

Kaikoura: Historical Background

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Kaikoura Case Study
Report No.1 /1998



LINCOLN
UNIVERSITY
Te Whare Wānaka O Aoraki



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September 1998

ISSN 1174-670X

**Tourism Research and Education Centre (TREC)
Report No. 1**

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Acknowledgements

Funding for this research was provided by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, as a component of programme LIN602, Planning for Tourism Development in New Zealand.

Summary

This report provides a brief historical introduction to human settlement and endeavour at Kaikoura.

It reviews the myriad factors, both Māori and Pakeha, which establish the context for contemporary patterns of tourism visitation and development.

Historical patterns of settlement, Māori-Pakeha relations, resource extraction and agricultural cycles of growth and decline are described as the enduring themes that lay the foundation for understanding contemporary Kaikoura and its search for new forms of development. While other reports in this series describe in detail Māori, Pakeha, tourists' experiences and impacts of them in Kaikoura, this report provides an essential understanding of the context into, and out of, which recent tourism development has occurred.

Chapter 1

Historical Overview

1.1 Geography

Kaikoura district extends from the Tutaeputaputa or Conway in the south, nearly to the Waima (or Ure) river in the north. The geography is mostly very rugged, with high mountains dropping to a narrow coastal strip. The mountains, the coastline and the Peninsula dominate the landscape. The Peninsula itself is the convergence of two ocean currents - one subtropical, the other subantarctic - a convergence which makes the sea rich in minerals, plankton, and marine life. This is accentuated by the rapid fall of the seabed; the continental shelf is closer to the coast at Kaikoura than in most other parts of New Zealand.

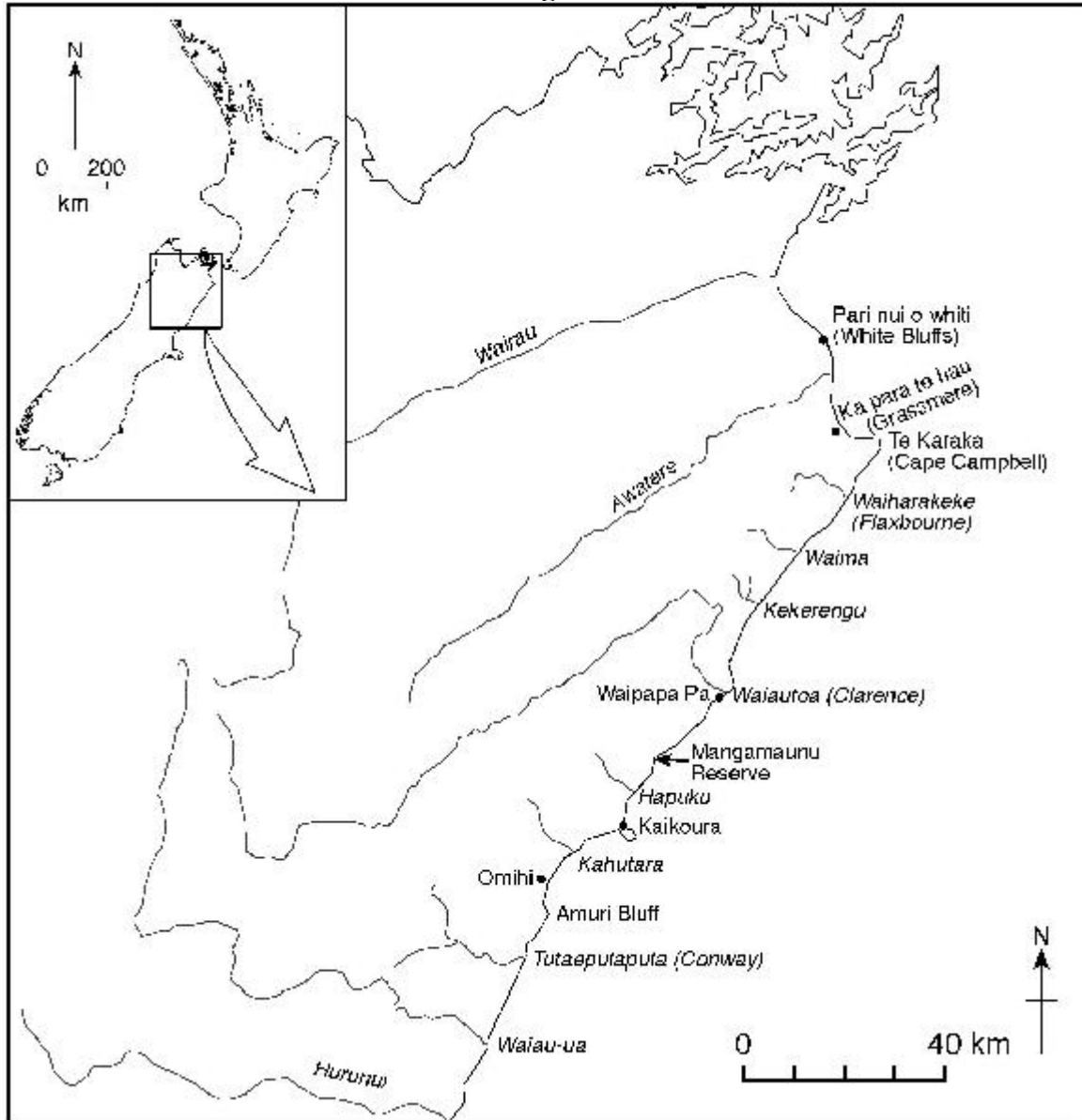
The mountain ranges - the Inland and Seaward Kaikoura Mountains - are divided by the long valley of the Waiautoa or Clarence river and smaller valleys cross each range. Some of the river flats are reasonably fertile, but much of the valley land is marginal for farming purposes. There is a large area of flat land, originally generally swampy, around the Peninsula. This, when drained, was fertile, as were a few of the river flats.

