



NEWSLETTER 3

CABIN FEVER



Jim Robie

How quickly our lives have changed from “Steady as she Goes” to uncharted territory with Covid19 sending our world into turmoil. Cabin Fever doesn't sound so bad when we are now in the Wild Rapids of life and death.

It is only 2 ½ weeks ago that Peter and I attended a funeral in the drowsy, bee filled glade of an orchard garden at Earnscleugh where a crowd of us farewelled the late Southlander, Jim Robie. We sat outside under tall spreading apricot trees and shady ornamentals, remembering the life of this Southland woodturner who turned bits of old root and tree trunks into works of art. Peter recalled how Jim asked him one day if he knew of any good native timber pieces which might be suitable to send to a lady customer in Japan. Peter showed him a knotty stump of Matai which he had retrieved from the old Waihopai River bed in our farm at Rosedale. Jim took it away, scraped out the bits of river gravel and sediment embedded in it and lovingly polished it, oiled and trimmed it until it was fit for display in the lavish home of the Japanese industrialist who shared an appreciation of beautiful pieces with his wife.

A year or two later Jim rang to say the Japanese lady had contacted him and asked if she could come and see where the matai had come from so she visited Rosedale and the Waihopai River and also took a walk in Thompson's Bush where there are good specimens of matai still growing next to our paddock.

After Jim's service (which was celebrated by David Ramsay, son of Wattie and Alison who, incidentally, had built a house on the edge of our garden – where David and his new bride lived for 6 months after the Southland floods) we all enjoyed cheese rolls and a glass or two of wine. There was a contingent of octogenarians like John Bath and John Matheson and they remembered that when Peter started as a 5 year old at North School, the teacher asked if anyone knew him, and little Jimmy in the front row put up his hand and said “I do”. They all ended up first at McGlashan and then at SBHS together.

Anyway I thought of Jim again this week as I drove along the Tiwai Road to take some lunch to Peter who was toiling away picking up sticks in a peaty block nearby. He had written an article about Jim for the “Tiwai Pointer” back in 1990 because Jim was long ago employed by Wilkins and Davies as Project Manager for building the Tiwai Road across the peat and it had to be built to last in that unstable footing.

The previous Awarua Bay Road ran from Motu Rimu Road to Awarua Bay. It had been surveyed before the turn of the 19th Century and was built for horse and dray and used mostly for delivering milk the 20km to Invercargill each day, along with a load of firewood. That ended in the depression of the 1930s and apart from some gravel topping, this little narrow road which was barely 3m wide with manuka and flax nearly brushing the vehicles - was used to service the handful of cribs built down there and the little yacht club.

Jim commissioned local farmers to supply vast quantities of manuka sticks which never rot in acid soil, tied in bundles to lay across the swampy ground as a footing and stabiliser before all the gravels and other materials went on, finally being tarsealed. It is a credit to him that the road has stayed firm and relatively intact all these years later. It has had to carry 1000 vehicle axles every day and support millions of tonnes of fully laden vehicles as they thunder along the road. Three local gravel pits supplied the road construction including one which was right in the centre line of the bridge to be built across the tidal inlet, and they used that patch of gravel to launch a jig to build the first bridge span. The rock was quarried at Greenhills while Tiwai Point itself is on incredibly hard and sharp argillite (which the Waitaha and/or Ngatimamoe employed their slaves to hone into perfect adzes). Jim said the argillite was so hard and sharp that it tore steel off dozer blades. They went in first with rubber-tyred loaders and it tore the rubber to shreds. So tyres were covered in chain to give some protection. He agreed that completing the road was quite an achievement, in the time it was done, where it was done and how it was done.

(Incidentally a few years ago whilst doing a beach cleanup which Lloyd Esler had organised on the Awarua shore of Bluff Harbour I found an adze tooled from argillite, embedded in the beach sediments and mud near where a little stream came out of the peat. Something made me stop and pull the rough haft up and lo and behold there was the beautiful adze which I returned to Estelle Leask for recording and local display). Tracker Black who was in our group said – you don't find it – it finds you!

So I thought of all this today when I drove across the Tiwai Bridge and had a paddle in the water below the bridge. Time moves on.....

Liz Cruickshank

The Bank that Broderick Built

Our Historian and member Lynley Dear has kindly agreed for Cabin Fever to print her poem "The Bank that Broderick Built".

Architect Cuthbert Brodrick's fine Bank is of course, located on the NE corner of Tay and Dee Streets and it is (thankfully) to be retained in our ICC redevelopment.

