

# Otematata: A Study of a Rural Hydro/Holiday Home Village

Jude Wilson  
Mike Mackay

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## Chapter 1 Introduction



**Photograph 1: Otematata from Benmore Dam**

### 1.1 Background

This research examines aspects of change and continuity in the small rural settlement of Otematata (Photograph 1, above) located in the Upper Waitaki Valley of New Zealand's South Island. Otematata was developed in the post-war era as a hydro scheme town – a residential base for workers building the Benmore and Aviemore power stations and associated dams and hydro lakes (Photographs 2 and 3). The town's population peaked at over 4000 in the mid-1960s, but then, after the Waitaki hydro project ended, suddenly fell. In the five decades since, Otematata's resident population has continued to decline (to 186 at the 2013 census), but the settlement has persisted, surviving today as a rural holiday home village. The aim of the research was to contribute a fresh perspective to the New Zealand research on rural change, particularly studies focused on the changing circumstances and adaptive capacity of small rural communities in 21st century New Zealand – those which have experienced (or are experiencing) major shifts in local economic activity, land-use, population and/or employment. Despite these changes, Otematata remains fundamentally linked to its hydro-town origins.

The selection of Otematata was based on a set of preliminary observations of social change in the area. In the late 1970s one of the researchers (Jude Wilson) had lived and worked in the town for six months on a government funded and administered project associated with post-dam construction lakeside enhancement. The work (for what had been the Lands and Survey Department<sup>1</sup>) included extensive tree planting around the shores of Lake Aviemore, the installation of picnic, camping and recreation areas around Lakes Benmore and Aviemore and the construction of the still existent Peninsula Track, located above Benmore Dam (Photograph 4). A return visit to Otematata 30 years later was

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<sup>1</sup> The Lands and Survey Department became the Department of Conservation in 1987. The new organisation combined the Department of Lands and Survey, the Forest Service and the Wildlife Service.

memorable for the fact that *physically* the village appeared unchanged, yet *socially* there had been an obvious transformation from hydro-town remnant into a busy holiday home village (for at least part of the year). Mike Mackay, through his involvement in resource management work in the upper and lower Waitaki Valley over the last decade, had also observed and recorded various patterns of local social change, most notably the increasing and more diverse use of the area by visitors, particularly the hydro-lakes, for outdoor recreation.



**Photograph 2: View across Loch Laird to Benmore Dam**



**Photograph 3: Benmore Dam against its barren, but spectacular rural backdrop**



**Photograph 4: Benmore Peninsula Track**

Another observation made by the authors was the town's emerging status as an affordable summer holiday destination for New Zealanders. As social scientists interested in rural domestic tourism development and the evolution of small destinations, a study of Otematata would enable us to examine how the resident community was creating/participating in local tourism initiatives and the benefits they gained from the visitor economy, if any. Otematata was also a destination which, whilst primarily domestic tourism focused, was situated on one of the trails of the New Zealand Cycle Trail project (Nga Haerenga) – a new 2400km national network of government backed cycle trails. Otematata is located at the mid-point on the “Alps to Ocean” (A2O) trail, the longest track in the network, extending 314kms from Aoraki Mount Cook to the township of Oamaru on the South Island's east coast. This research offered the opportunity to develop an empirical baseline against which we



could assess the impact of the new cycle trail on one of the rural towns purported to reap the benefits from the nationwide cycle trail network (Angus and Associates, 2013).

