunches to meet the requirements both of the healthy food pyramid and of stoking the human boiler. Tina could also teach McDonald's a thing or two about fast delivery. We file past the various food boxes laid out on tables. I take a paper bag and fill it with a large ham-and-salad roll, a muesli bar, a piece of cake and a handful of fruit.

We laze around. A few people swim. There's no hurry; Omarama, our destination, is only twenty-seven kilometres away.

Dave and I pedal away at 1.15pm, heading back to State Highway 83 and the 200-metre climb to Ahuriri Saddle ... debilitating heat ... water bottles in frequent use ... a tailwind flattens the climb ... we zoom the downhill, slipstreaming a truck ... ahead of us we spot the gliders, soaring above a spacious inland basin ringed by mountains ... chocolate milk shakes in Omarama at 2.40pm ... drift along to Omarama Holiday Park, collect the luggage, pitch the tent.

The campsite showers deserve a tourist-industry prize. The evening meal, at the Heritage Hotel, is unlike food that I normally associate with camping. Omarama has advanced somewhat since the Cobb & Co coaches stopped here. Dave is growing in confidence, enjoying the rally and glad of a break from his dad's cooking. The needs of 239 bikes, too, are met, with the R&R Sport mechanics being present on the campsite.

So far, so good.

#### Friday 17 January 2003 – AOK Rally, Day 2, into Central Otago

An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening, goes the old saying. Whereas yesterday's outing fully met the AOK values, it being leisurely, recreational and social, today I harbour a few doubts about the cruisiness ahead of us. So much so that we get up at 6.30am, we are near the front of the breakfast queue at 7, and we are on the road by 8.

The night has brought a total coverage of high cloud, but the light grey sky looks harmless. The terrain provides a relaxed start: seventeen kilometres of flattish riding lie ahead, skirting the Ewe Range. Our legs find a comfortable pace in the cool of the early morning. Today's ride over to the Manuherikia Valley will take us from flood plain to flood plain. The main exertion between these two flat expanses will be a steep climb of 780 metres up a well-formed 4WD track.

We reach Twin Burn Station, below the climb, at 9am. Our *Route Guide* says veer left through a gate, but an AOK notice on the gate and some fluorescent markers point us right, past the farmhouse and across paddocks. All the riders ahead have gone right. As I approach the house, a woman comes out and strides towards me.

'Excuse me, where are you going?'

'We're on the bike rally, heading for St Bathans.'

'That's the St Bathans road,' she says, indicating the left-hand way.

I explain that the orange markers have sent us rightwards.

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'Our legs find a comfortable pace in the cool of the early morning.'

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She seems unenthralled by the prospect of two hundred cyclists crossing her land. 'That's the St Bathans road,' she repeats. 'I know. I live here.' Furthermore, she seems to be implying that I should pursue all the riders in front and bring them back. I suppose I should also remove all the orange markers. Deary me. Just my luck. Couldn't I just have a puncture instead? By now, a group of confused riders is gathering by the gate.

I return to the gate and suggest that we all go left. Detouring to remove the disputed markers is out of the question; a hundred kilometres is far enough, without a good-citizen's extras. (I learnt later that John Fridd had contacted the farmers' representatives on both sides of the watershed, to obtain permission to cross private land, but that individual landowners involved can still pop up at the last moment and refuse access.)

Five minutes later the road rounds an arid spur. A thin soil covers bedrock. We look rightwards and see ahead the main challenge of the 2003 AOK Rally. The well-made track, of a generous width, goes up and up. Its surface looks excellent – flat and lightly gravelled – but its gradient looks steeper than I had expected. The riders ahead of us are walking. This is a formidable hill. Now I realise why John Fridd has arranged a helicopter option for this section.

A climb of 780 metres over 4.7 kilometres amounts to an average gradient of 17 per cent. The book *Bicycling Science* deals at length with the question that repeatedly raises itself for the touring cyclist in hilly country: when is it better to dismount and walk up a hill than to continue straining on the pedals?<sup>50</sup> In terms of energy efficiency, above a 15 per cent gradient there may be little advantage, apart from pride, in riding the bicycle even in a low gear. This figure is for riding on a sealed road; the figure for a surface with less traction would be lower.

Dave and I trudge up virtually the whole hill, remounting only near the top. Many of the other rallyists do similarly. Few of them have read *Bicycling Science*, but all of them seem to have discovered good sense intuitively. I see only one person ride the whole climb, a composed effort from a hard-core hill-climber who has found out the secret of perpetual motion. Anyone who managed the whole hill should have their legs photographed for the AOK Hall of Fame.

We reach the top at 10.20am. Down in Omarama, there had been a uniform greyness a thousand metres above us. At the road-summit, at 1340 metres above sea-level, that cloud enshrouds us, bringing an abrupt drop in temperature. School-pupils from Omarama materialise out of the mist, selling cold drinks as a fund-raiser. Hot cocoa might have sold better. We bring out the Baked Oaty Slices, and also our jackets for the downhill. It is not a day for lingering. This vantage-point would normally reveal the Ewe Range to the east, the St Bathans Range to the west, and the Southern Alps to the north. Today the visibility is about five car-lengths.

'Off we go, Dave. Outa here. Be careful, this'll be steep. The nearest hospital's a long way away.'

I want to get down. I didn't come to Central Otago to get my bollocks frozen off. Roughly speaking, the temperature drops about seven Celsius degrees for each rise of a thousand metres. A rapid descent on a bicycle can illustrate this most agreeably.

Dave hurtles off, in pursuit of exhilaration or oblivion. I follow sedately, making full use of my new brake-blocks. We drop out of the cloud and plunge several hundred metres, pausing only to photograph the apparently endless descent meandering below us. Only near the river are there any deep greens, and these are merely isolated patches; elsewhere the smooth spurs and hollows are mottled with the lightest pea green and pale yellow. Here and there the tussocks give way to bare earth. The whole panorama is treeless.

A zigzag drops us down the side of a spur and deposits us beside Camp Creek, which soon joins the east branch of the upper Manuherikia River. The track still falls, but much less steeply. We relax our fingers on the brake levers. The cloud is breaking up. The temperature is rising. I get rid of my jacket. We splash through the first of several fords. This is superb easygoing track, in a dry and dusty remote valley. I shall remember this for the rest of the year. We cruise about eight kilometres and reach the approximate lunch spot at 11.30am. Dozens of riders lie in the sun, enjoying the rest that they didn't have on the road-summit.

The AOK lunch crew arrive about 11.45 and move us on slightly to just beyond a wide ford that will provide some lunchtime entertainment. We resettle ourselves under some sizeable schist outcrops. It is a rugged and attractive section of the valley, although tastes in landscape do change, and at least one writer has suggested that some of the early settlers may not have appreciated this spartan scenery:

The reader who is unable to draw upon memory and personal experience, cannot possibly conceive more than a very faint idea of the absolute solitariness which in those days pervaded and enveloped the Interior of Otago – the solemn loneliness of its mountains; the ineffable sadness of its valleys; the utter dreariness of its plains. The weary traveller pursued his lonely way from point to point, always viewing around and before him a continuous and apparently interminable expanse of lofty hills, range succeeding range in monotonous uniformity, everywhere clothed in a sober livery of pale brown vegetation, relieved only by grim, grey rocks of fantastic form ... an expanse diversified by no pleasant forests; devoid of animal as of human life; where the profound stillness was painful in its prolonged intensity; and the only sound that greeted the ear from dawn to dusk was the melancholy wailing of the wind among the tussocks.<sup>51</sup>

Dave and I open the map and gauge our progress. The killer hill is behind us, yet we have covered only thirty-six of a hundred kilometres. The sun is now quite hot. Dave says he'd like to complete the whole route, rather than take the bus from St Bathans. I want to reach St Bathans before we relax too much. Reaching there in good time will win the mental battle.

We set off soon after lunch, planning a single twenty-four kilometre push to St Bathans. The kilometres roll by, mostly gently downhill and on an excellent surface. Gradually the valley broadens out and flattens. There's time to reflect. Who were the first cyclists to travel Central Otago's unsurfaced roads, and when? The *Cromwell Argus* recorded that W J Barry brought the town

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'This is superb easygoing track, in a dry and dusty remote valley. I shall remember this for the rest of the year.'

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'The kilometres roll by, mostly gently downhill and on an excellent surface.'

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its first two bicycles on 23 August 1870.<sup>52</sup> The bicycle very likely spread simultaneously through the province. In the mid-1890s the cycling correspondent of *The Otago Witness* recalled a ride made in about 1888 from Roxburgh to Clyde on a fifty-four-inch high-wheeler:

In company with a chum ... I left Roxburgh at about 6 o'clock one fine morning, and after various trials on the road, and some amusing incidents, reached Clyde soon after 6 the same evening, thoroughly tired out as a result of having to walk fully three-quarters of the distance, owing to hills and a howling gale of wind in our faces.<sup>53</sup>

Widespread bicycle use probably had to wait for the evolution of the safety bicycle and the pneumatic tyre. James Parcell, in *Heart of the Desert*, wrote:

By 1896 cycling had gained a hold in the town [Cromwell] and from then on it was quite a popular pastime to attack the road record from Cromwell to Clyde. Ernest Jolly put up the first record in September, 1896, of 56 minutes – it is almost thirteen miles. In October, W. Jolly put up 52¼ minutes, and later in the same month W. Ritchie, 46 minutes, and E. W. Watson, 45 minutes.<sup>54</sup> [The first car to reach Cromwell travelled this section of road in February 1905, taking one hour for the thirteen miles, which was considered to be wonderful going.]

The 1890s also saw a spurt in the popularity of cycle touring. In the first week of March 1896, Alice and Lizzie Mitchell cycled from Gore to Dunedin, via Cromwell, Coal Creek, and Lawrence.<sup>55</sup> A report prepared for the 1896 annual general meeting of the Otago Cycling Club said that 'a very great amount of touring has been done by members during the season, much more interest being taken in this branch of the sport than has been the case in the past'.<sup>56</sup>

Something wakes me from my daydreaming. I notice that Dave is dropping back. He is wilting. He announces that his arms are getting badly burnt and have I got any sunscreen? I ferret about in the lid of my daypack. Shit! Shit shit shit. We had carefully packed some broad-spectrum cream, but somehow I have left it in my luggage, which has gone on the truck.

Dave tries to cycle in my shadow, but it doesn't work. He is struggling to keep going, affected both by the discomfort itself and the worry that it might worsen. Talk about Aristotle's peaks and troughs! Everything had been going so well. To climb out of this particular trough, we desperately need some sunscreen. James Crawford of the Dunedin AOKers speeds past. 'James!' ...

He stops and looks back.

'Any sunblock?'

Yes, he has. Good on ya, mate.

With a layer of cream on his legs and arms, Dave gains new energy. What do you put into your sunblock, James?

We coast into a tree-lined St Bathans at 2.15pm. Bicycles litter the front of the Vulcan Hotel, which was built in 1870 and which can still arrange accommodation in Constable Cottage or the gaol.



Across the road from the hotel, trees shade a quiet grassy area. Bikes and bodies lie around. A lemonade, an ice-cream, and a half-hour fly past, as they do when you're tired.