At 1840 the northern part of the region (from the Waima to a little south of the Clarence or Waiautoa) was partially forested, principally in kanuka and totara, but much of the land was tussock. Further south the land was more heavily forested, with totara, rimu, matai, kahikatea in the valleys and beech on ridges. Human settlement, particularly since the 1840s, has considerably modified the environment. Much tussock was burnt from the 1850s, and forest fires in the 1870s and heavy sawmilling since about 1900 have left only small remnants of timber. Swamp drainage around the Peninsula has proceeded to such an extent that only about 10 ha of wetland remains (Breese, et al, 1986). Some forest remnants are critical, notably the 'best mixed podocarp forest remaining in the eastern South Island' and a unique ngaio-black maire forest at Hapuku (Department of Conservation, 1996, p. 75). Key areas (and place names) of significance to Māori are presented in Figure 1).

1.2 Māori Settlement

At least one archaeologist has suggested that Kaikoura was the site of the first Māori settlement in New Zealand (Caughley, 1988). This has been disputed by others who have postulated multiple sites of early settlement (Anderson, 1991; Anderson and McGovern-Wilson, 1990), but there is no doubt that the region was favoured by early Māori. Ancient Māori settlement was based around fishing and the hunting of moa, seals, and other birds (Challis, 1991). Moa-hunting sites have been found at every river-mouth in the region. Around the end of the fifteenth century, and coincidental with the extinction of the moa, the global climate cooled. With its abundance of seafood, Kaikoura remained an attractive location.

Figure 1



Areas of historical and Māori significance in the Kaikoura district

At the end of the 16th century a group of Ngati Mamoe, originally from Ahuriri (Napier) but dwelling at Te Rimurapa (Sinclair Head) received a gift of seafood from the Waitaha people of the Kaikoura region. Rather than reciprocate - and for what reason is not related - these Ngati Mamoe decided to take Kaikoura themselves. Eventually Ngati Mamoe came to dominate the Waitaha (although it is important to note that the two groups were related anyway) and they built a major pa at Waipapa (the mouth of the Waiautoa), as well as other settlements at Kaparatehau, te Rae o Te Karaka, and te Rae o te Kohaka. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1991, ss. 3.1.1-3.1.5).

