

1642-1864

## TASMAN SIGHTED THE HOKITIKA

## EARLY EXPLORATION OF THE COAST

## PRIMITIVE MAORI SETTLEMENT IN THE 'FIFTIES

[By W.W.]

On December 13, 1642, two small boats, with high poops and forecastles, appeared off the mouth of the Hokitika river. In the Heemskirk and the Teehaen, Abel Jansen Tasman and his men had set out from Batavia to look for the great Southern Continent, and they were the first white men to sight Hokitika. Judging from his diary, which was lost for 200 years, and only printed by Swart in 1860, Tasman arrived on a West Coast dull day, and it is highly improbable that he saw the highest mountain in Westland which perpetuates his name through the centuries. The explorers saw no sign of life, or smoke to snow occupation, and passed on by Cape Foulwind, and Cape Farewell, to suffer a grievous loss of men who were killed by the Maoris in Golden Bay. Tasman did not land in New Zealand at all, and passed on by Three Kings island, out of our ken.

To most people 1642 is but a school-boys' date, but at that time the Dutch were pre-eminent on the sea, England taking second or third place. King Charles the First still had his head on his shoulders, being besieged in Oxford by the Parliamentarians. The Great Elector ruled in Prussia, Frederick the Great had not seen the light of day. Cardinal Richelieu was supreme in France. Shakespeare had been 26 years in his grave, and Milton had not written "Paradise Lost." The United States was sparsely populated with white men, there being only small settlements in Virginia and New York. These facts show that New Zealand has some little claim to antiquity.

### Cook's Voyage

One hundred and twenty-eight years went by, and another great navigator glimpsed the Hokitika river and passed on. Captain James Cook, on his second voyage in March, 1770, came up the West Coast to Cape Farewell, and then across to Australia. He, too, was unfortunate in the weather, and records unflattering remarks about the appearance of the Coast. Sail along the fringe of the Tasman Sea in un-

prepossessing weather, and note how the flat foreshore is merged into the foothills. Certainly not the most attractive scenery. At this date George III. was King of England, and America was still an English colony.

The years rolled on, and there are no authentic records for 30 years and more. In the latter part of the eighteenth century many vessels sailing from Sydney to the sealing and whaling grounds about the Sounds must have passed by. In 1846 Thomas Brunner and Charles Heaphy were sent out by the Nelson Land Company to report on the country, and after many trials and hardships reached the Arahura, to find no Maoris at the place. Heaphy gives an account of his Magazine of October and November, travels in the New Zealand Monthly 1862, and after a description of the wild and rugged country proceeds as follows with an account of the native settlement at Taramakau.

### Greenstone Workers

"At Taramakau, 18 miles from Kararoa (Karoro), we came upon the chief settlement of the Ngaterarua, or greenstone people, some 40 souls in all; and every man, woman and child indolently engaged in sawing, grinding, or polishing greenstone. Taramakau village was unlike any other native settlement in New Zealand; every house had a chimney, and there being no pigs or other neighbours, fences were unnecessary, and the taris and potatoes grew about and between the houses. That we had at length reached the veritable greenstone country was very evident. Outside the principal house, the chief of the place had laid by a slab of poenamou, out of which he was sawing a mere, when he came to welcome us.

"In another place an old man—too old to move out to meet us—chanted some sort of song of welcome, and kept up a sawing accompaniment. Little children ran about with small pieces of kawa kawa, and brought us smooth pebbles of it as presents; Heitiki—the uncouth figures with red sealing-wax eyes, that are worn hung round the neck, were receiving their last polish; and fragments of greenstone—odd knobs and rejected cross-grained pieces—were lying about the houses, and down the beach, in a way that would have made a Ngapuki crazy could he have beheld it.

"Along the whole extent of the West Coast—from Cape Farewell to Dusky Bay, this is the only Maori community. Some fugitive natives are occa-

sionally to be found about the Sounds south of Milford Haven, and the natives from Arahura make excursions to obtain a peculiar kind of greenstone from near Wakatipu, and may be occasionally seen at Jackson's Bay or Cascades, but there is no other regular village. The people are chiefly a remnant of the Nga-i-tau tribe that formerly occupied the country round Otago and Banks Peninsula, and extended over the island to the West Coast to work the greenstone. The Kauparaha and the Taranaki tribes, with their guns, scattered them in a series of bloody engagements on the East Coast, and afterwards, the Ngaitoa tribe, under other leaders, came down from Massacre Bay, by the coast track that we followed, and defeated them on the west side. But the sight of the poeuamu had a pacifying influence, and before long intermarriages took place; some of the Ngaitoa remaining at Taramakau, and others returning to Cook Strait with a tribute of greenstone meres."

### Increased Interest

In 1847 Brunner again visited the Coast and went south to Hokitika and Okarito. In March, 1857, the brothers Cakes visited Hokitika in the Emerald Isle, coming up by Martin's Bay. The Shipping Register shows an Emerald Isle schooner of 29 tons, built in Auckland in 1854. In October, 1857, Leonard Harper, of Christchurch (whose son, Mr A. P. Harper, is now president of the New Zealand Alpine Club), in company with Mr Locke, came over the Hurunui Saddle with some Maoris. They rafted down the lower portion of the Taramakau, and Mr Harper, accompanied by the chief, Terapuhi, came to Hokitika and south as far as Big Bay Point. The trip took three months—a trip taken for pure love of adventure. The compiler of this article, 30 years later, with the resources of food, and use of ferries for river crossings, walked from Big Bay Point right through Westland, and can thoroughly gauge the discomforts and hardships that attended the trips of the early pioneers.