We pedal off again at ten to three. Naseby, food, and a long rest is forty kilometres away. I concentrate on setting a steady pace across the northern edge of the Maniototo Plains, where the run-holders arrived in 1858, just ahead of the gold-miners in their thousands and the rabbits in their millions. By 1876 on some stations there were more rabbiters than shepherds. In an attempt to reduce the rabbit numbers, the government imported a hundred stoats and weasels from Lincolnshire. Also, by 1889 about 10,000 ferrets had been liberated in Otago and Southland. Yet in eight months of 1892, New Zealand exported fourteen and a half million rabbit skins, of which eleven and a half million came from Otago.<sup>57</sup>

Late in 1997 rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) swept through Otago and Canterbury. This disease, combined with secondary control, has slashed the rabbit numbers. Yet a March 2002 NZ Landcare Trust article is titled: 'Rabbits Bounce Back. Otago Rabbit Numbers on the Increase.'<sup>58</sup>

David too has bounced back and is going well, drafting behind me on State Highway 85. We are riding carefully and unwaveringly on the white line, which occasionally merges into the grassy verge. A bus and a car converge at high speed. They rocket past each other, abreast of David and me. The bus misses me by centimetres, hooting aggressively at the last moment. At us or at the car? Who knows. Probably at us. We're only cyclists, after all. Why should anyone slow down, just for cyclists!

We pass through Idaburn and then the highway takes us gently over the foot of Rough Ridge, which, were we to follow it, would lead us to Rohan of Middle-earth, gifted to the Rohirrim by Cirion of Gondor in TA2510. Through the rolling hills of Rohan, shimmering with heat and dotted with layered tors, the Orcs rampaged and plundered.<sup>59</sup>

Soon after Wedderburn, the road crosses Eden Creek. Janet Cowan, in *Down the Years in the Maniototo*, wrote:

In all, the corner of the road at Eden Creek has been the scene of four fatal accidents ... The story goes that after one accident at Eden Creek a Chinese on his way from St. Bathans to Naseby was the first person on the scene and gave what help he could. During the inquest the Coroner asked the Chinese if life was extinct when he attended the dead man. The Chinese being a timid man replied, 'Me don't know. Him no stink. You ask Bob McSkimming. He tell you all.'<sup>60</sup> [Bob McSkimming was a hawker who I presume was at the scene.]

We reach Naseby at 5.30pm. First stop: the AOK check-in and a free Emerson's beer. Next: the wooded Larchview Camp, where our clobber waits conveniently. Next: tent, shower, and an amble down to the fashionable Maison Naseby – the village hall – where the caterers lay on an ample Cycliste Escoffier and more Emerson's. Afterwards we have a couple of hours to fill in. What to do? There's gold-mining history, there's urgent chain-oiling, there's a cricket match planned for the village green.

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'I concentrate  
on setting a  
steady pace  
across the  
northern edge of  
the Maniototo  
Plains ... '

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Dave is asleep, in some sort of a coma, by a quarter to eight. The bicycle chains remain dry. I do not see anyone in whites, heading for the wicket.

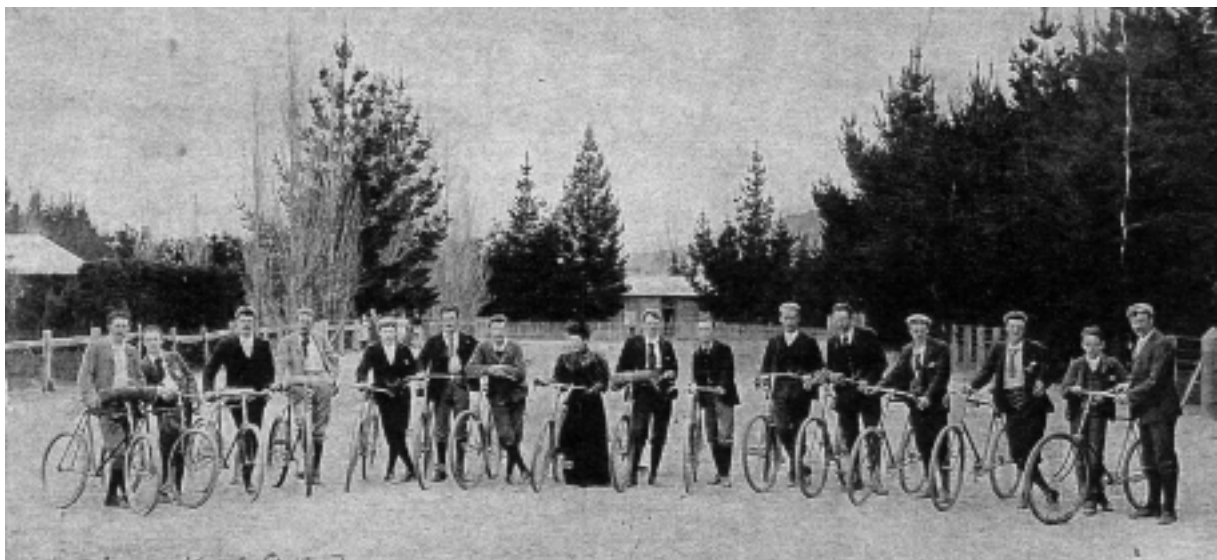
**Saturday 18 January 2003 – AOK Rally, Day 3, over Danseys Pass**

Dave and I pedal casually out of Naseby at 8am. The dry still night has made for effortless camping. We have slept well without the aid of orthopaedic beds or magnetic underlays. We head for Kyeburn Diggings and we are soon passing hillsides marked by the scars of sluicing, evidence of the gold-mining past.

On 20 May 1863 William and Benjamin Parker, P Warren and E G Scolan discovered gold in a little gully on the Hogburn Creek, less than a kilometre from the present town of Naseby. Their first three pans of wash dirt produced fifteen pennyweight (about twenty-three grams) of gold. The four men worked quietly for over a month until one man's tongue was loosened at Kyeburn, where they went for provisions, and the secret was out. The report reached the Dunstan goldfield on 3 July and Dunedin on 8 July. Janet Cowan described the rush:

... miners left in droves from Dunstan [the present Clyde] and Manuherikia, 'loaded drays, pack horses, men with swags going all day long'. Horses and drays could scarcely be procured; the freight was fourpence a pound, and many a miner, to avoid the expense, bundled his person with cradle, shovel, pick, tent and cooking utensils. So startling was the news in Blacks, a small diggings down the Manuherikia, and so suddenly was it conveyed that many who went to bed at night with all their household goods about them were by daylight tramping through six inches of snow with the whole of their available assets on their backs ... <sup>61</sup>

Within ten days of the find a city of canvas had sprung up. There were now five thousand people and many stores and shanties. By July 29, the miners at Parkers, or Hogburn as it came to be called, were demanding police protection and the appointment of a warden. Petty robberies were numerous. The street was in a deplorable state. On August 13, the town-



RON MURRAY COLLECTION

22. Cromwell Cycling Club, about 1900.

ship was moved one mile further down, but people still lived on at the old site until driven out by the miners. At the new Highburn the township was properly established within a week or so, with Mr. Hardcastle as the resident warden, and with three banks to safeguard the gold.<sup>62</sup>

Thirteen kilometres out of Naseby I notice a little cemetery in a field beside the road. A painted wooden notice says: 'Kyebrun Diggings Cemetery Charges. Single interment in open ground – £1. For all interments that take place not in the usual hours or of which 6 hours' notice haven't been given – extra £0-10s-6d.'

A few kilometres further on, we pause at Danseys Pass Coach Inn, a stone building dating from the 1860s. It is one of the few coaching inns that remain, where once there were many.

From here, there is a gradual 340-metre climb to the top of Danseys Pass. The gradient is moderate, making the pass fairly easily rideable from this direction. The gravel road winds gently up through the contours, with some steep drops to one side. Yet Dave is dog-tired now. His body hasn't recovered from yesterday's unprecedented effort. Now he is paying the price for having done insufficient training, which was largely not his fault. His blank face betrays an accumulated weariness. We barely exceed a walking pace. We enter the cloud, as we did on yesterday's climb. I suppose cloud is preferable to excessive heat. If we can just reach the road-summit, I know that Dave's mood-swings will be inversely proportional to the gradients ... there's a knot of people and bikes ahead in the mist ... a couple of support vehicles ... someone is handing out drinks. Yeeha! 'Well done, Dave. It's only ten thirty-five.'

The cloud thwarts our expectations of a striking view over North Otago, leaving us an excuse to cycle this way again one day. We are 930 metres above sea-level. Ahead lies the long Danseys downhill: a 590-metre drop in 8 kilometres to the Maerewhenua River, some legwork up Beatties Hill to warm up, and a 290-metre drop to the Danseys Pass Holiday Camp.

W H Dansey and his three companions passed this way in 1855 or perhaps 1856, working their way into Central Otago.<sup>63</sup> 'They had a mule and a donkey with them but the donkey was lost in the gullies around the pass, where it was found two or three years later when the country was taken up as a run.' The four men held runs in North Otago. 'They were all young men and enterprising, and the motive for their trip must have been mainly adventure.' This pass-crossing was the second recorded exploration of Maniototo by Europeans, the first visit having been via the Shag Valley, inland from Palmerston, in 1855.

Even after the discovery of Danseys Pass, the carting and droving from North Otago to Central Otago remained arduous and time-consuming. To reach the Kyebrun Runs, 'shepherds and bullock drivers were sent round from Duntroon via Shag Valley, the trip being made in a week. Dansey's Pass could not be negotiated with vehicles. Only once did a bullock driver, Donald Manson, return through the pass with an empty dray and he found the route "almost perpendicular" in one place.'<sup>64</sup>

Nowadays, from Dunedin we drive over to the Maniototo Plains in an hour. We forget the muddy treks that the settlers faced. None of the access routes were easy. To fully comprehend this we

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'The gravel road winds gently up through the contours, with some steep drops to one side.'

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need to look back to the early planning of the railway line into Central Otago. In the 1870s a fierce debate took place over the rival merits of three routes: Taieri Valley, Shag Valley, and Danseys Pass. The *Mount Ida Chronicle* and the people of Oamaru argued strongly for a railway over Danseys Pass.<sup>65</sup>

They lost the argument. Strath Taieri acquired the railway and the fame, leaving Danseys Pass with the sheep and the historical scraps, such as the fact that James Frederick Botting of Naseby, a devout member of the Salvation Army, once drove a hundred pigs from Livingstone to Naseby, over Danseys Pass, with the help of only two dogs.<sup>66</sup>

Dave and I spend less than five minutes admiring the confining mist of William Dansey's high-point. We raid our stockpile of muesli bars, top up our water bottles, and start the descent, eager to quit the drizzle. Five minutes of swift downhill has David shivering and stopping to dress up. I freewheel lazily. It is pleasing to cover so much ground with so little energy. Down, down, down, through picturesque rolling high country. We drift into the lunch spot, Danseys Pass Holiday Camp, at 12.10pm.

Despite our arriving in the middle of 239 ravenous riders, the queueing for lunch takes only five minutes. Once again, we appreciate the expeditious AOK organisation. We flop onto the grass for half an hour's rest and refuelling. I eat every scrap. 'The bicycle is a curious vehicle,' said John Howard, a US Olympic cyclist. 'Its passenger is its engine.'

Apparently there is a superb swimming spot in the Maerewhenua River here, but I am bad at unwinding when there are fifty kilometres still to do. We forgo the swim. We merge into the exodus of riders, relishing an easy twenty-two kilometres to State Highway 83. The profile drawings in the *Route Guide* have been invaluable for anticipating what is ahead.