Another important factor contributing to the selection of Otematata as our case study site was the town's unique social and industrial history. While much of the (written) history of rural and small town New Zealand is centred on farming settlements, a number of locations, like Otematata, have their origins in hydro-electricity production. Such towns were created as temporary residential bases for workers on large-scale infrastructure projects such as those which were part of "the great expansion of hydro-electricity in New Zealand" in the 1950s and 1960s (PCE, 2012, p.15). These "boom towns" (Stenhouse, 1960), as they have been called, experienced rapid population expansion over a relatively short period of time – the effect of workers arriving together in large numbers to assist with the construction of hydro-power infrastructure. As projects ended, these towns also shared the experience of a sharp population decline as workers and their families left to find jobs elsewhere. Otematata is one such location, planned as a temporary construction village (similar to Mangakino and Twizel) with a lifespan of only 15 years. What makes Otematata particularly interesting is that it *persisted* after the local hydro works were completed, albeit beset by a variety of problems and issues common to the 'persistent construction town' (Gardinier, 1982). These included: "houses and amenities that were not designed to last beyond 15-20 years; the necessity of a transfer of local authority to a local body; a distorted age-sex structure of the population; and the need for an alternative economic base to sustain a viable community" (Bendien, 1983, p. 4). As Taylor and Bettsworth (1983, p. 20) noted, not only did persistent construction towns come to service more than one project, but they "consequently had the time to acquire a physical and social identity in the local area". Otematata, therefore, provided a useful setting to study the evolution of a "boom-town" and the actors, processes and (economic) activities which have underpinned its survival.

While the current report is limited to a presentation and syntheses of the findings of our fieldwork, the study was and continues to be informed by conceptual insights drawn from at three discernible academic fields. The first is the social science of rural change (for an overview see Mackay et al., 2009), particularly studies interpreting how rural communities are attempting to negotiate their place in the modern globalising world. Some of the conceptual frameworks/ideas we have found most informative are: multifunctional rural space (Holmes, 2010, 2012), amenity migration and the global countryside (Woods, 2013), the creative enhancement of rural areas (Mitchell, 2013) and commodification and rural "re-resourcing" (Perkins, 2006). At the centre of all these debates is the idea that rural towns are not static nor homogenous places, but should instead be interpreted as dynamic, contested and diverse (and increasingly globally networked) territories where unique local responses to myriad exogenous forces (not least rural restructuring) are working to creating a diversified countryside.

The second field of research which has informed the study is the more applied discipline of rural community studies. New Zealand has a long tradition in this field, where the focus has been on developing in-depth descriptive profiles of specific geographical locations. The origins of this work dates to Somerset's 1938 study of changing patterns of everyday life at 'Littledene' (or Oxford as it is officially known), a small rural community in North Canterbury (Somerset, 1938). Since then, myriad rural towns have been studied and compared, with a notable flurry of work in New Zealand over the period 1998 – 2002 as part of the Resource Community Formation and Change research programme, which profiled and compared the development trajectories of energy, fishing and tourism communities (Taylor Baines, 1999; Taylor et al., 2004). While the current report adds to the back catalogue of applied rural community studies, our aim is also to theoretically interpret the main empirical findings of our fieldwork (as presented in this report) in order to contribute a New Zealand perspective to international scholarly debates about rural change.