In the middle of the 17th century, a group known as Kati Kuri, who were part of what would become Ngai Tahu, crossed over from the North Island. Kati Kuri moved first to Totaranui and Arapaoa, in time defeating Ngai Tara there, and then moving against Rangitane in the Wairau, who had sided with Ngai Tara.

Kati Kuri and Ngati Mamoe formed one or more marital alliances and defeated Rangitane, who were then confined to the Wairau. Then, however, Kati Kuri and Ngati Mamoe fell out and Ngati Mamoe were pushed south, ceding Kaikoura itself to Kati Kuri. Ngati Mamoe established a pa at Pariwhakatau (Conway) but later moved further south still.

The traditions have all this happening within one generation. Thus, by about 1670, Kati Kuri - who will hereafter be referred to by the larger name of Ngai Tahu - were dominant in the Kaikoura region and it was their canoes which approached the Endeavour in 1770, although no meeting took place.

In 1827 or 1828 Te Rauparaha and his coalition of tribes - Ngati Toa from Kawhia, Ngati Tama, Ngati Rarua and Te Ati Awa from Taranaki - attacked the Sounds and Wairau, and then Kaikoura. Undoubtedly Te Rauparaha coveted the resources of the South Island, and he had cause for war in that Rerewaka, a Ngai Tahu chief, had openly declared that if Te Rauparaha ever set foot in the South Island, Rerewaka would rip Te Rauparaha's belly open with a barracouta tooth. An additional reason for war was that Kekerengu, a young man from the north, had offended Te Rauparaha's nephew Te Rangihaeata by sleeping with a woman close to Te Rangihaeata (possibly one of his wives), and was now living with Ngai Tahu. The first attack on Kaikoura came as a surprise to Ngai Tahu. Ngai Tahu had been expecting a visit from Ngati Kahungunu, with whom they had friendly relations, and when the Ngati Toa canoes landed Ngai Tahu, believing them to be the expected visitors, came down to greet them and were set upon. Since Ngai Tahu lacked muskets, the death toll was high, but Te Rauparaha left after sacking the place.

Te Rauparaha did not return for two years, and when he did he attacked Omihi. Again there was much loss of life before Te Rauparaha and his troops headed south to Kaiapoi. There they suffered a major reverse, for Ngai Tahu at Kaiapoi had heard of the events at Kaikoura and, despite Te Rauparaha's protestations of friendship, Ngai Tahu caught a number of senior Ngati Toa chiefs off guard and killed them. Withdrawing in some confusion, Ngati Toa attacked the coastal pa of Mikonui on the way back to Kapiti (Elvy, 1950; Evison, 1993).

It is important to stress that Ngati Toa and their allies did not follow up their attacks on Kaikoura with any acts of occupation. They neither cultivated nor resided there, and had therefore no claim to the lands south of Ngai Tahu's northern boundary at Pari nui o Whiti. Apparently most of the surviving Kaikoura Ngai Tahu withdrew into the hills or moved south.

Ngai Tahu reorganised around their Otakou and Ruapuke strongholds, and carried the war back to Ngati Toa. It is related that a Ngai Tahu war party, during one of their annual raids on Ngati Toa stations at Cloudy Bay, waited for five months at Omihi in case Ngati Toa should turn up along the coast (te Kahu, 1901). Indeed some sources suggest that Ngai Tahu people continued to reside along the Kaikoura coast during the 1830s, stating that a vital tip-off as to Te Rauparaha's whereabouts (which resulted in his near-capture by Ngai Tahu at Ka Para te Hau) came from Kaikoura (Smith, 1910).