Just before Duntroon I turn left onto a diversion, while Dave continues straight on into Duntroon. I am thinking that he will take the minibus for the last part of the route. He has achieved



FROM HEART OF THE DESERT,  
J C PARCELL, 1951

**23.** Miners' camp near Bannockburn. Late 1890s or early 1900s. The safety bicycle rapidly became a utilitarian workhorse, a means of getting around as well as a machine for sport and recreation.

all his goals. Unknown to me, he later decides to ride the whole way to Kurow. I pass a line of soft limestone outcrops. This is Earthquakes Road, but geological and historical sightseeing will have to wait for another day. Not far away are the two Maere-whenua rock shelters, with their faded Maori rock paintings of fish, sharks, a possible taniwha, and a ship.<sup>67</sup>

A tailwind boosts me along eight kilometres of State Highway 83 until a fluorescent marker points me left onto a rural loop, the Rally's tail, which provides first a sting and then a treat. The sting involves climbing to a point 250 metres above Kurow, and the treat takes the form of a grassy farmtrack beside the Kurow River. The whole diversion is well-crafted and unexpectedly fine. A terrific sweat-soaked end to the Rally. I arrive in Kurow at 3.35pm, bubbling with praise for the AOK crew. Dave has rested in Duntroon and arrives an hour later. The town is quiet; it takes more than 239 cyclists to wake up Kurow on a hot Saturday afternoon. We lounge on some grass in the sun. This rally has been the best thing that we have done together.

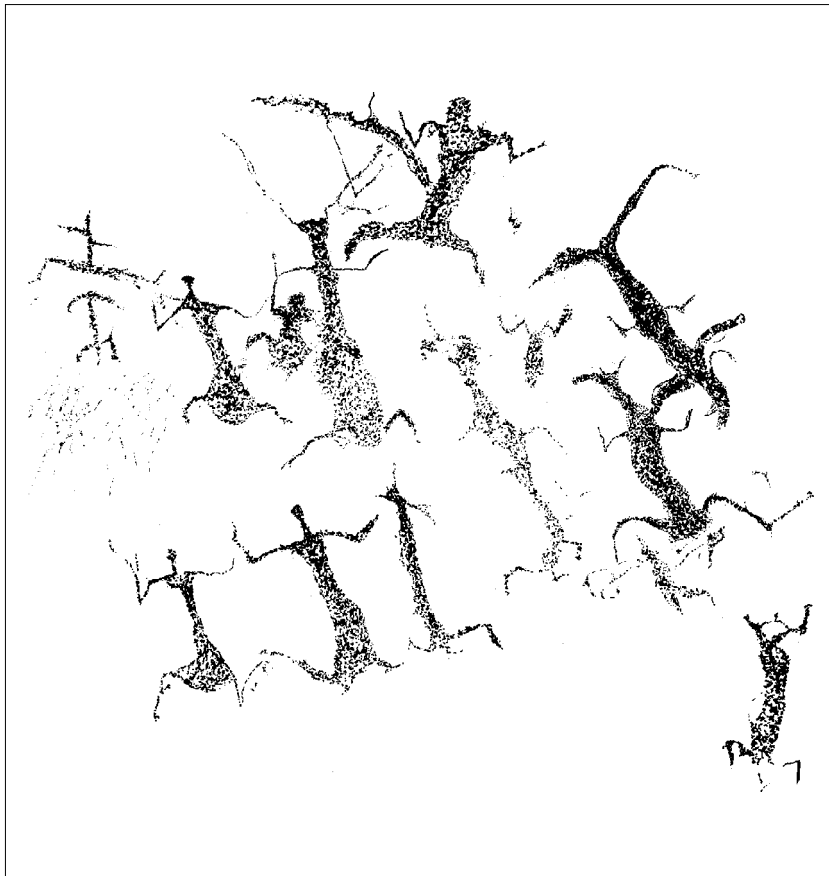
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'A terrific sweat-soaked end to the Rally.'

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#### Monday 20 January 2003

Dave heads back up north to normal life: school, homework, SuperValue shelf-filling, friends, *Friends*, Snoop Doggie Dog, and *Command & Conquer*. Before leaving he says he wants to do the Rally again next year and pay for it himself.



24. Maori rock art discovered in 1968 in a limestone shelter at Ngapara, North Otago. The discoverers named this painting the Ngapara Twist, after the 1960s dance in which couples vigorously twist their hips in time to rhythmic music.

# Mountain-biking in and around Dunedin, 2003

It is three months since McDonald's first ride, which banished several years of lethargy in one hour. Although he remains a new-comer to Dunedin's mountain-biking, with much still to discover, he has now stashed away enough local knowledge to plan a gentler training schedule. He is also now in a slightly better position to ponder the question: is Dunedin a mountain-bikers' Mecca? Andrew Corney had his doubts:

In my first few weeks in Dunedin [in 1995] I discovered a pamphlet produced by the Dunedin City Council (DCC), describing six mountain bike tracks close to the city ... After taking my shiny new machine for a few rides around the city, I decided I was ready to attack some real tracks. From previous mountain biking experience I expected gentle hill climbs followed by exciting down hill tracks. This expectation soon shattered with what I encountered in Dunedin. Most tracks were steep to ride up and when I finally reached the summit, travelling downhill involved muddy and rutted tracks making it difficult to stay on the bike. It became obvious that a high level of skill was required to successfully ride these very demanding tracks. This initial experience led me to question the DCC's role in providing recreational opportunities for Dunedin citizens.<sup>68</sup>

Elsewhere in his dissertation, Corney quotes Paul Coffey, the then DCC outdoor recreation officer, as having suggested 'that no facility in the city achieves the aim of providing the average mountain biker with an easy grade mountain bike track.'

Published at roughly the same time as Corney's dissertation, the city council's *Track Policy and Strategy* recognised that tracks are 'in important recreational facility in Dunedin'. In 1998 the council's track database listed 167 tracks. Of these, 131 were closed to mountain-bikes.<sup>69</sup>

Those two documents were written five years ago. Dunedin now has Jubilee Park Mountain Biking Circuit and Signal Hill Reserve Mountain Biking Area, both providing first-rate tracks classified as Easy, Average, and Hard. Also the *Track Policy and Strategy*, formulated after consultation with the community, identified the need for 'cheap information available off-site'.<sup>70</sup> A direct result of this planning is that where once there was only one DCC leaflet on mountain-biking, now there are three leaflets specifically on mountain-biking, plus several others that cover both walking tracks and multi-use tracks. These free leaflets are available from visitor centres and on the DCC website.<sup>71</sup>

Another welcome cycling happening took place in the week after the AOK Rally, when the council endorsed its *Dunedin Cycling Strategy*. Although not concerned directly with off-road cycling, the *Cycling Strategy* is relevant to the needs of any mountain-biker who rides across the town. It covers cycling routes on road reserve. (Road reserve generally covers the width of a road from property boundary to property boundary.) The routes include

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'... is Dunedin a mountain-bikers' Mecca?'

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'A direct result of this planning is that where once there was only one DCC leaflet on mountain-biking, now there are three leaflets specifically on mountain-biking, plus several others that cover both walking tracks and multi-use tracks.'

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cycle-lanes on the roads and cycle-paths physically separated from the roads. The strategy aims to get more people onto bikes, both journeying to work and riding for recreation and health. It also aims to make cycling safer.<sup>72</sup>

A map in the *Dunedin Cycling Strategy* shows a number of 'proposed cycling routes', including several through or alongside parts of the Town Belt.<sup>73</sup> The strategy describes these suggested routes 'as "desire lines" ... identified by the Cycling Interest Group and subsequently modified following public feedback'.<sup>74</sup> The general thrust of the strategy appears to give cycling more importance than it has had in the past. It remains to be seen whether the city's budget-setters will view the desire lines desirously for the decade that it might take to put them all into place. A promising start has been made. The *Otago Daily Times* reported that the council has provisionally set aside \$1.1 million over the next ten years for the work planned in the *Dunedin Cycling Strategy*.<sup>75</sup> The senior traffic engineer, Ron Minnema, estimated that \$1.4 million would be required to complete all the work. This included \$700,000 for creating thirty-one kilometres of cycle lanes, \$270,000 for hazard removal along seventy-seven kilometres of road, and \$240,000 for intersection improvements.

It is difficult to tell whether all bicycling ways through or alongside the Town Belt would need to be sealed cycle-paths on road reserve, of the sort funded under the *Dunedin Cycling Strategy*. There may be scope for an unsealed multi-use track in some parts of the Belt. Such a track, contouring wherever possible, could be suitable for families. If the needs of disabled cyclists were considered at the planning stage, this track could also fill a hole in the city's provision for disabled cyclists and wheelchair users. On the upgrade of existing tracks and the development of new ones, the city council's *Track Policy and Strategy* says that 'priority will be given to multi-use tracks, such as those which allow for a range of users including mountain bikes and walkers'.<sup>76</sup> (This policy reflects international trends. About half of Britain's 8,000-mile National Cycle Network is being designed for a mixed use that includes pedestrians, wheelchairs, prams and buggies.<sup>77</sup>) This new approach sounds promising, but a track through the Belt could languish in the money-queue indefinitely. Compared to the maintenance of existing tracks and several other concerns, the development of new tracks, with the exception of the Signal Hill tracks, has a low importance.<sup>78</sup> At present the whole Belt except the marked tracks in Jubilee Park is no-go for mountain-bikers, according to the city council's mountain-biking code of behaviour.<sup>79</sup> Any change to allow cycling in more of the Belt would require alteration of the Town Belt Management Plan, which took five years to agree.

For safety as well as aesthetics, cyclists and pedestrians could do with a multi-use track from the city to Port Chalmers. This coastal route is a desire line in the *Dunedin Cycling Strategy*. A more appropriate label would be 'necessity line'. Similarly for its twin on the south side of the harbour. Until these coastal routes grow from map symbols into realities, Dunedin's report for cycle-friendliness should remain: 'Has made some important progress, but we are anxious that this continue.'

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'... priority will be given to multi-use tracks, such as those which allow for a range of users including mountain bikes and walkers.'

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Some Dunedin mountain-bikers, however, may now feel that their needs are well met. Others may feel that, yes, Dunedin is a great place for mountain-biking, but concerning access and cycle-tracks there remain some key missing links, two in particular that dominate the skyline at a height of about 750 metres.

### **You Can't Ride That Thing Here, Mate!**

#### *Flagstaff and Mount Cargill*

One splendid Wednesday evening a couple of months ago, from their meeting-place near the Botanic Gardens, some AOKers slogged up the tarseal of Wakari Road and Three Mile Hill Road and then up the corrugations of Flagstaff Whare Flat Road to the Bull Pen. The sun was shining, the views panoramic, the sweat copious. They had climbed 450 metres. Could they complete a logical circuit by riding over or around Flagstaff and dropping down to the Leith Valley? No. There is no legal route. The Pineapple Track, an official walkway, is a no-go route for cyclists. They turned round and rode back the way they had come. With the satisfaction, there was also exasperation.

Let's be blunt about this Flagstaff access. The lack of mountain-biking entry to the eastern and southeastern sides of Flagstaff, close to a city of 114,000 people, is unfair, divisive, and morally questionable. Dunedin's recreational mountain-bikers need coherent off-road circuits near the city, especially on Mount Cargill and Flagstaff.

The *Track Policy and Strategy* acknowledged that there had been conflict between walkers and mountain-bikers on some tracks, including the Pineapple Track. It proposed 'the development of an easy multi-use track ... to assist with conflict resolution'.<sup>80</sup> Hence the excellent happenings on Signal Hill. But how does this solution equitably meet the desire of some mountain-bikers to descend Flagstaff? It doesn't, not at all, unless they ride down Signal Hill several times with their eyes closed, pretending they're descending Flagstaff.

