

## VIA KINGSTON IS A VERY FULL DAY BANNOCKBURN TO GARSTON AND BACK TO CROMWELL

- Ask permission before going on to private property. (DOC can provide contacts)
- If access is denied, it is for a good reason so please respect the landowners wishes
- Leave all gates as you find them .... open or closed
- Try not to disturb any stock
- Take only photos, leave only footprints
- Please take your litter home with you

### RURAL RESPONSIBILITY CODE

At some sites at times of stock movement and at lambing time the property owners would be appreciated. Access may also be denied for your risk. Some of these sites are on private property, and respect for visitors are warned, that when following this guide, you do so at your own risk.

### Caution

John Douglas – Safari Excursions Tours & Walks  
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### Researched by

- Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust & Ray O'Brien Trust
- Cromwell & District Promotions Group
- Department of Conservation - with plaque help
- Pacific Development and Conservation Trust - Principal Supporter

### Supporters & Financial Assistance

An historical tour of old gold mining sites and places of interest from the early days of the Nevis, starting from Bannockburn and traversing Duffers Saddle to the Lower Nevis, then on through the gorge to the Upper Nevis and over to Garston, following the route once used by the supply wagons in the days when the goldfields were at their peak.

## 4WD & Walking Tour Nevis Valley Historic Sites

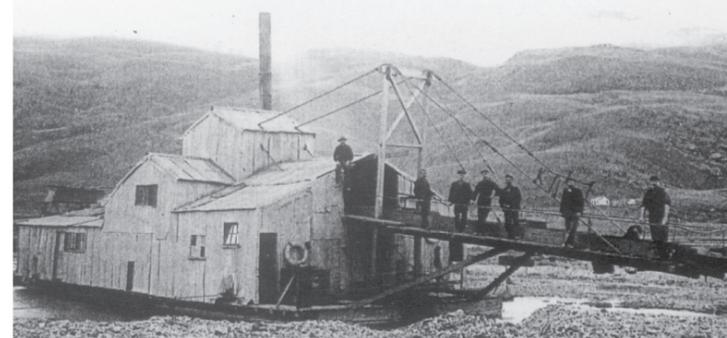


# NEVIS VALLEY

## Historic Sites

## Viewing & Walking Tour

A remote high country valley which still contains some of the best examples of early gold mining techniques in Otago.



New Zealand's Heart of Gold

## OTAGO GOLDFIELDS

Catch the gold fever

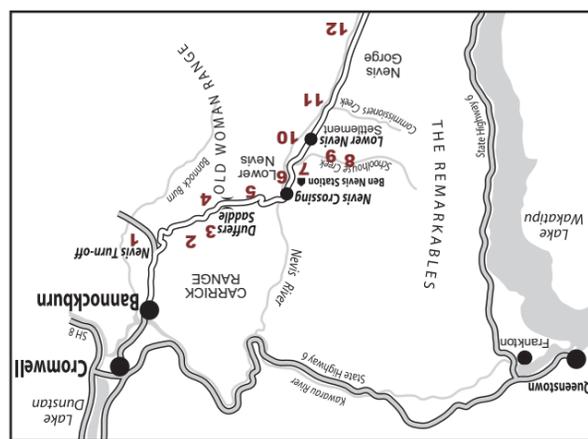


The first section of the road over the Carrick Range is a climb to 1300m, closely following the miner's route to the Nevis diggings and to the Nevis settlements.  
In the Nevis the road through the gorge follows much the same route as the first wagon track and still suffers from problems of slips and washouts.  
The way out of the Upper Nevis Valley to the south involves climbing to 1100m and follows the original road that was opened in 1891. The road is often blocked by snow. The Southland District Council now closes the road over winter.

### THE NEVIS ROAD TO GARSTON

As an alternative, you might consider a good half-day trip into the Lower Nevis, which can be accessed by an ordinary car during the dry summer months, but you will need to return the way you came over Duffers Saddle. The views are spectacular looking down over Lake Dunstan and the Upper Clutha Valley on the way back.