Ngati Toa continued to claim the east coast as far south as Kaiapoi, by right of conquest, but since that conquest was never followed up by occupation or an effective assertion of rights, and since Ngai Tahu carried the war back to Ngati Toa, the Ngati Toa claim was without foundation. This claim was, however, continually asserted by Ngati Toa and would cause Ngai Tahu much trouble.

The region was sporadically inspected by European ships in the 1830s and 40s, and there are fragmentary reports of whaling during the 1830s (Sherrard, 1966). The first definite shore-based whaling station was established early in 1843. This station was financed from Wellington and was run on the ground by Robert Fyffe and John Murray. Operations were successful but the crew took fright after the Wairau affray in June 1843 and the station was abandoned. Word of Kaikoura's whaling potential had spread, however, and by the end of 1844 there were stations at Waipapa, Kaikoura, South Bay and the Amuri Bluff.

Whaling continued on a small scale until 1920, although by 1870 there were only two stations in use and in 1905 only one, at South Bay. Whaling was mostly done by Māori, and only a couple a year were caught (Cyclopedia, 1906: p. 446).

In September 1846 John Wade, a Wellington merchant who had had a major role in financing some of the whaling stations, guided Clifford and Weld to the location of their first Marlborough sheep run, at Flaxbourne. Clifford and Weld set up there in August 1847, leasing a long coastal strip from the Ngati Toa chief Rawiri Puaha - another attempt by Ngati Toa to assert spurious claims.

1.3 Crown Purchases

In March 1847 Governor George Grey concluded the Wairau purchase with younger chiefs of Ngati Toa (Te Rauparaha having conveniently been arrested a short time previously). In 1845 William Spain's Land Claims Commission (established to inquire into pre-Treaty purchases) reported on the New Zealand Company's claims to have purchased land as far south as Kaiapoi. Despite the fact that Spain found no Ngati Toa rights south of Parinuiowhiti, Grey found it convenient to treat with them for the whole area from Wairau to Kaiapoi. From Grey's perspective, the deal would allow him to allocate the open country of the Wairau valley to the New Zealand Company's Nelson settlers (McAloon, 1997). At the same time the £3000 purchase price, and the Crown's recognition of whatever claims Ngati Toa made, would bind the younger Ngati Toa chiefs to the Crown. As Grey said, the deal would 'give us an almost unlimited influence over a powerful and hitherto a very treacherous and dangerous tribe' (Evison, 1993, pp. 231-38).

By an agreement with the London government, the New Zealand Company was given a monopoly, for three years from July 1847, over disposing of Crown land in the South Island (Evison, 1993). However, arguments in Nelson between the New Zealand Company's original settlers and later arrivals over the allocation of rural land delayed the allocation of pastoral land in the Wairau and Kaikoura districts until 1849. For that reason, and because of frequent changes in administrative boundaries and land regulations until 1853, the early history pastoral occupation in Kaikoura is unclear (Sherrard, 1966).

As noted above, Clifford and Weld were the first to run sheep, in the northern part of the Kaikoura coast. Robert Fyffe combined whaling and sheep farming at Waiopuka, on the Kaikoura Peninsula, almost certainly from the late 1840s. In 1851 he claimed a run as far south as the Tutaepuaputa, or Conway River (Sherrard, 1996, p. 92).

The Crown had made Kaikoura available to sheep farmers without reference to Ngai Tahu. The 1847 Wairau deed, signed with Ngati Toa, represented the Crown's sole agreement with Māori in respect of the land north of Kaiapoi. As soon as Ngai Tahu heard of the Wairau purchase - and this was not until February 1848, at Pigeon Bay, on Banks Peninsula, they protested that Ngati Toa had no right to dispose of that land. The Crown would use the Wairau deed as a means of coercing Ngai Tahu to sign Kemp's Deed, and continued Ngai Tahu claims of ownership of the land between Kaiapoi and Parinuiowhiti would be ignored until 1857. In 1857 the Crown made a take it or leave it offer to Ngai Tahu for the lands between the Rakahuri (Ashley) and the Waiiau-ua: £200 and no reserves. With this the only way of having their mana over those lands recognised, rather than that of Ngati Toa, Ngai Tahu signed (Evison, 1993).