A four-point summary of the appropriateness of mountain-bike access, as perceived by the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (FMC), appears in the *FMC Policy Guidelines*.<sup>81</sup> Although the majority of FMC members are trampers and climbers, the FMC 'supports mountain biking as a low-impact recreational activity on appropriately zoned public tracks'. In broad terms, the FMC supports a philosophy of planning that says a wide range of recreational activities should be possible with minimum conflict between users.

It may be that minimum conflict on a track like the Pineapple Track is unachievable. McDonald himself has walked up the Pineapple Track and found it mostly easy to stand at the side of the track while a few bikes glide past. But he has also seen small groups of mountain-bikers shredding that hill, forcing pedestrians into desperate avoidance. Young children frequent this route, and octogenarians are not uncommon; the onus cannot be on them to take emergency action when bikes suddenly bear down upon them.

For Dunedin mountain-bikers, the twin developments of Signal Hill and Jubilee Park, together with the city council's comprehensive *Track Policy and Strategy* and *Sport and Recreation*



*Strategic Plan*, justify mixed reactions: some eager approval, some qualified optimism, and some budgetary pessimism. There seems a chance of more-flexible admission to the plantations of City Forests. But the development of new tracks has a low priority, except on Signal Hill, and so illicit riding on the Pineapple Track and on Mount Cargill is likely to continue.

Dunedin's recreational mountain-bikers will not spend every Saturday on Signal Hill. The problems of mountain-biking access to Flagstaff and Mount Cargill will persist until mountain-bikers can legally cycle to the summits of these hills and enjoy the same views and sunsets as walkers enjoy. One of the track policies approved in 1998 dedicates the Pineapple Track and the Mount Cargill tracks 'for foot use only', extending a discrimination that has existed since the 1980s.<sup>82</sup> In doing so it reflects a walking-dominated history, it perpetuates prejudice and old thinking, and it directly contradicts another track policy, that of 'enabling access to points of major interest', in this case the two most commanding viewpoints in Dunedin.<sup>83</sup> This contradiction would be tolerable if the track strategies included a commitment to eventually provide mountain-biking access to Flagstaff and Mount Cargill; yet no such commitment appears, despite another track policy that prioritises 'tracks that fill an identified gap or need'. Instead the track strategies mention 'proposed works on the Pineapple, Mount Cargill and Ross Creek tracks to make them more difficult to bike'.<sup>84</sup>

The *Track Policy and Strategy* is due for revision in late 2003. All known track-interest groups and individuals had the opportunity to submit comments on the draft 1998 document. During the coming revising, the city council will again be seeking comments from targeted groups and individuals, and also from the wider public.

In some ways, however, the influence of the city's *Track Policy and Strategy* may be limited by national factors. The policy's emphasis on multi-use tracks might be difficult to implement under the limitations of the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990. Several of the tracks on Flagstaff and Mount Cargill are gazetted or agreed walkways. The New Zealand Walkways Policy (available on the Department of Conservation website) does not completely rule out nonpedestrian use of walkways, but such exceptions are rare. Dunedin's *Track Policy and Strategy* is ahead of national arrangements; the city's mountain-bikers await national change.

### *Commercial Forests*

Concerning recreational access to commercial forests, we have seen that one of Dunedin's most attractive riding areas, Flagstaff Forest, managed by the city council's City Forests Ltd, is closed to mountain-bikers (until 6pm) on 250 days a year. Contrast this with Christchurch's Bottle Lake Forest Park. Here a range of recreational uses coexists with sustainable forest production. The forestry workers log the forest while 250,000 visitors a year wander around it, walking, jogging, mountain-biking, horse-riding, and orienteering. Another similar example is Rotorua's Whakarewarewa Forest, also known as The Redwoods. Fletcher Challenge Forests manage Whakarewarewa Forest on behalf of the Rotorua District Council. A Fletcher Challenge *Health, Safety and Environment* report describes the forest as 'a multi-purpose sustain-

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'The problems of mountain-biking access to Flagstaff and Mount Cargill will persist until mountain-bikers can legally cycle to the summits of these hills and enjoy the same views and sunsets as walkers enjoy.'

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able commercial resource, with extensive recreation areas for a number of activities ... [Staff] manage, maintain and improve the recreational facilities and trails ...<sup>85</sup>

Dunedin City Council itself has a sport-and-recreation plan that recommends improving the access to outdoor-recreation resources. The plan proposes the development of ‘open space that recognises the importance of *casual* and *spontaneous* recreational experiences’.<sup>86</sup> (My italics.) The plan also acknowledges that the timing of a recreational opportunity, if it does not coincide with a person’s free time, can be a barrier to recreating. It says that ‘people require more-flexible options’.<sup>87</sup> Mountain-bikers look forward to this greater flexibility from City Forests. We will return to commercial forests later, to glance at some overseas approaches to access.

### *The Otago Peninsula*

On the Otago Peninsula, countryside of national importance, mountain-bikers are feeding off a few scraps that happen to be unformed legal roads. Very tasty scraps, enjoyed and valued, but still scraps. They exist only by some historical quirk, not through an enlightened and modern approach to recreational rights. This is not a criticism of the city council. Unless a large number of farmers take up mountain-biking, the creation of cycle-tracks over private land awaits long-term national change: a powerful Cycleways Act and government money. How powerful? Look at Walkways. The 1990 New Zealand Walkways Act is so toothless that negotiating a short stretch of walking access to the Soldiers Memorial took the city council five years of procedural shilly-shallying.<sup>88</sup> Even today, five years after entry was agreed, one promotional website, *Visit Dunedin*, states mistakenly, ‘No physical access to the Soldiers Memorial’.<sup>89</sup>

A number of organisations promote the Otago Peninsula as a tourist destination. On whether improved tracks would attract more tourists to Dunedin, the *Track Policy and Strategy* emits a hard-nosed realism; the city’s tracks might not merit the Great Trails label. This is probably true, with one potential exception – the walks and cycle rides on the peninsula. (And maybe one other potential development, a part of Dunedin’s heritage – a gold-rush trail.) Already the website of the Harington Point Motels includes notes on all the peninsula tracks.<sup>90</sup> Not that the peninsula’s fragmented and patchy sprinkling of tracks is likely to win any tourism prizes.

When in 1992–3 the Otago Peninsula Walkers rediscovered and opened many tracks, no provision was made for maintenance. Gorse and grass grew over the tracks. Marker posts vanished. The city council could not absorb the maintenance of these tracks into its planned budget. To further complicate things, some of the tracks fell into the council’s sphere, others were the responsibility of the Department of Conservation. ‘Issues of management and maintenance of some Otago Peninsula tracks [were] still prevalent nearly five years after their development.’<sup>91</sup> Dirk Reiser’s impression, in 2000, was that ‘the Council sees itself under no obligation to maintain or upgrade [the peninsula tracks] despite the fact that they are important facilities for recreation-

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‘Dunedin City Council itself has a sport-and-recreation plan that recommends improving the access to outdoor-recreation resources.’

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ists ... and tourists ... <sup>92</sup> You do not need to be a Machiavelli to wonder whether the reasons for the Council's apparently lukewarm enthusiasm are entirely budgetary.

If the maintenance and upgrading of existing tracks seem to be a problem, negotiating new ones would challenge a United Nations delegation backed by the 1st (US) Armored Division. Yet there are very few obnoxious farmers around, if any, and very few obnoxious mountain-bikers. It would also be wrong to assume that all farmers and landowners on the Otago Peninsula loathe the prospect of tracks across their land. Some of them may never have been asked about such things. Many of them have, however, and quite recently. In November 1999, as part of a study of landholder attitudes to recreational public access to their private lands, Dirk Reiser delivered 125 questionnaires to probable farmers on the Otago Peninsula. The response rate was 46 per cent, fifty-seven questionnaires being filled in. (Twenty-two questionnaires were returned blank, mostly because the land or house owned or rented was 'no farmland'.)<sup>93</sup>

One of the study's findings indicated a lessening of willingness to allow recreational access. Whereas nearly 60 per cent of the respondents had in the past permitted public access for recreation, only 46 per cent would do so now. The abuse of user rights seems to have soured some farmers.

The most common explicit problem that respondents had experienced with the public using their land was the failure to shut gates.<sup>94</sup> This would seem to be a depressing indictment on the urban Kiwi. Yet not so long ago McDonald observed 239 AOK rallyists taking the greatest care to close numerous gates.

Another common problem mentioned was recreators' dogs worrying sheep. The respondents also described serious dog trouble unconnected with recreators. Condemning irresponsible dog-owners is one thing; extending the distrust into a blanket veto on all outdoor recreators would be quite another. No sensible person would downplay the trauma of a marauding Alsatian scattering a flock of sheep across a hillside. The majority of mountain-bikers would go out of their way to alert a farmer to the presence of such a dog. The coming microchipping of newly registered dogs should gradually reduce the frequency of dog attacks on sheep. Bob Kerridge, the chief executive of the Auckland Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, commented: 'The control over dogs, particularly strays, is tremendous ... With a microchip [the dog] can be returned to its owner, [who] can be fined instantly for letting their dog stray ... '<sup>95</sup>

Reiser's questionnaire contained thirty-three questions and yielded an exhaustive range of responses. Concerning the activities that respondents do or would allow on their property, only about 10 per cent (six respondents out of fifty-seven) approved of cycling. Regarding who respondents would allow onto their land for recreation, only about 17 per cent would allow individuals. Reiser concludes: 'The result of the survey is a sign that landholders are not in favour [of using] private rural lands for public recreation.'<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere he points out that recreational trends in New Zealand suggest that the use of leisure facilities located on the urban fringes of towns like Dunedin will increase. 'A conflict

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'The result of the survey is a sign that landholders are not in favour [of using] private rural lands for public recreation.'

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between the farming interests of the most privately owned land [and the interests of] recreationists and tourists seems inevitable.<sup>97</sup>

The supreme rights of the New Zealand landowner form an unconscious thread through Reiser's survey. None of his questions probed the landowner's pre-eminent right to exclude. So the seminal question was avoided: Do you agree that the public have a moral right to pass across and enjoy private rural land?

There are about eighty farms on the Otago Peninsula.<sup>98</sup> There are 114,000 people in Dunedin City.<sup>99</sup> Outdoor recreation is vital to their physical and mental health. Tourism is important for their economic future. But to improve the network of tracks on the peninsula, and to solve the smouldering conflict, the walkers and mountain-bikers of Dunedin await a national debate started in Wellington.

In the short term a widening of mountain-biking access to the peninsula would appear, both anecdotally and from Reiser's survey, to await a reversal of farmers' attitudes. If this seems like asking for a miracle, stop for a moment and consider what is happening nationally with walking tracks. The developing Cape Reinga to Bluff trail, Te Araroa, will be about 2,600 kilometres long. Ninety per cent of the trail's legal route is now in place on paper, in one form or another.<sup>100</sup> A section northwest of Warkworth, the Tamahunga Trail, opened about eighteen months ago. John Williams, who farms at the Omaha Valley end of the trail, commented: 'It's very well used, and we have had no problems with trampers, who're responsible people.'<sup>101</sup>

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'... to improve the network of tracks on the peninsula, and to solve the smouldering conflict, the walkers and mountain-bikers of Dunedin await a national debate started in Wellington.'

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COLLECTION OF OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM,  
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

**26.** A toll house on the Otago Peninsula bays road. The toll gate was moved several times, being located at three different places from Andersons Bay onwards. Representatives of the cycling clubs appealed to the Portobello Road Board for a reduction in the toll charges, which for bicycles were disproportionately high. The road remained a toll road until 1908.