You should allow a whole day for the full tour from Cromwell through the Nevis to Garston and back to Cromwell via Kingston and Frankton. This is a round trip of some 210kms. You will need to allow plenty of time to enjoy the Nevis section and to negotiate the many fords. Beyond the Lower Nevis and on through the Nevis Gorge, is for 4WD vehicles only as there are many creeks to cross and then further up the valley, there are fords to cross and recross the Nevis River. In winter the road is closed to the Upper Nevis.



The Soper brothers worked the top valley floor in Cumberland Gully by the paddock sluicing method from the early 1900s to 1934. They alternately worked on their farm at Garston for 2 to 3 weeks, and then spent the next 2 to 3 weeks mining, from spring until the early winter frosts each year.

Recent restoration work comes from open excavation mining by L&M in the early 1990s and by Sarginson workings in the mid 1990s.

### 20 THE CLIMB OVER THE HECTOR MOUNTAINS

The climb to 1100m takes you into sub-alpine territory. The view back over the Upper Nevis Valley is quite stunning. Nokomai Valley lies off to the left with Roaring Lion Creek joining the Nevis. The Roaring Lion Creek water race was built and maintained by the Chinese. It can still be seen and was the main water source for the Nokomai workings from the 1900s to the 1940s.

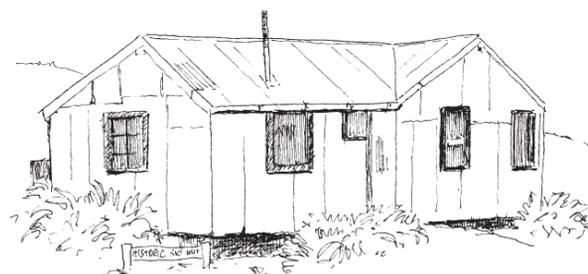
As you descend, the Upper Mataura valley comes into view with the Eyre Mountains to the west. In the distance to the south, lies the Slate Range.

### 21 HISTORIC SKI HUT

The Southland Ski Club had the hut built in three stages. Construction started in 1934, the kitchen was added in 1939 and the bigger bunk room in 1946. The hut was finally able to accommodate 45 persons. In 1950 two of the club members built a 24-bunk hut at Coronet Peak Ski field, where skiing conditions were better and more equipment was available.

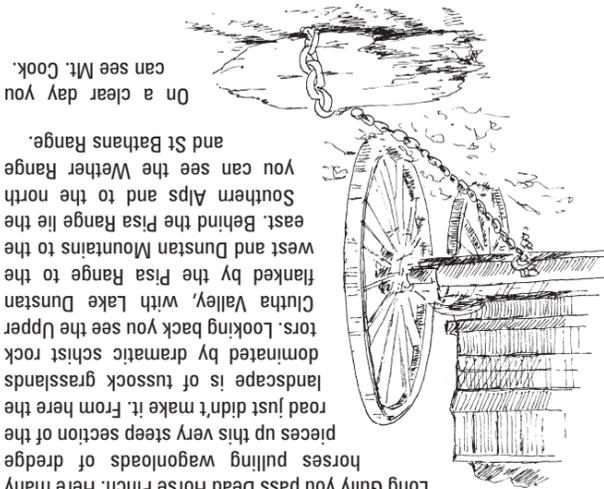
The old hut was sold and became a tramping hut and is used by cross-country skiers in winter. The Department of Conservation now looks after the maintenance and repairs.

For those travelling along the road, the hut makes a good stopover and offers a breathtaking view of the Upper Mataura Valley with a chance of seeing the "Kingston Flyer" on its excursion run.



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On a clear day you can see Mt. Cook.

As you climb the eastern end of the Carrick Range up Long Gully you pass Dead Horse Finch. Here many horses pulling wagonloads of dredge pieces up this very steep section of the road just didn't make it. From here the landscape is of tussock grasslands dominated by dramatic schist rock tors. Looking back you see the Upper Clutha Valley, with Lake Dunstan flanked by the Pisa Range to the west and Dunstan Mountains to the east. Behind the Pisa Range lie the Southern Alps and to the north you can see the Wether Range and St Bathans Range.