Similar proceedings occurred over the Kaikoura block, from the Hurunui to Parinuiowhiti, in 1859. (The boundaries overlapped with the 1857 North Canterbury deed in order to accommodate some unaddressed claims). Ngati Kuri had not passively accepted runholders' encroachments; on a number of occasions they had driven sheep off the land and prevented runholders from cutting timber, putting up buildings, and making other acts of ownership. When James Mackay Jr. came to Kaikoura in February 1859, Ngati Kuri demanded £10,000 and the 50,000 ha block between the Conway or Tutaepuaputa and the Kahutara rivers. During the negotiations, which lasted for a full month, Ngati Kuri and their principal chief Kaikoura Whakatau variously threatened to evict the sheep farmers and cited as evidence of the land's value the sums already paid to the Crown by some sheep farmers. In the end, again confronted with a take it or leave it proposal, and having to assert their mana against Ngati Toa claims, Ngati Kuri agreed to £300 and some 2250 ha of reserves, much of it 'of the most useless and worthless description' as Mackay himself said (Sherrard, 1966; Evison, 1993, pp. 382-84).

The largest of these reserves was 1950 ha on the coast from Porangarau creek to the Hapuku river; 40 ha at the Waimangarara stream; 9 ha at Kaikoura pa; 5 ha near Lyell creek; 22 ha north of the Kahutara mouth; 8 ha at Kiekie; 5 ha at Waiarakiki (between Goose Bay and Omihi); 34 ha at Oaro; 180 ha at Mikonui; and a small area at South Bay. With such small reserves, Kati Kuri were forced to rely on seasonal farm work and on fishing and whatever crops and cattle they had (Sherrard, 1966: 153-54, 59). Fishing was a major source of subsistence and petty cash: in 1870 all but two of the fishers in Kaikoura were Māori, and barracouta - reasonably sized fish and easily caught - the main species. Hapuku, trumpeter, tarakihi, moki, rock cod and kahawai were also caught, but the local market varied according to the availability of meat (AJHR 1870, D-9, p 5).

Ngai Tahu's reserves were considerably reduced in area after 1900, when the Crown compulsorily acquired them for scenic or railway purposes. Over time, half of the area reserved was lost, much of it to the Crown for these purposes.

1.4 Pastoralism

Sheep farming spread steadily in the 1850s. The Clifford and Weld run at Flaxbourne formed something of a beach-head for pastoralism, and the land as far south as the Clarence or Waiiau-toa river was taken up fairly quickly, by the mid 1850s (McIntosh, 1940). In the south, runs between the Conway and the Hapuka rivers were also taken up by 1856. By 1857 new sheep farmers had to move further up the Clarence valley (Sherrard, 1966).

Marlborough seceded from the province of Nelson in 1859. The secession was basically motivated by sheep farmers' dislike of the artisan radicalism of Nelson's superintendent John Perry Robinson. Robinson, elected superintendent in 1856, had firm views about the desirability of intensive agricultural settlement as opposed to extensive pastoralism (McAloon, 1997). Marlborough provincial land policy favoured sheep farming, and it might be argued that, before refrigeration, much of Marlborough was best used for sheep farming anyway.

By 1865 there were twelve runs in what would later be the Kaikoura County, from the Waima river in the north to the Conway in the south. The geography of much of the region was not promising for sheep farming, however. Forest covered much of the coastal land from the Waima to the Tutaeputa; further inland the river valleys were more open but rough land and very cold (Sherrard, 1966). The establishment phase - in the 1850s - had seen sheep farmers move onto a promising block of land, holding it on pastoral lease. All that was required was the rough definition of the block - for example, 'North by the summit ridge of the Kaikoura mountains; East by the Crown Reserve at Kaikoura joining the beach at the mouth of the Kahutara; South partly by the Kahutara and partly by the run held under licence by Mr Tinline; West by the summit of the Kaikoura range. Estimated extent, 8000 acres' (Sherrard, 1966, p. 99). Rents were low, and runholders were required to stock their runs with a certain number of sheep.