*Land in the Dunedin Area Managed by the Department of Conservation*

This diary has avoided discussing mountain-biking in national parks, a subject which pro-MTBing campaigners are already focusing on. Suffice to say that many mountain-bikers and some careful researchers have already commented on the National Park Act (1980) and its classification of bicycles as vehicles. Guidelines produced by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in 1994 have resulted in a total ban on mountain-biking in national parks.

A related aspect is the question of mountain-biking on lands and tracks that are managed by DOC but which are outside national parks. Does the same DOC ban apply? A brief search of the DOC website on 6 May 2003 did not find the answer to this question. An email enquiry to DOC's Wellington information office on 7 May had not been answered at the time of printing this diary (11 May). The first three staff-members spoken to at DOC's Dunedin office did not know what DOC's policy was on mountain-biking on the many DOC-managed tracks in the Dunedin area. Finally the answer arrived: bicycles are vehicles and are not allowed.

The city council's *Track Policy and Strategy* lists 178 tracks, 55 of which are managed by DOC or by DOC and a private owner. Some of the lands in the Silver Peaks, for example, are managed by DOC and are therefore closed to mountain-bikers (except when legal roads cross them). Curiously the excellent walking guide, *From Sea to Silver Peaks*, states that 'DOC encourages recreational use of [the Silver Peaks]'. Only a walker could make such a statement. From the mountain-bikers' viewpoint, DOC does everything to discourage recreational use of the Silver Peaks. How can a total ban be interpreted in any other way?

DOC also manages some land and several tracks on the Otago Peninsula. This land and its tracks are closed to mountain-bikers.

An apparent exception might be the DOC-managed Government Track, near Waipori Falls, a recognised mountain-biking track. Perhaps this old coach road is a legal road.

Get this straight. DOC's Otago offices issue more than three hundred concessions (permits, leases and licences) to the private sector to operate on land that DOC manages. These concessions apply to commercial tourism, recreation, mining, telecommunication sites, and grazing. The tourism includes bungee jumping, ski-fields and jet-boating. Yet Dunedin's mountain-bikers cannot cycle over the DOC-managed lands or tracks in the Dunedin area.

It is difficult to tell whether we are faced here with a body that is constrained by an Act of Parliament or with a body driven by a pathological prejudice against bicycles. Mountain-bikers await national change in DOC policy, a change of heart from the top echelon. But be ready for permits, bicycle inspections, colour restrictions, tyre regulations and speed limits.

*Woodhaugh Gardens, Ross Creek, and Multi-use Tracks*

Several Wednesday-evening AOK rides involved furtive cycling through Woodhaugh Gardens, then along the Upper Leith Walkway, and then up Ross Creek. This route forms a logical off-road connection to Wakari Road or Leith Valley Road, frequently used roads for mountain-bikers heading out of north Dunedin. But the tracks of Woodhaugh Gardens and Ross Creek are heavily

used by pedestrians, a minority of whom are prone to bike-leptic fits. At present the city's mountain-biking code of conduct outlaws mountain-biking in these two areas, as if walkers and cyclists must forever be kept kilometres apart.

Worldwide there is now a great deal of knowledge about successfully integrating cycle-tracks and walkways. The accent is increasingly on shared-use paths, accompanied by appropriate education and publicity.<sup>102</sup> Cyclists, for example, need to learn to cycle at near-walking speed when mixing with pedestrians. Integration is not always possible, yet humans solve problems well if the will is there. The 'Mountain Bikes' section of the *FMC Policy Guidelines* includes some ideas on minimising ecological, social, and physical impacts.<sup>103</sup> But at present, Woodhaugh Gardens and Ross Creek would provide fertile ground for a study on how the needs of pedestrians (a majority) have taken complete and exclusive precedence over the needs of cyclists (a minority).

The ironies of cycling access are stark and are long-established. Oddities of perception have existed ever since cyclists shared roads with motor vehicles. There is no public outcry against the manifest dangers of long juggernauts thundering past cyclists on State Highway 88, sometimes passing within centimetres of the flesh and bones. Yet if you cycle slowly and cautiously through Woodhaugh Gardens, taking care to give pedestrians a wide berth, you risk prosecution for breaking the law and public censure for posing a danger to walkers.

Change is coming and hardly prematurely, for one of the listed aims of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club, when it was established in 1896, was the removal of 'all unreasonable restrictions upon the use of public parks by cyclists'.<sup>104</sup> Another prophetic aim was to uphold and improve 'the status of wheelmen by condemning furious riding and every other practice likely to bring the cyclist into disrepute ...'. People are gradually getting used to the idea of cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair-users, and people with prams and buggies sharing the same space, free from motor traffic: 'Although some authorities react at first against shared use, concerned that walkers will be at risk from cyclists, the risk to both groups is overwhelmingly from motor traffic.'<sup>105</sup> And from heart disease ...

#### *A Convincing Case for Exercise, but ...*

Knowledge of the benefits of outdoor recreation is quite advanced. It exists in hundreds of dissertations and in whole books. There are research results from studies of cycle-trails. The identified merits include improved physical and mental wellbeing, social spin-offs (eg 'it's good for the family'), appreciation of history, and commercial growth.

If we look more closely at one of these aspects, one argument for exercise goes something like this: to optimise health you must exercise adequately. Exercise is the repetitive contraction of the large muscles of the body against a load. Regular exercise improves cardiovascular fitness and decreases the risk of developing coronary heart disease. It helps maintain bone density and prevent obesity and diabetes. It is a mood elevator and an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression. By exercising regularly, people will be healthier and happier, the country will spend less

of its GDP on health care, and you might even enjoy an improved sex life, so they say, although McDonald noticed only an enhanced ability to sleep.

Knowing these arguments is all very well, but exercise-awareness may be of limited practical influence if, in mountain-biking for instance, the available rides are relentlessly steep or on illegal tracks or on suburban tarseal. Or closed to you on your one day off. Or inaccessible without a car. Or impeded by permit rigmarole. Or too far from the city for an evening. Several of the rides that McDonald has been doing are too strenuous to remain a part of his life, to be looked forward to and relished. These steep rides reflect the geography of Dunedin, and they may perfectly suit the needs of stronger riders. But we also need routes for human beings. The Dunedin bowl between Flagstaff and Mount Cargill needs more routes for softies as exemplified by the southernmost two kilometres of the Telecom Track. The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) publishes a guide to trail-building that, for several reasons, emphasises the advantages of contour trails with gentle grades.<sup>106</sup> With this basic knowledge, the children of Pine Hill School could design an easier and more aesthetically pleasing route up Mount Cargill than Cowan Road, a straight line probably dumped on the map by a 19th-century surveyor.

Elsewhere, the city's mountain-bikers value the gravel roads such as Leith Valley Road. Kiwi mountain-bikers are fortunate to live in a country that has about 40,000 kilometres of unsealed country roads. Yet it's debatable whether sharing gravel roads with would-be rally drivers makes top-quality mountain-biking; in particular the busier gravel roads may not suit family mountain-biking.

The exercise habits of many of us are probably laid down in childhood. Central Otago has its 150-kilometre Rail Trail, providing a safe and traffic-free route for family cycling. There is a limit, though, to how often you will drive eighty kilometres to Middlemarch to give young children an hour's bike ride. Closer to home, Dunedin, thanks to the late Trevor Gerrish and the city council, has the Jubilee Park Mountain Biking Circuit. Let us hope that this is just the start of the city's provision for family cycling.

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'... the busier gravel roads may not suit family mountain-biking.'

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FROM HEART OF THE DESERT,  
J C PARCELL, 1951

27. The office of the *Cromwell Argus*.

According to a TV news item in December 2002, the level of obesity in New Zealand's children had doubled in the last ten years. Paediatricians are focusing on diet. Yet exercise also is an important factor. An article on *5+ A Day*, a nutrition website, says:

But it is not just poor diet but an increasingly-indoors lifestyle which is adding to the problem. In a country that prides itself on its outdoor lifestyle, children are at risk of vitamin D deficiency from spending more time indoors playing computer games and watching videos and television. As a result they are not getting enough exposure to the sun, an important source of vitamin D. Many children no longer walk to school or play outside. This not only affects the vitamin D levels in their bodies but also contributes to the increasing amount of obesity in New Zealand children.<sup>107</sup>

This sounds a convincing case for outdoor exercise, but if you were a parent in Ravensbourne, would you let your children cycle on State Highway 88?



## National Issues: Clean, Green, and Private

'Three of the best days of my life!' That's how one newcomer summed up a previous AOK Rally. Judging from the happy mood of the farewell function at Kurow on Saturday 18 January, you could assume similar sentiments from many of the 2003 rallyists. McDonald, that evening, felt particularly pleased, because as well as not having to pedal anywhere the next day he could also finish his diary-writing.

Rather than consider the Rally in isolation, *An AOK Diary* has placed it as the culmination of three months of enjoyable mountain-biking. McDonald's rural rides have opened his eyes to Otago's history and geography. They have also reinforced what is, for him, mountain-biking's main advantage over traditional cycle touring: on the Telecom Track there are no cars to swat you into the ditch. His rides have also made him think about the importance of outdoor recreation for an increasingly urbanised and sedentary society.

According to Statistics New Zealand, New Zealand now has one of the most highly urbanised populations in the world.<sup>108</sup> Its urbanites are lucky to live in a country that contains genuine wilderness, in large national parks. Yet visiting one of these wilds is for many just a once-a-year possibility. (Dunedin, for example, is over 300 kilometres from the national parks of the Southern



28. New Zealand's fourteen national parks.

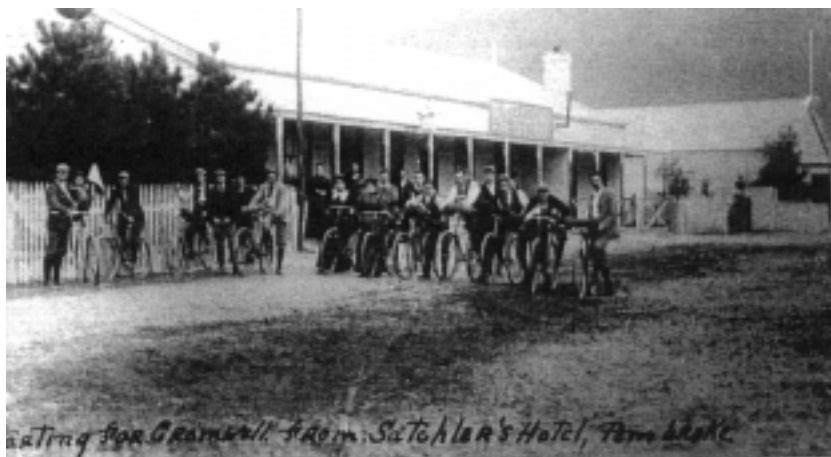
Alps.) City- and town-dwelling Kiwis also need outdoor-recreation possibilities for evenings and half-days and single days, such as multi-use tracks in and around urban areas. They need public rights of way across urban-fringe farmland. They need improved waymarking on the ground. (McDonald makes this point from his mountain-biking this summer. Dunedin city council's *Track Policy and Strategy* makes the same point.<sup>109</sup> The need may not be peculiar to Dunedin; some preliminary research in Christchurch has concluded similarly.<sup>110</sup>) In the longer term and of much practical importance, recreators and particularly mountain-bikers need uncomplicated maps of legal roads, easily accessible.

### The Need for Freely Available Maps of Legal Roads

This diary has highlighted the difficulties that a casual recreator met when trying to identify legal roads. There seems to be a common belief that the main confusion over legal roads centres on the unformed variety, sometimes called paper roads. This diary has suggested that considerable uncertainty also surrounds formed rural roads, such as farmtracks and logging roads.

