

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name : CORONET PEAK

Lease number : PO 195

Conservation Resources Report - Part 4

As part of the process of Tenure Review, advice on significant inherent values within the pastoral lease is provided by Department of Conservation officials in the form of a Conservation Resources Report. This report is the result of outdoor survey and inspection. It is a key piece of information for the development of a preliminary consultation document.

Note: Plans which form part of the Conservation Resources Report are published separately.

These documents are all released under the Official information Act 1982.

January 06



Fig. 1. Coronet Peak Station covers more than 20,000ha, most of which is mountainous with serious limitations for sustainable pastoral use. Its landscape, natural and historic values are on the other hand, very high. This means that it ranks very highly as a recreational area. This is particularly important because of its location close to Queenstown which is increasingly being recognised as the adventure capital of NZ. This aerial view is looking over Big Hill and up the Arrow River towards Macetown.



Fig. 2. Coronet Peak Station stretches from the Arrow River in the east, over the Harris Mountains and down to the Shotover River in the west. The Harris Mountains form the backbone of the property and include most of its highest points. These include Mt Hyde (2,056m), and Mt St Just (1,729m) which can be seen along the crest of the Mountain Range which forms the skyline in this view from Skippers township.



Fig. 3. A large party of visitors starting out on the very scenic, historically fascinating and exciting trip to Skippers. This party, which included the late Arthur Borrell of 'The Branches' at the head of the valley, are enjoying the view down Long Gully towards the well-known 'Lighthouse rock' with Advance Peak towering over Macetown in the distance. All these features combine to give the area an international reputation, and possible future recognition as National Park.



Fig. 4. The dramatic Skippers Road climbs along the steep-sided gorge of the scenic Shotover River. Although now colonised by many exotic shrubs and trees like briar, sycamore, pine and larch, the lower slopes are also host to many historic relics and a few old cottages, some of which are still in use as holiday cribs. Because of their heritage values, and the increasing public interest in heritage, the strip between the road and river should be protected as an Historic Reserve.



Fig. 5. Trampers descending from the summit of Advance Peak. These people have been enjoying magnificent 360 degree views including the distant Harris Mountains and exploring the remains of mile-high goldmines situated high on these slopes above Macetown. Although OK for today's well equipped trampers, the conditions would have been extreme for the nineteenth century miners who sought their fortunes in the mountains and valleys of Central Otago.



Fig. 6. These trampers take a break to enjoy the scenery at the junction of the Big Hill and Sawpit Gully tracks. Big Hill was originally the only route into Macetown until the road was pushed up the gorge. Big Hill is now a recognised Walkway which, together with the Arrow River Road makes an excellent round trip for walkers and mountain bike enthusiasts.



Fig. 7. Visitors come to Skippers Canyon for many reasons, the newest of which is to see locations used in the filming in the epic "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. The site used to depict the 'Ford of Bruinen' is situated in a very narrow part of the canyon just below Skippers township. While pine and briar might be acceptable in a film location they pose problems for pastoral use and are an ecological threat as 'woody weeds'. Other woody plants such as matagouri, also indicate potential for ecological restoration.