### 2 THE HILL CLIMB – VIEWS LOOKING BACK TO CROMWELL

Some of those rocks were used in the building of this woolshed. rock was discarded.

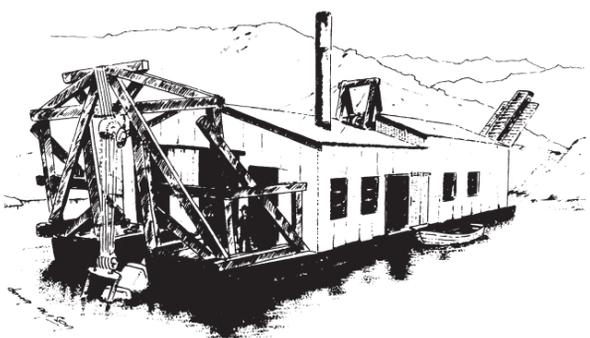
When the early wagons and then later the first motor vehicles descended the steep hill down to the Bannockburn Road, they attached a large flat schist rock at the end of a steel chain to act as a brake on the steep descent. When they reached the bottom, the road just didn't make it. From here the landscape is of tussock grasslands dominated by dramatic schist rock tors. Looking back you see the Upper Clutha Valley, with Lake Dunstan flanked by the Pisa Range to the west and Dunstan Mountains to the east. Behind the Pisa Range lie the Southern Alps and to the north you can see the Wether Range and St Bathans Range.

The first at The Crossing and the second before the settlements grew, both in the Lower Nevis. Today the valley is almost deserted. One family runs the Ben Nevis Station and the former run-holder at Ben Nevis has moved across the valley to a new home on Craigroy Station. The long established tradition of the Adie family is still evident, back in residence at the Nevis Settlement.

In the nineteenth century it was settled first by the pastoral farmers in the late 1850s and then by the miners in the early 1860s. Two small settlements grew, both in the Lower Nevis.

The early Maori used the valley, both as a trail route and for moa hunting. They named the valley *Te Papapuni* some 650 years ago after a person but today the meaning has changed to camping place - Papa puni.

### EARLY HISTORY



### 16 THE LAST BIG DREDGING VENTURE

In 1925 the electricity powered "Earnsclough No 3" ceased dredging on the Earnsclough Flats when the Company went into liquidation. The Upper Nevis Dredge Co was formed in 1926 and purchased this very large dredge, had it dismantled, transported over the Carrick Range and into the Upper Nevis where it was again assembled and put back into operation early in 1928. The dredge was not very successful. Working on a cast iron bottom the dredge had great difficulty in getting any quantity of material to pass through the dredge. The electric power plant was converted to diesel in 1934 but the returns were no better. In 1936, while the company was looking for a buyer, the dredge sank in its pond in the very severe 1937 winter weather. The dredge was broken up and sold off to various buyers.

### 17 CAMERONS GULLY - HYDRAULIC ELEVATING HOLE

The pond here was the result of a hole created by the Williamson's party from hydraulic elevation workings between 1930 and 1948. The stone remains by the pond were the huts built and used by the Williamson party.

### 18 DRUMMOND CREEK - PAST & PRESENT

There are old ground sluice workings along the gully sides with more recent open cast strip mining by L&M higher up the creek valley. Close to the Nevis Road, the gully has recently been re-worked.

### 19 TOP OF THE NEVIS VALLEY

Running along, above and parallel to the road as the valley narrows, lies the widest and longest race in the Nevis. It was built by the Pactolus (Pac Tolas) Company in 1893 for their claim just south of Bailey's Hill. It was not a very successful venture, and finally failed in 1898.





### 3 CARRICK WATER RACE - 1872-1884

The Carrick Water Race starts high up in the Old Woman Range near the head of Coal Creek. The race first supplied water in 1875 to the Young Australian battery and to parts of the Bannockburn sluicing claims early 1877. The race was finally completed in 1884. The ownership of the race early in the 1900s was transferred to the Bannockburn settlers who then, and still today, use it for irrigation purposes.