A further example would be the Day-2 route of the 2003 AOK Rally. Without local knowledge or guidebook advice you cannot easily determine whether the route from Omarama to St Bathans follows legal roads. There are no signs on the many gates, indicating such. The 1:50,000 topographic map does not say whether those high-country roads are public or private. (Actually the route crosses private land. Mountain-bikers who want to follow it need to contact the farmers' representatives on both sides of the divide. Even after obtaining their consent, a cyclist can meet the refusal of an individual landowner. It's easier to get into Buckingham Palace; at least you know who owns the place.)

Consider one last example: Goldrush, the triathlon set in the back country of Central Otago. The setting sounds fantastic, but read the Goldrush information carefully and you discover this: 'Much of the course passes through private property. We have arranged set weekends for practice runs on these properties.'<sup>111</sup> Elsewhere a Goldrush web page tempts us onto this private land: 'CENTRAL OTAGO OUTBACK OUR BEST KEPT SECRET'.<sup>112</sup>



RON MURRAY COLLECTION

29. Heading for Cromwell from Satchler's Hotel, Pembroke. (Pembroke was renamed Wanaka in 1940.)

Leave aside, for a moment, the moral and political question of whether such splendid emptiness should stay a private secret, closed to casual recreators. Pretend, for a moment, that it is entirely fitting for event-organisers to be able to make one-off, exclusive access arrangements that cater for privileged minorities. Remain a law-abiding citizen, reluctant to enter wrongfully on land belonging to another. Get the 1:50,000 topo maps that cover the Goldrush route. Try to determine from these maps which sections, if any, follow legal roads. You cannot. Visit the Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) website for this information. You still cannot obtain these facts, not without first researching the land districts, the appropriate record reference numbers, and the record types, and then faxing the necessary record request forms to the LINZ Dunedin Processing Centre. And don't forget the fees.

Some readers might point out that LINZ now has a 'world-first online survey and title lodgement service'.<sup>113</sup> True. You could retrieve the legal-road information from home, for a licence fee of \$500 (plus an annual maintenance fee of \$80), and a digital certificate fee of \$72 (plus an annual renewal fee of \$46).<sup>114</sup>

We are supposed to be in the information age. If New Zealand's legal roads are indeed what their name implies, then every man, woman and child in the country has the right to know where these roads are, without having to become an expert in the arcane mysteries of cadastral charts and without paying inspection fees. And without visiting every public agency in town: the office of the Department of Conservation, the visitor centre, the city or town council office, the library. And without long reconnaissances, knocking on farmers' doors.

One thing that a British immigrant in New Zealand learns quickly is to never mention how they do things in the UK. You just don't do this, any more than you would point out the advantages of nuclear power or walk into a pub in Kaikohe and start talking about the noble savage. But sod it. About walking and cycling access to ordinary rural land, as against access to national parks, there are different histories and different ways of doing things, that's all it amounts to. In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act introduced procedures for the recording and mapping of rights of way across much of England and Wales, not just in national parks: footpaths, bridleways, roads uses as public paths, and byways open to all traffic.<sup>115</sup> The first inch-to-the-mile map to show these rights of way was published in 1959.<sup>116</sup> The majority of local authorities, excluding the old Urban Districts and Inner London Boroughs, had completed their Definitive Maps by the late 1960s.<sup>117</sup> In 1968 a public-rights-of-way act gave cyclists the legal right to use bridleways. Gradually the 1:50,000 maps of England and Wales acquired their rights of way; they hence gained the x-factor. During his many years of full-time outdoor instructing in Britain, McDonald seldom had to negotiate admittance with a landowner; his right to walk or cycle, or the lack of that right, was usually clear either from the map in his hand or from signage on the ground.

Land Information New Zealand is developing an impressive online topographic map, *NZTopoOnline*.<sup>118</sup> Access will be free. The trial version, already online, shows the revolutionary potential of this way to obtain a plan of your mountain-biking route. You may use, copy and distribute the information extracted from

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'If New Zealand's legal roads are indeed what their name implies, then every man, woman and child in the country has the right to know where these roads are, without having to become an expert in the arcane mysteries of cadastral charts and without paying inspection fees.'

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*NZTopoOnline* in any format or media without charge. (Where the data is distributed to a third party the source, date of extract and copyright of the Crown must be acknowledged.)

A fully functional site is programmed for release in mid-2003. At the time of writing, the *NZTopoOnline* track classifications are still under development. If you zoom into a few spots in the Dunedin area, some tracks seem conspicuous by their absence, eg Racemans, which has been in *From Sea to Silver Peaks* since at least 1997. Unless these new maps show all tracks and distinguish legal roads from private ones, they will not provide the x-factor that recreational mountain-bikers need.

#### The Need for Wider and Easier Access to Rural Land

As well as meeting difficulty in identifying legal roads, in just a few months McDonald met a variety of other access complications and problems. This section revisits some of these obstacles, particularly the access to commercial forests, and then adds a limited international perspective.

Although the following examples come from the Dunedin area, the general points that will be made might also apply to rural land in some other parts of New Zealand. Aucklanders' access to green corridors and to the countryside, for instance, has already concerned some commentators. Neil Olsen pointed out that Auckland's population may double in the next fifty years. On green space both in and around the city, he wrote that 'a population of two million Aucklanders will need more public open space and new ways of acquiring it'.<sup>119</sup>

Several passages in this diary have mentioned the recreational-access policies of Wenita Forest Products Ltd and City Forests Ltd. Both companies welcome the walker or cyclist into their forests, provided he or she applies for a permit. The Wenita forest estate has a net stocked area of 25,000 hectares.<sup>120</sup> The City Forests estate has a net stocked area of 13,500 hectares.<sup>121</sup> The permit requirement applies to all the Wenita estate and to 90 per cent of the City Forests estate. (The entry to City Forests' Flagstaff Forest is managed differently, see page 32.) Both companies provide informative websites that project images of commendable commercial management, responsible guardianship of the environment, and judicious provision for recreation.

City Forests summarises its approach to recreational access, and encapsulates every forestry agency's dilemma, as follows: 'We encourage the public to use our forests and [we] allow access

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'Unless these new maps show all tracks and distinguish legal roads from private ones, they will not provide the x-factor that recreational mountain-bikers need.'

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FROM TUAPEKA: THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE, W R MAYHEW, 1949

30. Lawrence Cycling Club, 1900.

to parts of our forests for recreation and educational purposes to the extent that neither the company's operations, [nor] forest security nor public safety is compromised.'<sup>122</sup>

One view of the permit regimes is as necessary controls; permits are a sensible solution to managing conflicting demands. But the way McDonald sees it, the need to obtain a permit greatly inhibits casual and spontaneous recreation. If he wanted to diminish an area's recreational potential, virtually eliminate its casual-tourist potential, and minimise the number of mountain-bikers who use it, he would design a permit system for that area, perhaps one like that of City Forests, which requires walkers and cyclists to call in person into an office in South Dunedin every time they need a permit.<sup>123</sup>

Often the Wednesday-night AOKers chose their route on the spur of the moment, to suit the weather and their mood. Several times they dropped from Mount Cargill summit to Sullivans Dam, through the City Forests pine plantation (see page 10). This descent forms an essential link in a circuit. Permission was not sought. The need to do so would eliminate spontaneous, unplanned trips.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many visitors to the forests of the Dunedin area ignore the need for permits, especially for Berwick Forest. If this is true, then the permit schemes may be failing to provide adequately the control that they exist for.

Are permits the only workable solution? What other forms of controllable, undamaging entry are possible? Is a limited form of open admission possible, one that uses notices and gates – backed up by website announcements – to prohibit entry during periods of high fire risk or 'dangerous' forestry operations? Entry could also be halted in exceptional wildlife-conservation circumstances. If a forest included upland sheep pastures, these areas could be closed during lambing.

In Scandinavia, 'instead of the landowner possessing a right to exclude, the general public have a right to walk [through forests and across uncultivated farmland] and the onus is on the landowner to demonstrate why this freedom should be suspended ... If a landowner wishes to exclude people, he has to apply to do so. Landowners have to fit their activities around the public right of access.'<sup>124</sup> This 'every man's right' – *allmansrätten* in Sweden, *allmannsretten* in Norway – is frequently extended to horse-riding and cycling. As well as covering woodland and uncultivated land, it often applies also to farm roads, field edges, and forest tracks. Norway has a population density almost exactly the same as New Zealand's. Sweden has one slightly greater. Scandinavian outdoor recreators do not of course rely totally on *allmansrätten* and *allmannsretten*; they also use state nature reserves, state forests, and national parks.

In former West Germany, the federal Forest Law of 1975 'gave West Germans the right to wander freely at their own risk in all woodland, large or small, whether publicly or privately owned'.<sup>125</sup> The right extends to running, sitting, camping and playing, cycling, horse-riding, and using wheelchairs.<sup>126</sup>

The UK's Forest Enterprise harvests the large conifer plantations of upland Wales, while at the same time providing open access, welcoming millions of visitors a year. How does it balance timber production with tourism and recreation? McDonald doesn't

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'Are permits the only workable solution?'

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know. What he does know is that one of the four designated aims of Forest Enterprise is ‘to increase opportunities for public recreation’.<sup>127</sup>

Which brings us back to the subject of this section: wider and easier recreational entry to rural land. Forestry plantations are just one example of rural land. The Otago Peninsula, the farm-track between Halfway Bush Road and Abbotsford, and Flagstaff are three other examples; all three raised access questions in McDonald’s mind when he tried to discover Dunedin on a mountain-bike.

A recent study in Christchurch investigated people’s knowledge of their access rights to the New Zealand countryside for outdoor recreation. ‘It appears that Christchurch’s urban residents have a mixed set of knowledge about their rights of access, as may be expected.’<sup>128</sup> Overall, individuals appear to be aware of different admittance mechanisms – such as paper roads, the Queen’s Chain, and walkways – although when questioned about details, respondents quickly floundered.

McDonald too has floundered. As summer passed he felt that he and his bike were straying onto the outermost sands of a fairly extensive access desert in which the most flourishing species was the unattractive weed, de-facto-access-at-the-pleasure-of-the-landowner.

### The AOK E-group

Sanctioned admission, however, forms an important chunk of the range of access in Dunedin and Otago. A recent AOK Saturday ride followed parts of the 1861 gold-rush trail from Dunedin to Gabriels Gully, a renowned route, thick with history. The organisers arranged access with seven landowners or land-occupiers.<sup>129</sup> The riders enjoyed a fantastic day, as well as retracing the steps of the famous kind bushranger of the Maungatua. Some AOKers would probably say there’s nothing difficult about phoning a few farmers and having a chat about crossing their paddocks. You only have to convince the farmer that you are a reasonable sort, capable of closing a gate. It might help, sometimes, if you get it into your head that Bill English is a good bloke ... ‘Too right, mate. Yes, Bill had a farm himself, in Dipton I think, in Southland’ ... and, uh-uh, don’t point out that the access situation is half-baked.

Your admittance to the countryside will depend upon a subjective and arbitrary verdict on your character, suitability and status. It will be subject to the vagaries of landholders’ personal preferences. Your recreation will need to be pre-arranged and approved; forget the spontaneous and impulsive bike ride on a fine autumn morning. And cheerio to the recreator who lacks the local knowledge of who owns what. Yet, looking at things pragmatically, one could regard the coming-together of dozens of recreational mountain-bikers into the AOK circle as one way of tackling some of these problems. When arranging access, there can be a strength in numbers. Also, several Dunedin AOKers have rural contacts.