The Marlborough provincial land legislation allowed runholders favourable terms for freeholding crucial parts of their runs. By 1865 Kaikoura runholders had freeholded 119,429 acres (nearly 50,000 ha) at a price, in most cases of a little over five shillings an acre. Wool prices had been high until then, but slipped in the late 1860s before temporarily recovering in the first half of the 1870s. From about 1878, fluctuating wool prices combined with rabbits and scab to put many runholders under severe pressure (Sherrard, 1966).

Some of the Kaikoura runholders were undercapitalised. Among those who were not were the Bullen brothers, Frederick and George, who had made substantial sums on the Victorian goldfields, and then in Otago and Westland, as merchants and storekeepers. They bought the Kahutara run in 1866, liquidating many of their other assets to do so, and combined it with the Greenhills run in 1868. George Bullen took the more active role, and Frederick returned to England in 1883. The Bullen brothers had the money for drainage, ploughing and grassing as well as controlling rabbits and wild pigs. George Bullen also built a mansion, The Elms - but his shearers had one large concrete building, containing seventy bunks, in which the cooking was done as well. In 1907 Bullen sold out, and died worth £225,000 in 1912 (Sherrard, 1966).

Undercapitalised runs had a troubled existence in the last third of the nineteenth century. One example is Swyncombe, owned until 1882 by the Keene brothers. Despite their origins in the English gentry, the Keenes 'were not practical farmers, nor had they enough capital to mount effective attacks against rabbits or the scab disease' (Sherrard, 1966, p. 126). The flock had dropped to half by the time the Keenes sold to the Christchurch miller William Derisley Wood. Wood had the capital, not only to erect rabbit fences but also to plough and sow much of the property in fodder crops (Sherrard, 1966, pp. 122-27). Much of the land in pastoral runs was very rough, indeed marginal country, almost as difficult as Molesworth. Rabbits also caused a great deal of trouble. They were well established by 1870; the Keene brothers are credited with having introduced a special silver grey breed, for food, fur and sport hunting. In 1875, 120,000 skins were shipped out of Kaikoura (Sherrard, 1966, pp. 184-92).

1.5 Small Farming

Sheep farming on an extensive scale dominated the local economy until the turn of the century. Some small farming had been combined with whaling, and Kati Kuri had farmed such of their reserve land as was suitable.

During the 1850s various authorities reserved some 6000 ha around the Kaikoura Peninsula. Town and small farm sections, mostly of 15-20 ha, were surveyed out between 1861 and 1864, and a few whalers had already been given grants for four ha blocks. This land was very swampy and covered in flax, toitoi, raupo and similar vegetation; where it was drier it was covered in fern. Few small farmers took up these sections, for not only was the task of draining such land time consuming and hard, but there was little prospect of a market for their produce. The swamps made road building very difficult as well. Runholders thus picked up much of this land as well. Life for those small farmers who did take up such sections was hard and isolated, virtually subsistence.

Conditions slowly improved from 1870, once the Marlborough Provincial Government was able to grant land in payment for public works. Rough roads and bridges were built, but connections with the outside world were by sea, through the small harbour at the town. A small wharf was built in 1863, and small ships also stopped off the river mouths, with boats taking wool out to the ships and bringing supplies back. Coastal shipping at Kaikoura lasted until 1924, the wreck of the small steamer Wakatu marking the end, with road transport then rail supplanting it.

What is now known as the Inland Kaikoura road, linking Kaikoura with North Canterbury via Rotherham, was built between 1882 and 1888. This was the main route for a long time, for although the road through the Hundalees was opened in the early 1890s the major rivers were not bridged until 1914 (Sherrard, 1966).