Lynley says Broderick attended SBHS as a first day pupil in 1881. He also designed the Grand Hotel and Alexandra Building.

Lynley discovered that our Cuthbert Broderick was the namesake of his English relative, Cuthbert Broderick who was also an architect, designing the Leeds Town Hall which was built between 1853 and 1858. It was for a very long time the tallest commercial building in England, opened by Queen Victoria and 400,000 people attended the opening!

THE BANK THAT BRODRICK BUILT

Broderick's Bank



This is the place that Kelly chose
to build his hut against the bush
that soon was cleared for the town's first shop
that then gave way to the town's first Bank
that in the year of nineteen four
became **the Bank that Brodrick built.**

This is the corner columned and curved
that felt the roaring forties blast
yet saw our forebears photographed
by Elmwood Studio's Stuart Geange
who snapped **the Bank that Brodrick built.**

This is the Trooper's Monument
which gazes over to the Bank
that was left behind in the 'progress' rush.
And this is the pigeon with his flock
who perched and pooped on the parapets,
besmirched **the Bank that Brodrick built.**

Then came the Vibrant City crowd,
Historic Places and City Friends
who cared enough to save this place,
who found the funds and spread the word,
who made the plans and formed the Trust
to save **the Bank that Brodrick built . . .**

And then came another century,
a second chance for the city's heart
to beat once more 'tween Tay and Dee
around **the Bank that Brodrick built.**

Lynley Dear

Leeds Town Hall



Scuttling the Tug Awarua.

Many of you may remember the old Bluff Tug Awarua which first entered these waters in 1932. At 1326 on 19th December 1989 the hulk of the Awarua was scuttled in Foveaux Strait just a few weeks over 57 years since she first arrived. Why am I so precise about the time, well I was in charge of the operation. She was sunk close to Breaksea Island.

She was born on the River Clyde at the Renfrew yard of Lobnitz & Co. powered by two triple expansion steam reciprocating engines totalling 1200hp the Awarua was the most powerful Tug in New Zealand when new. (One of the engines can be seen in the Bluff Maritime Museum).

The advent of the port's second Voith Schneider Tug Monowai in 1973 resulted in the Awarua being offered for sale. She was towed to Breaksea Sound for use as a base for fishing and Deer recovery operations in 1975 and was renamed Kiore One.

She returned to Bluff in 1988 under tow of Bluff Tug Hauroko and again I was in charge of the safe tow back "home".

The owner Tim Wallace was looking at doing some repairs and changes to the vessel but costs and requirements of the marine department brought these to a halt and the Tug was handed over to the Southland Skindiving Club who, with the assistance of the Port Company prepared the hulk for scuttling and it remains a useful asset. After acting as a harbour and salvage Tug, pilot vessel, Stewart Island Ferry and deer and fishing base she will be a diving attraction.

It was and is her final role.

John Henderson

The grounding of Meridian 1

On the afternoon of 15th December 1998 the Ukrainian trawler Meridian 1 went aground on anchor ridge in the approaches to Bluff Harbour. Anyone who knows the ridge would know that even in calm weather the swell tends to break in the area and on that day it was not calm.

Her situation was not good as the Meridian 1 had grounded on a falling tide and the reduction in stability caused by being aground was allowing her to fall heavily from side to side. As the tide continued to fall her stability continued to deteriorate and the possibility of her capsizing seemed very real.

In my role as Operations Manager and Chief Pilot I without hesitation together with the duty pilot got both Harbour tugs operational and reached the scene within the hour. The Master of the trawler was offered assistance by use of a Lloyds Open Form which means no cure no pay. If successful in the operation the salvager would be payed a value including the vessel and cargo.

After some time and some "hairy" moments we finally managed to save the ship and cargo and tow the vessel into Bluff.

Whilst from a legal point of view the Lloyds Open Form stood we were advised that it could take years of legal arguments and we accepted a substantial settlement which went to the Port Company. (Nothing to myself or the crew!)

Ironically at the time of grounding the Meridian 1 was off Bluff for repairs to her electronic navigation systems.

John Henderson

U3A Wakatipu

Robin Webb has drawn my attention to: <https://u3awakatipu.org/>

It is worth a look with many options on how to fill your time.

Walkways

Liz has been in touch with local authorities and drawing their attention to the number of gates you have to open and close on popular walkways around the city. Some have already been tied open by locals who have recognised the "touch contact risk" to be avoided by doing this. If you come across gates that do not have to closed for good reason, at the moment, please follow Liz's lead and alert the authorities.

Touch is key to unlocking Covid.

Daniel