### 4 SUMMIT STOP AT THE SADDLE — 1300m

Your journey continues through "The Cutting", which regularly closes in winter due to snow and then on to the highest maintained mountain pass road in NZ. To the southeast stretches the Old Woman Range and the Garvie Mountains, to the west, the Carrick Range. Behind the two big rocks, "The Two Sisters" are The Remarkables. Double Cone (2319m) dominates the skyline with the Hector Mountains to the south.

### 5 DOWN HILL STOP

Here is a panoramic view of the Lower Nevis Valley and of the Nevis River nestling within a spectacular tor-dotted tussock landscape.

The valley consists of two sections - each about 6km long separated by a 4km gorge, the Lower Nevis at about 700m and the Upper Nevis at about 900m above sea level.

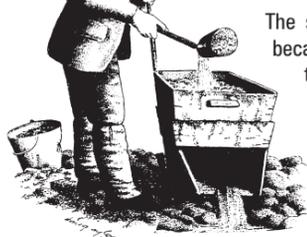
The small cluster of buildings close to the Nevis River is Ben Nevis Station. Above is Ben Nevis and at 2234m it is the highest peak on the Hector Mountains. Clumps of trees mark signs of settlements.

Further down is the Steep Pinch which like Dead Horse Pinch today, is a reminder of what it was like in the early 1900s.

### 6 THE CROSSING SETTLEMENT 1863-1900s

It was John Potter who first discovered gold in the Nevis. In October 1862 after leaving the Dunstan diggings he tried panning whenever he stopped on his way south to the Nokomai diggings.

His first find, now named after him, was at Potters No 1 Creek. Here the creek drops from the range crest down to the Nevis River below the crossing. A small settlement soon grew here but as the 1863 winter approached, prospectors found signs of gold in the Nevis River and its creeks close to where the present Nevis Bridge is today.



The settlement which grew up here became known as Nevis Crossing — the name by which it is still known today.

A small cluster of buildings, including three hotels, soon spread from the river a short distance along the valley floor road. All that is left of any of

the early commercial buildings is the wall of the old "Nevis Crossing Hotel" next to the cattle yards. An interesting cluster of little stone walls is from huts from a later period (about 1890s,) which can be found amongst the trees opposite, on the east bank of the Nevis River.

Coal found nearby was of great benefit to the early miners and was later essential for the dredging operations in the 1890s and early 1900s.

The present bridge location dates from 1904. The original bridge was another 200m upstream and was swept away, not by floods but by big sheets of floating ice. These took out the bridge when the Nevis River thawed after the river froze in the winter of 1903.

### 7 MINING OF THE LOWER NEVIS

The 1866 flood destroyed all evidence from the first mining period of the 1860s, but an interesting story of the evolution of alluvial gold mining methods is preserved in the workings on the valley floor of the Lower Nevis. These include the remains of paddocking, various sluicing methods and the dredging which was carried out from 1898 to 1939.

The dredging industry peaked in 1902-1903 with no less than six dredges working. The longest working dredge in all of Otago and Southland was the small "Nevis Crossing Dredge" which started operating in 1900 and was finally laid up in 1939. Its few remains can still be seen near the junction of Schoolhouse Creek and the Nevis River.

Other dredges which left their trails of tailings along the river terraces including "Success" which was later to become "Crew No. 1", "Ngapara No. 2" and "Ngapara No. 3", worked up stream by the town settlement. Other dredges in the



Lower Nevis included the "Carrick" which was later shifted to the Upper Nevis and renamed "Crew No. 2" and "Mrs. Silks" dredge which later became the "The New Era".

Dredging was impossible in this high, cold valley in the winter months. Not only did the ponds freeze but the Nevis River also froze in most winters and the ground became too hard for the dredge buckets to be able to be worked. The races which carried the water essential for sluicing, also froze especially in the Upper Nevis where it was, of course, higher and colder.