From the late 1860s to about 1883 the market for farm produce (mostly potatoes, with some wheat, bacon and butter and cheese) was the West Coast goldfields, Wellington and sometimes Sydney. In essence Kaikoura farmers rode the immigration and public works boom of the 1870s. Wheat was really only grown for the Kaikoura market, and women ran small farm dairies (in the unstandardised conditions of the 1880s Kaikoura butter was not renowned for its quality). Most farmers had to combine farming with working on the runs, road building, or cutting flax for the sporadic attempts to run small flaxmills in the District. In 1868 there were some 410 Pakeha living in the Kaikoura region. By 1883 the district population was 1107 Pakeha, and they were concentrated around the Peninsula. (Sherrard, 1966; AJHR 1883, D-2.)

Village homestead settlements were established in 1886 at Hapuku 1886 and also upper Mt Fyffe road, South Bay, and Lyell Creek. Village homestead settlements were a creation of John Ballance, Minister of Lands 1884-87, and were designed to allow labourers a supplementary subsistence on small blocks. They were never very successful; the blocks were too small and the settlers under-resourced.

More systematic closer settlement awaited refrigeration and state direction, which only came after 1890. In the Kaikoura region there was little first-class land available, and the State resumed a number of leasehold runs for division into small grazing runs. These runs were designed to carry about 1000 sheep on between 160 and 400 ha of Crown lease.

In the five years 1897-1902, some 10,000 ha acres of Crown land were divided into 60 farms and 100,000 ha into 29 small grazing runs. A good deal of freehold pastoral land was subdivided by the owners. For example, the Shades had originally been 12,000 ha from the Kekerengu river to the Clarence. After 1893 all but 3200 ha were sold, in order to finance improvements on the rest. Pasture was improved with clover, ryegrass and cocksfoot; fencing and rabbit control were also improved (Sherrard, 1966; Cyclopedia, 1906, p. 444).

Small farming proper was typically carried out on about 120 ha of good land running crossbred sheep (for meat and wool) and dairy cattle. Smaller mixed farms of about 60 ha usually required the farmer to work outside as well, and demanded a high input of unpaid family labour. The establishment of the Kaikoura Dairy Factory in 1894 relied on the development of small farming, and gave dairy farmers an outside market. The Company was set up as a farmer co-operative, and it made cheese for Hokitika, Sydney and London, with a little butter for the local market. In 1922 it converted to butter manufacture, selling through London agents, but in 1969 - perhaps prompted by the changing British market - returned to cheese (Cyclopedia, 1906; Davidson, 1994).

The demand for land was such that there were over 300 applicants for some of the small grazing run ballots; for one, there were 475 applicants. In the Mt Fyffe, Hapuku, Puhipuhi and Blue Duck valleys many of the small grazing runs had extensive areas of rimu, matai, kahikatea and totara. These were milled, providing farmers with an extra source of cash, and supporting a timber mill at Puhipuhi from 1898 (Cyclopedia, 1906, pp. 452-3; Sherrard, 1966).

Railway development had been under consideration since the 1870s. There was considerable argument in the 1870s and 1880s over the best route by which to connect Christchurch, Kaikoura and Blenheim. The eastern route (roughly, that which was eventually chosen) was very rough and steep in places, but gave access to the good land at Cheviot. The alternative, which would have followed the Inland Kaikoura road, was easier but gave access to much less good land (AJHR 1876, p. E-1; 1883, p. D-2).

Progress was spasmodic progress from 1895 to 1914 but little was done through the 1920s. The First World War had intervened, and the Reform party government of 1912-28 tended to favour road transport. There was a brief burst of work from 1929 to 1931, but the Forbes government's depression retrenchment brought work to a halt until 1936. The first Labour government made completion a priority, and work was pushed through until completion at the end of 1945 (Sherrard, 1966).