After journeys of exploration in 1858 and 1859 by James Mackay and John Rockfort, the former, in 1860, set out from Nelson under instructions from Sir George Grey to complete the purchase of the West Coast from the natives, and accompanied by his nephew, Alexander Mackay and Messrs Mackley and Bennett came to Hokitika, and on to Okarito, where the bargain with the Maori chiefs was completed and Westland, excepting various reserves, was bought for 300 sovereigns.

In 1863 Henry Whitcombe, a road surveyor, accompanied by a Swiss, Jacob Lauper, with an inadequate supply of food, came to the mouth of the Hokitika, to find no Maoris there or at the Arahura. Half starved and weakened by exposure, they attempted to cross the Taramakau and Whitcombe was drowned. A monument to his memory stands on the top of the Cemetery hill at Hokitika. From now on, attracted by the gold rumours, the Coast had many visitors. On October 1, 1864, J. R. Hudson and James Price erected the first building in Hokitika on the north side of the river. On December 7, 1864, Captain Leech took the steamer Nelson over the Hokitika bar. It was the christening of Hokitika as a port.

# SCENIC WONDERLAND

## Variety of Attractions in Westland

## LAKES, RIVERS, MOUNTAINS, AND GLACIERS

## Ample Scope for Sportsmen in Many Rivers

For the wealth and variety of its scenic beauty it would be difficult to surpass the West Coast, in any area of the same size and geographic position. The heavy tourist traffic which passes up and down this part of the South Island is proof of this claim. Hokitika can be called the centre of this traffic, and therein lies a good reason for the belief that the town will continue to thrive.

Within easy access of Hokitika are lakes, mountain rivers, and glaciers which form a collection of scenic beauty spots probably unrivalled. There is said to be no glacial region in the world where great rivers of ice come so far down into the area of forest vegetation.

With its mighty rivers, too, the West Coast affords an ideal sporting ground for the angler. Brown trout, rainbow trout, and land-locked quinnat salmon can all be caught in Westland, and it is no wonder that the district annually attracts many overseas sportsmen. Shooting of several species of game can also be added to these attractions, and makes the land a sportsman's paradise.

To the angler Westland presents a variety of rivers and lakes where in he may indulge his hobby. The rivers are of the dashing mountain torrent variety, interspersed with long smooth pools, and the lakes are all more or less densely wooded and may only be fished from a boat. The streams are fairly large, and although there are a good many fly fishermen, the principal method is minnow fishing. This is accounted for by the size of the streams, which do not lend themselves to effective fly fishing, while with the American short rod system of casting, a minnow can be made to cover a great deal more water. This latter system is very effective, and, with a little practice, a cast of 40 yards is quite easy. In clear water it has a decided advantage. The average size of the trout caught on the minnow is two and three pounds, while the fly will get more fish, but usually smaller in size. Brown trout are the principal species inhabiting

all the waters of Westland, but rainbow trout are taken in the southern streams. Land-locked quinnat salmon afford good sport in Lake Kanieri, but they do not grow—or at least have not been caught—weighing more than five pounds.

### Down the Coast

Commencing with the Teremakau river, at the northern boundary of this district, a visitor may literally fish his way right down the coast, down past the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, and then across the Haast Pass into Northern Otago and still get good fishing.

The Teremakau is a splendid trout stream which flows adjacent to the old mining township of Kumara, where accommodation may be obtained. This place was once the scene of great alluvial gold mining activity.

Proceeding southwards, the next stream is the Arahura river. This is about the most heavily stocked

brown trout stream in Westland and suitable to the fly and minnow. This stream was famed for its great deposits of greenstone, so highly prized by the early Maoris. It is quite near to the town of Hokitika. From Hokitika may be fished a number of waters, namely, the Hokitika, Kokatahi and the Styx rivers, and Lakes Kanieri and Mahinapua. In the upper reaches of the Hokitika and Styx rivers, rainbow trout are obtainable, and these species will compare more than favourably with any of their kind in any waters in New Zealand. Their beautiful colouring and excellent fighting qualities are no doubt due to the clear turbulent waters in which they seem to make their habitat.

### Salmon Lake

As before mentioned, Lake Kanieri, with its land-locked quinnat salmon, is one of the most beautiful lakes in Westland, and the introduction of quinnat salmon there was due more to accident than design. These fish average about three pounds and usually put up a good fight. Lake Kanieri is situated about 12 miles from Hokitika, and the only means of access is by road, through some typical West Coast bush scenery. Although the railway extends some 20 miles further south to Ross, Hokitika is the starting place for South Westland. Its population is about 3000, and it presents quite a tidy and clean appearance. In the adjacent country may be seen the relics of the great gold mining days.

From Hokitika, good motor services are available and on the trip south many rivers await selection by the fishermen—the Totara, Mikonui, Big and Little Waitaha, Wanganui, Waitangi, La Fontaine, Wataroa, and several smaller streams, also Lakes Mapourika and Ianthe. All these waters produce brown trout and usually of a heavier variety than in the northern streams. The roads are good, and the accommodation is first class.

## FIRST RIMU RUSH

## COLOURFUL DAYS AT WOODSTOCK

## THOUSANDS DIGGING FOR GOLD

## BIG RETURNS AND HIGH LIFE

When the tourist rushes through the Rimu township to-day in his fast-travelling motor-car or motor-coach, he sees nothing to remind him that Rimu was once a large and flourishing gold-mining town. But Rimu had its day, as the files of old newspapers of the district can testify.

Originally the township was known as Upper Woodstock, which itself, no doubt, derived its name from one of the Waverley novels.