The last of the old-time miners, the McLean Brothers, finished working in the early 1950s, but recently modern mining has been carried out in Whittens Creek, Drummond Creek and on the Lower Nevis Flats opposite Schoolhouse Flat.

At its peak in 1866 there was a population of some 600. Most of these were in the Lower Nevis with the Chinese out - numbering the European population by the late 1860s.

In the 1870s there were an estimated 300 Chinese working the Nevis area with their own shop which was reportedly somewhere south of the Nevis Settlement.

### 8 SCHOOLHOUSE FLAT

Beside Stewarts Creek or Schoolhouse Creek, there was first a Maori camp and then later in the early 1900s, a camp for those that worked on the "Nevis Crossing" dredge.

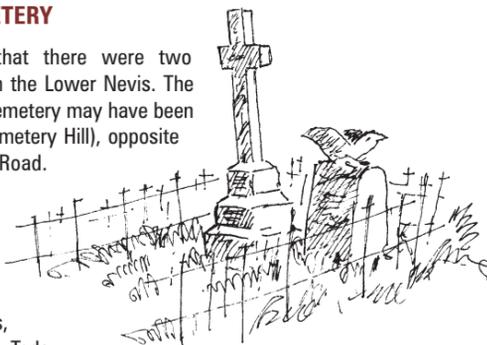
The Nevis School and the teacher's house were originally at a mid way spot between The Crossing and the Nevis settlement between 1874-1913. This School building was later shifted on to Carrick Station and can now be seen on the opposite (East) side of the Nevis River.

Bald Hill (Cemetery Hill) which lies close by the river, on Schoolhouse Flat, acted as the Grandstand for the irregular horse race meetings. The first meeting held was in 1866, and the last meeting was in 1912.

### 9 NEVIS CEMETERY

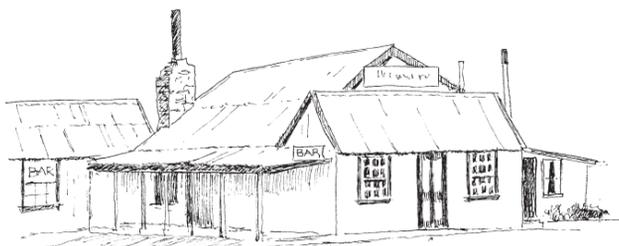
It is believed that there were two cemetery sites in the Lower Nevis. The site of the first cemetery may have been at Round Hill (Cemetery Hill), opposite the Cemetery Road.

The present cemetery dates from the 1890s and is believed to have had some 40 graves, including Chinese. Today there are only a few marked tombstones, including those of Stewart, Graham and McLean.



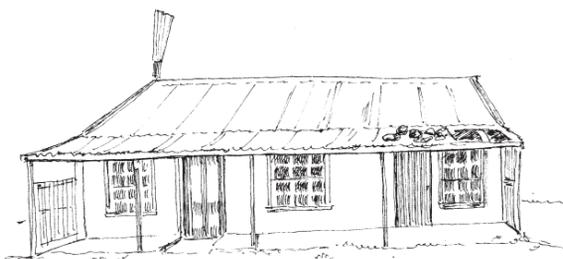
### 10 LOWER NEVIS SETTLEMENT — 1863-1953

This was the main town in the valley, though today less than half of the town area remains. The southern area was destroyed in the early 1900s as a result of dredging operations.



Like most hotels, the first hotel was burnt down, and was rebuilt in 1885 and later became Elliotts Nevis Hotel. This was also destroyed by fire in 1917.

Master's old home, about a kilometre north from the old site, was bought and converted into a public-house by Johnny Williams in 1919. Additions included the former bakery and the store. The small manual telephone exchange was there in 1904. The town also had its own hall, and a school from 1914 to 1920 which was burned down. An old home became the school until it closed in 1930, but was reopened again in 1951. There was also a library dating from 1870, and many miners cottages and homesteads.