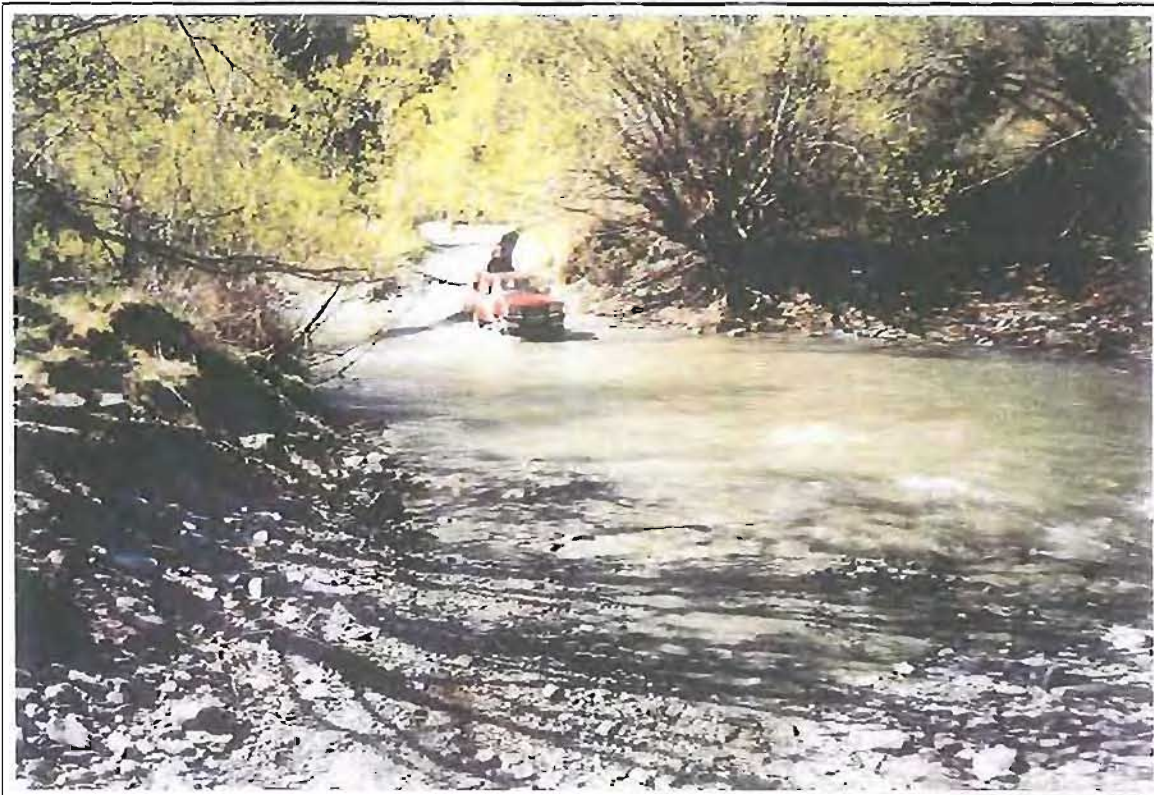


Fig. 8. Both Skippers and Macetown can now be reached easily by 4WD vehicles and while this might be good in allowing a wider range, and increasing numbers of visitors to experience these places, it is not without its environmental problems. The Arrow Road has many fords which are sometimes passable and sometimes not, while other parts of the road and particularly areas around Macetown are susceptible to abuse.



Fig. 9. This view shows trampers approaching Lochnagar, which is one of many compelling recreational destinations beyond the northern boundary of Coronet Peak Station. The lake was formed when a massive landslide blocked the upper valley of Lake Creek by creating the huge dam these trampers are crossing to reach the hut which is situated on The Branches Station.



Fig. 10. Coronet Peak Station provides several links to important recreational routes beyond its boundaries. This view from above Shotover Saddle is looking down the Tunnel Burn to the Shotover. This route provides access to Mount Aspiring National Park, to which parts of The Branches and Coronet Peak Stations should be added at some time in the future. Tenure review can lay the foundations for such developments.



Fig. 11. The Polnoon Burn marks the northern boundary of Coronet Peak Station and offers a route to the Polnoon Hut and Sharks Tooth, a prominent and well known feature of the Matukituki valley. The Polnoon is also known for the diversion tunnel put in by optimistic miners seeking alluvial gold in the lower reaches of the creek bed. It is therefore a place worth visiting for its historical curiosity as well as the spectacle of an entire creek disappearing into a hole in the hillside.



Fig. 12. Most of the land below about 1,000m on Coronet Peak Station lies in steep-sided gorges. Although classified LUC Class VI, with medium limitations for pastoral use, these gorges are often infested with briar and other 'woody weeds' which are a real problem for farming and threaten the natural character of the landscape. Farming under covenant may be the solution for some of this land, so long as rigorous conditions are imposed, monitored and enforced.



Fig. 13. This view, looking down from Skytown to Macetown, shows some of the very extensive LUC Class Vile lands which are largely tussock and rock and have serious problems of actual or potential erosion. It is unlikely that such lands can be managed in a way that is ecologically sustainable and they should instead be considered for their high natural, landscape, recreational and historic values.



Fig. 14. Observations made during a recent inspection indicate that recently quite extensive work has been done on the felling and spraying of exotic trees. Wilding tree control should be a requirement of any new land holder following tenure review, whether that be the current lessee or DOC.



Fig. 15. Old routes still present today as 'paper roads' are important for at least two reasons: they link the past with the present for today's recreational users and add historical interest to the wonders of the natural landscape. Here a trumper on the summit of Advance Peak contemplates the old high level route along the ridge crest towards Vanguard Peak.



Fig. 16. Andersons stamping battery at Macetown is among the better known and more frequently visited historic remains of the goldmining era. The battery is situated within the existing small Historic Reserve which includes the township and a narrow strip up the Rich Burn. There are however, many more remote remains which could be included in a much enlarged reserve as an outcome of tenure review.



Fig. 17. The existing Reserve does include the beautifully restored Homeward Bound battery with its huge wooden hopper which fed gold-bearing ore into the crusher. The site is only about a half-hour walk from Macetown but is very close to the upper limit of the Reserve. Even the remains of the cableway which brought the ore down from the mine is excluded from the existing reserve.



Fig. 18. Further up the Rich Burn, at the junction with Sawyers Creek can be found the remains of the Premier battery and the associated cyanide vats which are illustrated here. In another tributary (Sylvia Creek) lie the remains of the All Nations and United Goldfields batteries. None of these historic sites are within the existing reserve which should be extended, through tenure review, to include all goldmining relics in the area.



Fig. 19. The former cableway which transported the gold-bearing ore from the mine high above the valley to the Homeward Bound battery in the Rich Burn is worth exploring to understand the lengths to which the miners would go to win their riches.



Fig. 20. Perhaps even more dramatic was the cableway at Skytown. Here a tramper stands at the top station near Skytown and looks down to Macetown. Exploration of this site makes a demanding but interesting and rewarding day trip.



Fig. 21. The exotic trees around the township at Macetown are out of character with many of the natural values of the area but they do provide a splash of colour in autumn. So long as they are contained within the township they may be acceptable and certainly provide some pleasant sheltered camping on the flats beside the Arrow River.



Fig. 22. Shelter of a very different, but equally necessary kind was provided by the early stone cottages built in the nineteenth century. Some of these remain as relics of the past while some are still in use as holiday cribs. Trampers are seen here visiting Strohler's Cottage in the Shotover.



Fig. 23. Here a group of representatives from several NGOs sit on a terrace near the cemetery at Skippers and discuss the merits of different possible boundaries for the new conservation area on Coronet Peak Station. Their deliberations might even lead to possible new additions to Mount Aspiring National park.



Fig. 24. Consideration has been given to possible boundaries of a new conservation area in the northern part of Coronet Peak Station. The preferred line would run up an unnamed spur, seen here across the Shotover Valley from Skippers township, and thence to Vanguard Peak (partly obscured by cloud) and Malings Peak, before dropping down to the southern boundary of the existing Macetown Historic Reserve.