Sometimes we are so involved in living our lives that we do not see a revolution that we are part of. The AOK setup is a recreational phenomenon. It has no membership formalities, no membership fees, no written framework, no committee or officers, and no annual programme of meets, and so it is not a club in the

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‘Your  
admittance to  
the countryside  
will depend  
upon a  
subjective and  
arbitrary verdict  
on your  
character,  
suitability and  
status.’

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traditional sense. Yet its loose-knit band of Dunedin mountain-bikers, informally linked by John Fridd's weekly e-news and notices each Thursday in the *Otago Daily Times*, are very active. For these local AOKers, the AOK Rally itself is just one part of a year-round mixture of mountain-biking. This recreation could not take place in such an informal and often spontaneous way without the email newsletters; it is a product of the computer age.

The AOKers are so successful at arranging access that some of them may not feel that access is a pressing issue. Others might agree that there are areas of concern.

### Access Entrepreneurship

One particular type of sanctioned access is that which you pay for. Selling the right of entry to rural land has been called the turnstile-at-the-gate approach. The landowner uses access as a market commodity. The transaction can take various forms. A local authority might secure a track by legal easements, paid for by an annual rental. Or a landowner might develop a private track, charging each individual tramper or cyclist an admission fee. The Banks Peninsula Track is one such example. It grew out of a need to improve the economic viability of the farms involved.<sup>130</sup> A two-day tramp along it costs \$120 per person, which includes accommodation in two huts. This 'world famous 35-km track that crosses farmland, native forest, and spectacular volcanic coastline' was a finalist in the 1999 New Zealand Tourism Awards.<sup>131</sup> It also won a regional conservation award. It hosts about 2,500 visitors a year, of whom about 20 per cent are New Zealanders.

Writing about the future pressure on the countryside around Auckland, Neil Olsen saw private landowners meeting some of the demand:



STEFFANO WEBB. PERMISSION OF THE ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND, MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE REUSE OF THIS IMAGE.

**32.** A group cycling along a road in Christchurch, 1907. Bill Hyslop, in writing of Christchurch in the 1890s, recalled bands of fifty or more male and female cyclists off on club runs. 'Ladies rode in bloomers and men in knickers.'

We should also not overlook the role that the private sector increasingly is playing in leisure and recreation. We are all familiar with growth in commercial gymnasiums and adventure recreation industries. Increasingly in the Auckland region, private landowners are providing for activities such as horse riding and various forms of motorised sports.

The large commercial forests in the region, for example, provide for much of that form of recreation. But as the forests mature the function will be disrupted and may diminish. There is considerable potential for farmers, particularly on marginal coastal properties, to supplement their incomes by providing recreation for the public on their land.

The regional council has recently [1998] floated the idea of public agencies acting as brokers of recreation access by leasing land or buying access rights from private landowners. The public do not need to own the landscape in order to have access to it.<sup>132</sup>

Olsen is not alone in mentioning the possibilities of recreation on private land. Grant Hunter, a land resource scientist, has pointed out that naturalness sought for recreation and tourism is not confined to the conservation estate; the 'recreation estate' extends into private land. He suggested that diversity in land ownership can increase the overall opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism at the regional level.<sup>133</sup> At the same time, he acknowledged something that this diary has emphasised, that it could be individual citizens who lose out most from the lack of immediate, unnegotiated access to private land:

These examples lead me to conclude that at least for relatively aware, organised public groups, land tenure *per se* does not appear to strongly facilitate, or inhibit, recreational choices. Individuals and other small, informal 'non-paying' groups, who lack the knowledge of opportunities and/or acceptance by landowners, may be less well served by private land ownership. A private owner has the legal right to 'shut the gate' following a perceived 'bad experience' with public use (such as damage or inconvenience), or more simply by exercising personal choice. There is also a risk to the general public that involvement of a landowner in revenue generating tourism may lead to hardening of attitudes towards free access, even where the activities are different.<sup>134</sup>

In the short term, turnstile-at-the-gate approaches widen the access opportunities for those outdoor recreators who can afford to take advantage of them. The income generated from them can pay for improved environmental management and aesthetic refinements.<sup>135</sup> They can also create jobs. But views on them are likely to remain polarised. There is an argument that such approaches are hopelessly provisional and are unsuitable for protecting valued natural or cultural features in perpetuity. Had he been alive today, Karl Marx might have said that in the long term they reaffirm and entrench the hegemonic power of property and diminish the rights of the citizenry.

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' ... it could be individual citizens who lose out most from the lack of immediate, unnegotiated access to private land ... '

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Once again, we are scrutinising access and finding only more questions. A landowner's right to charge people for admission derives indirectly from the law of trespass. It is a curious thought that many of the early cases of trespass in English law concerned not so much a trespasser's unlawful presence on land but his damaging actions there: assault and battery, taking goods, abducting servants and villeins, abducting wards and daughters, abducting and ravishing wives.<sup>136</sup> Similarly in 19th-century Central Otago, when the runholders talked about trespass, often they may have been referring not to people being harmlessly on their land but to invading cattle. In August 1870 in the Cromwell area there was a trespass dispute between some cattle-owners and the station-holders. To cut a long story short, the grass was greener on the other side. The cattle-owners agreed 'to pay certain sums annually, that their cattle might enjoy certain privileges'.<sup>137</sup>

A golden rule of writing is to stick to something you know about. McDonald knows little about the law of trespass, and so maybe someone else will help him to answer two questions. First, was the Trespass Act 1980 designed or intended as a means for farmers to supplement their incomes by charging entrance fees? Second, are there any moral objections to their using it as such, when the trespassers are not cattle that eat the pasture but people who have no effect on the land?

### **This Land Is Their Land**

Two of the earlier suggestions, one local and one national, are very achievable. Easier entry to the plantation forests of the Dunedin area could happen quickly, given the will from the forest-owners. Easy-to-understand maps of legal roads could be produced gradually by LINZ, given a government directive. But the wider national issues of access to private uncultivated rural land involve historical, legal, social, and political complexities that to cover adequately would take a book and an interdisciplinary panel of authors. What follows is merely an exploratory poke, through the partisan eyes of just one mountain-biker, and a pakeha one at that.

The bottom line on walking and cycling access to our countryside is this: there are countless gobsmacking corners of New Zealand which walkers and mountain-bikers may never have the right to see except during organised events or on *Country Calendar*. These corners will remain unseen because our rural land lacks an ancient network of rights of way. Few New Zealanders recognise this poverty of access; even fewer see the need to rectify it. Geoff Chapple is well known for his inspirational promotion of Te Araroa, New Zealand's still-evolving long-distance pathway. Of the 1990 New Zealand Walkways Act, which was supposed to result in more walking tracks across public and private land, he wrote: 'The 1990 Act was probably moribund even as it reached the statute books.'<sup>138</sup>

Yet again, we are here digging into access and finding more questions than answers. According to the Department of Conservation, 'the primary purpose of the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990 is the promotion of safe and unimpeded foot access to the countryside for recreational purposes.'<sup>139</sup> Is Geoff Chapple's statement about the Act a fair and accurate comment? Has the Act

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'Few New Zealanders recognise this poverty of access; even fewer see the need to rectify it.'

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proved impotent in creating new walkways over private land? What changes would a new Walkways Act contain, to succeed where the old one failed?

If we cannot obtain an effective Walkways Act, there hardly seems any point in thinking about a Cycleways Act.

English law, and seemingly the New Zealand version of it, gives extreme protection to the landowner or occupier.<sup>140</sup> It has been said that English law cares more for property than person. Who would have thought, then, that walkers in England and Wales would ever acquire a 'right to roam' over private 'open country'? Yet this finally happened, with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, after more than a century of debate and various levels of conflict. During that long gestation, the supporters of the right to roam attracted much ridicule. 'The idea that land should be walked over freely where there is no footpath, by people who neither own it nor have permission of the owner, [was] frequently dismissed as ridiculous or subversive'.<sup>141</sup> The Country Landowners' Association and the National Farmers' Union opposed the Act.

How do rights of access in New Zealand now compare with those in the UK, former West Germany, and Scandinavia? In some important ways, a suntanned Kiwi country-lover now has fewer legal rights to enjoy the countryside than a white-faced UK rambler. A New Zealand farmer or forester may now have more power to exclude than a present-day lord of the manor. Even some of our existing tracks are at risk. In Dunedin, for instance, 'there is little security for use of many tracks ... Forty-eight of Dunedin's 167 tracks (28%) are vulnerable to changes in attitude to use by the landowner.'<sup>142</sup> If our negotiated tracks are so assailable and impermanent, is there much point in spending public money negotiating them?

One heavily used pleasure-of-the-landowner track in Dunedin is the entry to Signal Hill from Logan Park High School. The route through the school grounds is a textbook case of crucial access to urban-fringe open space. Yet it is potentially as transient as a school governor. A notice at the school reminds us of this: PUBLIC ACCESS TO SIGNAL HILL IS PERMITTED AS A PRIVILEGE.

Our society, in McDonald's opinion, needs to make a philosophical somersault, first in attitude and then in law. The problem is not so much that the members of Federated Farmers have to get used to the idea that this land is every person's land, although that's a big enough obstacle, but that every person must get used to it first.

Also, a Swede's *allemansrätten* comes with responsibilities, age-old rules learnt in childhood, such as not lighting fires, not harming trees, not stealing eggs, not climbing fences, and not leaving a single trace. Swedes honour the privacy of the farmhouse and its garden. Hunting and fishing require permission. Dogs must never be let loose in the summer half-year. Similarly, an English rambler's new right to roam over the heaths, moors, and downs is not completely unfettered; the access is qualified, undamaging, in tune with the conservation of wildlife, and in balance with economic uses of the land, such as hill-farming and game management.

Whether Kiwis would be ready for such rights and responsibilities is hard to judge. Farmers' representatives in Northland have recently been talking not about 'trespass' but about 'farm invasion'.<sup>143</sup> In Dunedin, 'many landowners are continuously disappointed by the behaviour of track users – cars are parked inconsiderately, dogs are allowed to chase sheep, litter is dropped and many visitors have little respect for the rights and privacy of the landowner.'<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, in 1990 the Otago Peninsula Walkers organised a public opening of several tracks that follow unformed legal roads; on the opening day they found that someone had vandalised their new signposts and put an electric fence across one track.<sup>145</sup>

Some places on the Otago Peninsula remain access hot spots. A recent report in an AOK news-email illustrates a continuing basic disagreement – an ancient and fundamental conflict – between the landed and the landless:

We all made it down to the lighthouse, where we all stopped for a photo as well as to admire the view and count the abandoned cars. On the track back up to Cape Saunders Road we came upon an open farm gate. [One of us] had done a lot of orienteering around Mount Charles, he decided to investigate; we all followed. This track proved to be well worth the risk. (Farmers in these parts display signs threatening to shoot any trespassers.)<sup>146</sup>

Such signs did not deter Leslie Stephen on his walks out of London in the late 19th century, although the cyclist, he said, had to follow the highroad and was 'enslaved by his machine', seeing 'nothing of the retired scenery which may be close to him':

When once beyond the 'town', I looked out for notices that trespassers would be prosecuted. That gave a strong presumption that the trespass must have some attraction. The cyclist could only reflect that trespassing for him was not only forbidden but impossible. To me it was a reminder of the many delicious bits of walking which, even in the neighbourhood of London, await the man who has no superstitious reverence for legal rights. It is indeed surprising how many charming walks can be contrived by a judicious combination of a little trespassing with the rights of way happily preserved over so many commons and footpaths.<sup>147</sup>

'Fundamental conflict' is not too strong a term for what we are dealing with here, whether on the Otago Peninsula in 2003 or on the outskirts of London in the 1890s. For a century and a half, the question of recreational entry to the countryside of England and Wales never moved far from the political agenda. One writer commented that the state provided a context within which the 'non-landed' sought to establish their moral 'right' to roam in contradistinction to the 'landed', who sought to maintain the hegemony of private property.<sup>148</sup>

The hottest access hot spot in England was a peat moor called Kinder Scout, south of Manchester. On 24 April 1932, Kinder Scout hosted what became known as the mass trespass. Benny Rothman, the trespass's prime mover, 'was a 20-year-old Man-

chester communist in the motor trade – Jewish by descent, tiny in stature and fiery in rhetoric'.<sup>149</sup> The trespass took place shortly after a ramblers' rally at a quarry on the edge of the moorland. At the rally the intended speaker took fright at the sight of 200 policemen. Rothman took his place and castigated the organised rambling movement for inactivity, insisting that if concessions were to be won, they must be fought for. Five hundred people then advanced onto the moor. As they marched they sang the 'Red Flag' and the 'International'. A report in the *Manchester Guardian* of 25 April 1932 began:

Four or five hundred ramblers, mostly from Manchester, trespassed in mass on Kinder Scout to-day. They fought a brief but vigorous hand-to-hand struggle with a number of keepers specially enrolled for the occasion. This they won with ease, and then marched to Ashop Head, where they held a meeting before returning in triumph to Hayfield. Their triumph was short-lived, for there the police met them, halted them, combed their ranks for suspects, and detained five men.