All these have gone except the ruins of the hotel and store, an earth and corrugated iron homestead, believed to have been built by William Masters, situated opposite the road to the cemetery, and the 1903 wooden and corrugated iron homestead which the Adie family still owns. Adie's claim lies on the slopes behind the homestead.

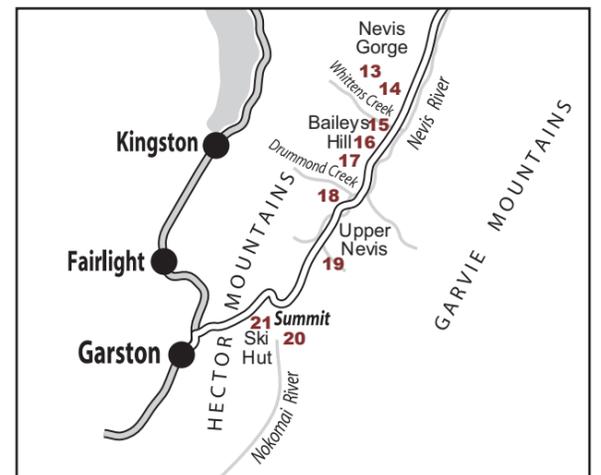
### 11 COMMISSIONERS CREEK — THE FIRST FORD

Commissioners Creek was the source of many water races. Coming out of the gorge on the lower hillside are five races. The lower races

provide low pressure for ground sluicing while the higher races were either for hydraulic sluicing or hydraulic elevation sluicing. This last method was used from the late 1880s to 1890s. The higher the race is the more lift it provides to remove the sludge from the hole as it gets deeper.

### 12 THE GORGE

The stacked stone at the entrance to the gorge was a major Chinese working claim. All through the gorge are more signs of both Chinese and European workings and the occasional stone remains of huts.



### 13 UPPER NEVIS MINING

Again, like the Lower Nevis, evidence of all the various mining techniques have survived - various sluicing methods, dredging - the tailings mainly from "Crew No 2", and the "Upper Nevis Dredge" (former "Earnsclough No 3"), tunneling and as well, modern strip excavating mining. The river flats have either been worked by dredge or by hydraulic elevation, while the lower hill slopes on the true left have been sculpted by the sluicing gun.

### 14 WHITTENS

Whittens Creek is the first creek to cross above the gorge. In 1898, it was the scene of the battle between the Upper Nevis miners and the Chinese miners. The Chinese had been forced off their Lower Nevis claims by the dredging companies and were looking for new territory to work, but they were driven back.

The sluicing scars and the ponds from hydraulic elevation nearby, are those of the Jones' claim worked between 1906 and 1939, while the tailings are from the "Crew No 2", which dredged right down to near Bailey's Hill. In the 1990s there were two open excavation mining operations using a floating recovery plant working the creek valley. L&M Mining worked in the early 1990s and then Terry Holland was a one-person operation, working at the lower end in the mid 1990s.



### 15 BAILLIE'S OR BAILEY'S HILL

The hill was named after one of the first miners, John Bailey.

Evidence of early sluicing, characterized by its distinctive red wash, shows quite dramatically along the river facing slopes.

At the northern foot of Bailey's Hill, beside Whittens Creek lies the stone ruins and stables of the former 1880s "Loch Linnhe" homestead. The run holder abandoned the homestead after a new homestead was built near Kingston. However, miners and dredge workers regularly used the building when working this area. The McLean family last used the building in the late 1940s when they worked a sluicing claim on the southern hill terrace slopes further up Whittens Gully.

Just a short distance up from the homestead and in good repair, is an excellent example of an old stone hut. This is the former O'Connell home, which was later used as a mustering hut. Recorded on the ceiling are the names of the yearly mustering gangs.

On the south side of Bailey's Hill was the McLean's claim of the 1960s. Here they tunnelled some 27metres down into the hill to get down to the old riverbed. In the end they abandoned the work due to the constant seepage and freezing conditions. Power for the electric machinery came along power lines they had installed themselves from their own hydro-electric generating plant some distance away.

