

## Lincoln and Districts Historical Society, Inc.,

### Kaituna Valley

by Geraldine Parkinson (nee Gebbie)

*Transcription of Talk to Lincoln & Districts Historical Society on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2007*

The Kaituna Valley is a very beautiful valley several miles long and where Pat and I lived at *Rockwood* – the house was 600 feet above sea level and the top of the farm was 2,600 feet. We were six miles from the main Akaroa highway.

William and George Rhodes bought the 25,000 acre Kaituna Run in 1847, but didn't receive the title until 1852. They bought the Purau Run from the Greenwoods in 1847 as well.

Thomas Hodgson Parkinson, born in Lancashire, came to New Zealand from Australia in 1855 and to Kaituna in 1856 as manager of the Kaituna Run, soon buying blocks of land from the Rhodes Brothers, firstly the Homestead Block then ?? sections which were mostly 20 acre blocks. John Bevins was also buying up the freehold land in Kaituna by the 1850s and 60s. T. H. Parkinson was involved in sawmilling and flour milling and in the cocksfooting industry. He also owned a butcher's shop in Lyttelton, which he supplied with sheep and beef from Kaituna. These would have been driven over the hill by the Sign of the Packhorse, one of Mr Henry Ell's chain of rest spots on the Sumner Road. The others being the Sign of the Takahe, the Sign of the Kiwi and the Sign of the Bellbird, and then the Sign of the Packhorse.

In 1858, T.H. Parkinson, then aged 37 years married 18 year old Mary Anne McKinnon at Mr. William Birdling's house on Waikaki Station at Birdlings Flat. They had 15 children. They lived where the Kaituna homestead, built by their son, Walter Parkinson, now stands. It was built in stages. He also built Park Hill at the foot of Gebbies Valley for his wife.

It was a wonderful life living and farming in the Kaituna Valley, full of challenges from the weather, very quiet and peaceful, with quail on the lawn, native pigeons, bellbirds, fantails everywhere. At our end of the valley the hills were very steep, Rockwood having been cut out of the hill and the valley floor very narrow with only the river and the road and a narrow strip of land, so you can imagine what the watershed was like. Fifty inches was our average rainfall and one really wet year we had seventy inches. The Kaituna river becomes a raging torrent in a flood with boulders thundering down with the force of the water.

One year three slips came down to the back side of the house taking one picket fence by the front gate with it. That flood put 18 inches on top of the tennis court so that was the end of that sadly.

Another year after the Kaituna Gymkhana, we were having some friends for a BBQ. It started to rain about BBQ time so I realized I would have to cook the meal inside on the conventional stove which was fine for a while until the power went off. It stayed off for three days that time. Luckily for me our four teenaged guests

cooked outside under umbrellas so hopefully that was part of an experience for them. We never had another BBQ. We had six inches of rain that night.

We were no strangers to snowfalls, but 1992 was a particularly bad one with 30 to 40 feet drifts in the gullies. A lot of sheep were lost and some rescued ones suffered from snow blindness.

American Servicemen came out to help to snow rake, complete with marvellous clothing and equipment and also brought their own food which was a great help to we poor soup and scone makers.

The valley could be very cold, we got the sun at 10.25am on the shortest day and lost it at 3.25pm and it could also be terribly hot, stifling in fact. Occasionally we would take our evening meal to Charteris Bay and set it on the rocks where the boat ramp is, to get a little bit of sea breeze.

The Kaituna Homestead was the hub of the District. There was always a party on New Year's Eve with music mostly supplied by the Misses Waugh, Mrs Walter Parkinson, Annie Currie was a Waugh from Australia, so they were her cousins. Marewa Parkinson<sup>1</sup>, the only child of Walter Parkinson, married I.L.M. Coop (Leonard) and was Dominion President of W.D.F.F. so we all got conscripted into helping with garden parties and entertaining A.C.W.W members (Associated Country Women of the World). Auntie Morewa was very enthusiastic and at 4'11" seemed to manage to get the district running around in circles. Later she married Graham Jamieson, 6'3" and together they toured the world, although she had done that almost all her life and couldn't understand why we all didn't travel too, the small fact of needing money to travel and being responsible for the care of our sheep and cattle, shearing, lambing, tailing etc., didn't enter her head.<sup>2</sup>

The Government Reserve at the head of the Valley was sold and given to the Crown by Mr Walter Parkinson. He sold 150 acres and gave 90 acres.

Marewa Jamieson wanted to leave the Kaituna Homestead to the Historic Places Trust for it to be open to the Public, but they decided the upkeep and running expenses<sup>3</sup> would be too expensive so eventually the Parkinson Memorial Park Trust decided to use the interest from the sale of the land for the preservation of historic buildings on Banks Peninsula. We have just helped with the restoration of the Time Ball Station in Lyttelton, a very worthwhile project.

We have the lists of the housemaids' duties at the homestead and you will see the housework was very thorough.

Marewa Parkinson was presented at Court at Buckingham Palace on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1926 at 9.30pm. Ladies to wear court dress with feathers and trains.<sup>4</sup>

We had our paper, mail, bread and milk delivered by Rural Delivery 6 days a week, but when we were first married the Motukarara Store delivered our groceries twice a week, collecting our orders and delivering on Monday and Thursdays. Talk about spoilt?

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<sup>1</sup> Marewa Agnes Waugh Parkinson, b. c. 1900

<sup>2</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP19810722.2.120.1> Kaituna's pioneer Homestead

<sup>3</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP19821023.2.55> Kaituna homestead sold

<sup>4</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP19260821.2.9> At the Palace New Zealanders presented

Terry O'Brien visited us all every few months with all items of clothing, ?, coats, boots, gumboots, sheets, towels etc. He was a real character and usually had lunch or dinner with us when he came, always hopping up and down every time I got up to go to the kitchen for something.

Mustering was often a problem as the weather really did rule our lives, we couldn't muster if low cloud covered the top of the hills, 13 steps up to the fowl house, top clothes line and dog kennels.

The orchard was across the creek and a bit of a climb on the other side. The tractor and trailer went across to pick the apples and bring them home.

In later years we had cannabis growers to contend with. The police would fly in by helicopter and we got very good at reading car number plates.

When my mother was young, several families in the district would picnic in the Kaituna Bush, boiling their potatoes and peas in kerosene tins and one Christmas Day there was a large earthquake.

My Grandfather had a C.Y.C. camp out on the lake paddock with a garden party and Army Band on the croquet lawns at *Graylees*.

Pat and I loved the school holidays when our young relations came home from boarding school as eeling was always on the programme. Rotten eggs were very good eel bait as long as they made it to the stream and we didn't have an accident on the way!

After all the floods, snow falls, minor car accidents, the Wahine Storm, the big August wind, when tussocks were blown out of the ground and all the other character building experiences and challenges, life in Lincoln seems very sedate, but I do want to thank the Lincoln Historic Society for helping me to learn about this area and to settle into my new way of life in Lincoln.

Geraldine Parkinson, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2007