The access problem in New Zealand – if there is one, and this diary has suggested that there is – needs to be part of an extensive debate about the significance of property and its associated rights, about the unchallenged supremacy of agriculture and the existing rural landowners, and about the rights of ownership versus the rights of citizenship.

The access rights in Scandinavia, former West Germany, and now England and Wales could be viewed as forming a civilised compromise. It would not harm New Zealand's international image if we could show the world that New Zealanders are capable of understanding the complexities involved in this compromise. But so far New Zealand's city- and town-dwellers have not produced any mass demand for improved access for walking and cycling.



**33.** The plaque celebrating the mass trespass onto Kinder Scout, northern England, on 24 April 1932. The mass trespass became the most famous incident in a century of struggle for access to the countryside. The plaque is mounted on the gritstone wall of the little quarry from where the trespass started.

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'The access problem in New Zealand ... needs to be part of an extensive debate about the significance of property and its associated rights, about the unchallenged supremacy of agriculture and the existing rural landowners, and about the rights of ownership versus the rights of citizenship.'

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New Zealand is an outdoor paradise, the envy of the world ... a third of it is protected as parks and reserves ... Tongariro was the fourth national park in the world, sixty-four years ahead of Britain's first ... there couldn't possibly be anything lacking here. Few organisations, if any, are arguing for freer entry to private rural land. The strong private-property ethos is ingrained and uncompromising. No political party has dared to campaign for universal, unalterable access to Forbidden New Zealand.

That is not to say that nothing is happening politically. Even if no organisations are campaigning for public rights of way across private rural land, there could still be a strong latent demand, awaiting a voice. How many access problems are festering, harming recreation and tourism? Who knows. There's the acquaintance at work, nearing retirement, who arrived home from a holiday in Spain and said: 'I wish we had footpaths like in Spain.' She was referring to the lack of public access near her batch in Central Otago. As this diary neared completion, an AOK news-email included a brief account of an access problem. The passage neatly demonstrates the complications of access to private rural land – the good, the bad, the ugly, and the confusing:

Soon we were heading down Semple Rd towards Waitati, but Mike had mapped out a more interesting route back to Evansdale which involved hooning along a grass track beside the forest marked on the map as Wright Rd, meaning it was apparently a paper road, although I was a bit suspicious of the huge chain and padlock on one of the gates we crossed. At the end of the track we came across a second gate with a huge chain and matching padlock – and who should be unlocking the huge padlock but a grumpy looking farmer who was taking to task the riders he'd first come across. Obviously he thought we shouldn't have been on that particular track and there was much discussion about whether we'd taken the right route. As usual in these cases, we just smiled lots and nodded and said 'sorry' and went on our merry way, with the farmer yelling after us: 'If you were 20 years younger, I'd boot your arses!'<sup>150</sup>

On 23 January 2003 the rural affairs minister, Jim Sutton, acknowledged that access was a growing issue. He announced the formation of a land-access reference group. One of the group's three aims would be to 'review access onto private rural land to better facilitate public access to and enjoyment of New Zealand's natural environment'. The sincerity of this exercise, though, might be judged from Sutton's comment, quoted on the government's website: 'We're really trying to bring some community wisdom to bear on this to see if [there is] anything we can do sensibly about it. The answer may be, at the end of the day, that it is all too difficult.'<sup>151</sup>

A press release from Public Access New Zealand (PANZ) welcomed the government's initiative but commented that the reference group 'has a predominance of farming interests, and minimal recreational presence'. The group has eleven members, eight of whom have some sort of farming background. Two of the remaining three work in outdoor recreation. According to a PANZ

spokesman, Bruce Mason, 'the exercise is pie in the sky stuff with minimal prospect of workable outcomes acceptable to the wider community'.<sup>152</sup>

The aspirations of PANZ differentiate sharply between public and private land. PANZ campaigns aggressively to preserve legal roads and to strengthen the inalienability of public land. In acute contrast, and despite its name, PANZ puts private land into the too-hard basket. PANZ holds no ambitions on the admission to private land, considering the matter to be political suicide, a lost cause. *KEEP OFF*, says PANZ. 'The public does not have a right of recreation over private land, and cannot expect such'.<sup>153</sup> Mr Sutton might well think, With friends like PANZ, who needs enemies?

On 14 April 2003 Federated Farmers of New Zealand issued a media release explaining that recreators already have all the access they need:

Farmer Goodwill is Meeting the Needs of Recreational Users  
There is little evidence that there is a problem with current land access provisions with over 40% of New Zealand readily available for public access and recreation.<sup>154</sup>

The media release said that John Aspinall, a national board member of Federated Farmers, had made a submission to the land-access reference group. He had emphasised that recreators have no legal right to enter private rural land:

'It is also clear that farmers hold the right to manage access to their property as a fundamental principle of land ownership,' said Mr Aspinall.

'Farmers must retain the right to manage who comes onto their land, for how long and for what reason. At the end of the day a farm is a business and we do not allow the public to wander at will through factories or office blocks.'<sup>155</sup>

The alarmist rhetoric of the rest of the media release presents the urban Kiwi as an irresponsible and incompetent idiot who leaves gates open, resulting in animal deaths and injuries, mis-mothered lambs, and aborting cows; whose dogs will kill countless in-lamb ewes; who will have to be rescued in the middle of the night; who will grow marijuana; and who will fire shots at farmhouses. McDonald has spent a large part of his life walking across farms in Britain and the Alpine countries. Invariably farmers there have greeted him with a friendly wave and 'Morning', 'Bonjour', 'Guten Morgen', or 'Buongiorno'. The representatives of New Zealand's farmers, in contrast, appear to be sounding the alarms and raising the drawbridges.

Another Federated Farmers media release calls the land-access review 'a dark cloud on the horizon' that will be 'foremost in the minds of our members' as they discuss their vision for New Zealand agriculture.<sup>156</sup> Yet another release reiterates the basic imbalance in New Zealand law: 'Access to private land is a privilege, not a right.'<sup>157</sup> And in another release the president of Federated Farmers, Tom Lambie, sees New Zealand regressing into tribal anarchy: 'You only need to look at the situation in Zimbabwe where a resource-rich country has essentially remained a developing country because of an erosion of property rights.'<sup>158</sup>

The immediate future for mountain-biking access appears, therefore, to lie not in radical national politics but in carrying on as at present, with a pragmatic range of approaches: local arrangements, personal contacts, some piecemeal improvements, more de facto access with permission, organised events, improved signage, well-designed leaflets, access information on websites, and club access officers. But there is a possibility that in tolerating the status quo, mountain-bikers will be acquiescing to an access culture that discourages spontaneity, flexibility, and recreational individualism. They may unwittingly be consolidating a stilted access culture that is restrictive, permission-oriented, group-focused, and wretchedly arbitrary. Even discriminatory. The long-term future, if we are to leave anything worthwhile for future generations, does lie in national politics and in irrevocable tracks.

That debate has not yet really started. A suitable starting point would be the Federated Farmers' statement that 'there is little evidence that there is a problem with current land access provisions'. The obvious reply is that there is little evidence to indicate that New Zealand's farmers will be as selfish and pig-headed as England's country landowners have been.

It is inevitable that some New Zealand landowners will resist appeals for public access, for reasons which from their point of view make perfect sense. The only lasting way of opening up entry to private rural land is for parliament to oblige landowners to relinquish some of the rights which they are otherwise certain to defend and exploit. Until then, this land is their land.

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'Cycling on a very muddy road in England, I politely asked a man who was leading a horse in a farm cart to go to his proper side of the road and allow me to pass. His reply was, "Go to Hell!" But on my saying that I would rather not, as I should meet him there, he went to the right side of the road to allow me to pass.' Mrs Isabel Georgina Homewood, remembering the 1890s.<sup>159</sup>

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'But there is a possibility that in tolerating the status quo, mountain-bikers will be acquiescing to an access culture that discourages spontaneity, flexibility, and recreational individualism.'

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**34.** Bannockburn Hotel, 1907. This bicycle was obviously an object worthy of a place in the photograph. Note the ample tyres, which were to be rediscovered about seventy years later.

## Sources of Illustrations

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand: Figure 18 (1/1-009322; G); Figure 32 (1/1-004283; G); Figure 35 (1/1-005293; G).

Alexandra Museum, Alexandra, Otago, New Zealand: Figure 10.

Aotearoa New Zealand Centre, Christchurch City Libraries, New Zealand: Figure 14 (PhotoCD 1, IMG0069).

John Fridd: Figure 21 (from *AOK Rally* web page).

Mayher, *Tuapeka: The Land and Its People*: Figure 7 (Plate X); Figure 30 (Plate XXXIII).

Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin, New Zealand: Figure 5 (BU2.69); Figure 6 (BU2.75); Figure 26 (BoxA-C.C.No3).

Parcell, *Heart of the Desert*: Figure 23 (Plate X); Figure 27 (Plate XX).

Ron Murray: Figure 22; Figure 29.

Thompson, *East of the Rock and Pillar*: Figure 12 (Plate XVII).

Waite, *Pioneering in South Otago*. Figure 19 (Facing p. 149).



STEFFANO WEBB. PERMISSION OF THE ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND, MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE REUSE OF THIS IMAGE.

**35.** District nurses outside South Durham St District Nursing Office, Christchurch, 1914. The cycling craze of the 1890s, during which the bicycle caught the public imagination, had long passed. But the cost of a bicycle has fallen, and the safety bicycle has achieved some popularity as a means of delivering goods, messages, and services and as a vehicle for commuting to work.

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**36.** On this Opel-Siegerrad bicycle on 2 August 1925, Peter Rosen won a 1,040km race between Zurich and Berlin. He took 36hrs 36mins 57secs, travelling at an average speed of 28.4 km/h, pedalling at 80 revolutions a minute.



Dave and Pete McDonald, 2003 AOK Rally, 9am, Day 2.  
The well-made track, of a generous width, goes up and up.