1.6 Conclusion: An Enduring Pattern

The developments of the two decades from 1890 set a pattern in Kaikoura that lasted until the 1950s. In 1962, a government survey described a region, over two thirds of the population was concentrated in the town and the surrounding small plain. The population had increased with rail works after 1935, but fell slightly after completion in 1945 (Ministry of Works, 1962).

The Kaikoura town labour force was concentrated in transport and servicing occupations. Public sector departments were major employers, particularly the Ministry of Works and Railways. The railway repair and maintenance shops accounted for many of the 80 railway employees. Road transport company depots also accounted for a number of workers in service stations and vehicle repairs. The dairy factory was small; stock and station, bank agencies and private shops accounted for a few. Fishing and lime were in decline.

There were five distinct farming zones: dairy farming was concentrated on the fertile crescent around the Peninsula; store sheep were raised to the south of that area and arable farming was carried on to the north. Sheep and beef cattle were raised along the coastal strip north of the Clarence river, and wool-growing predominated further inland (Marlborough Regional Development Council, 1976).

The potential for tourism was only briefly referred to. Although at the turn of the century the town was 'recognised as being one of the most picturesque and healthy spots in New Zealand. It is often referred to as the Scarborough of the colony' (Cyclopedia, 1906, p. 446) little development had occurred. Kaikoura was basically a tea and pee stop for motorists and rail passengers, although there had been some development of baches at South Bay in the 1950s. There was, reportedly, considerable reluctance in the town to see further tourist development (Marlborough Regional Development Council, 1976).

Fishing was not a major industry. By 1960 it was apparent that the easy crayfish grounds had been over-fished in the years since 1945, and by 1975 the same was true of other species as well (Marlborough Regional Development Council, 1976). Despite Kaikoura's status as the second largest fishing port in the northern South Island, after Nelson, with a catch valued at more than half a million dollars, fishing was generally small-scale. In 1975 there were 97 registered fishing vessels, and 149 fishers. Many of these were part-time operators; 38 boats and 59 fishers were classed as 'active', that is, making more than \$4000 a year from fishing.

About two thirds of the Kaikoura catch by value was crayfish, but wetfish were very significant as well - especially gurnard, hapuku, ling, moki and shark. There were growing concerns that the crayfish were being over-fished, but wetfish were considerably under-utilised. Partly this was due to the small harbour being able only to cater for smaller vessels, a factor which made it likely that more intensive exploitation of fishing grounds off Kaikoura would be carried out by larger vessels from elsewhere (Marlborough Regional Development Council, 1976).

Little had changed in terms of tourism by mid 1970s either. Tourism in Marlborough was a spin-off from road traffic to and from the Picton ferry link. In Kaikoura, there had been one 40-bed motel before the Cook Strait ferries started running in 1962. In 1975, there were 304 motel beds and another 500 hotel and camping ground beds. It was observed, with some understatement, that there was 'concentration of capital investment [in tourism] in the main centres of Blenheim, Picton and Kaikoura and not, as could be expected, in the areas of great scenic attraction' (Ibid, p. 127). In other words, accommodation, rather than tourist attractions as such, were the emphasis.

Like most small rural regions, Kaikoura was hard hit by the recession of the 1970s and the restructuring which followed after 1984. Farm incomes dropped throughout the country after 1984, which had a significant effect on towns such as Kaikoura. Public sector employment declined considerably, with 170 jobs lost in a town of 3000 (Brett, 1992).

The 1980s were also notable for a greatly increased emphasis on tourism as a generator of overseas funds, and for the increasing visibility of Māori claims under the Treaty of Waitangi. These two factors intersected in Kaikoura. In 1985, confronted with a wave of redundancies and a falling population, a group of Kaikoura people established a promotion association and tourist centre. Originally the emphasis was on the District's scenery and walkways, but once the whale watching ventures started, visitor numbers soared (Press, 4 September 1996, p. 25).

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