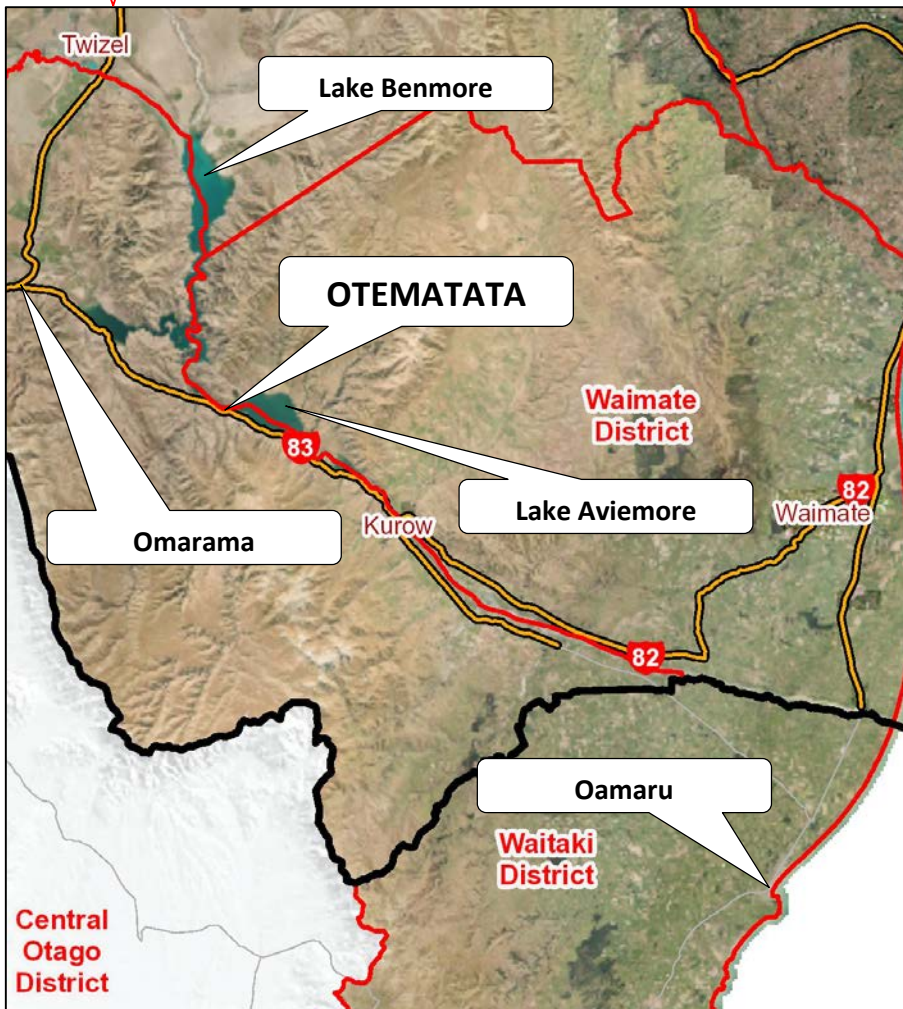
As the title of this project and report suggests, the third area of research applicable to this study is that addressing the holiday home phenomenon. Whilst most commonly examined in the tourism sphere, holiday home research has also attracted attention in migration, leisure and cultural studies. Topics

researched under the holiday home umbrella have included, *inter alia*: place attachment (e.g., Kaltenborn, 1997; Kelly & Hosking 2008), the meaning of home (Perkins and Thorns, 2006), social and economic impacts on host communities, environmental impacts of holiday home development (Halseth, 2004), amenity migration and access to amenity resources (e.g., Sandell, 2006). More recent work, including New Zealand work, appears in a special edition of the *Annals of Leisure Research* (e.g., Walters and Duncan, 2014). While common themes appear across holiday home research, the proliferation of case studies is an indication of the importance of understanding the specific spatial, social and cultural characteristics of holiday home development in different countries and locations within countries. New Zealand specific studies include the identification of different types of second homes (Keen & Hall, 2004), an examination of the 'classic' Kiwi bach (Kearns & Collins, 2006) and in-migration of seasonal homeowners to coastal communities (McIntyre & Pavlovich, 2006).

## 1.2 Locating Otematata and the Waitaki Valley

Otematata is located in the Waitaki Valley (Map, Page 6) on State Highway 83 (SH83) of New Zealand's South Island. SH83 runs parallel to the Waitaki River (in the lower reaches) and then alongside the hydro lakes formed by the Waitaki and Aviemore Dams. Otematata's location just off the main highway, rather than straddling it, is unusual in New Zealand, although common for hydro-towns; it is also unusual in that it not located *directly* alongside the lakeshore (refer Photograph 1). From Otematata, access to the hydro lakes, dams and power stations is facilitated via a sealed road following the northern shores of Lake Aviemore, via the Benmore and Aviemore Dams. Lake Aviemore is the closest lake to Otematata village: Lake Benmore is accessible above the Benmore Dam and at Sailors Cutting (located several kilometres west of Otematata along SH83).

The earliest inhabitants of the area were Māori on hunting expeditions or travelling through the valley to reach the inland areas and mountain passes. Otematata in Māori means 'place of good flint'. The township was constructed in the 1950s (as the new construction base for the Benmore and Aviemore Dams) near what *was* the confluence of the Waitaki and Otematata Rivers; the Waitaki was dammed as part of the Waitaki power scheme with Lake Aviemore forming at this location. The Waitaki River is the valley's major river and one of New Zealand's largest. It is fed by three large glacial lakes: Pukaki, Tekapo, and Ohau. It has several tributaries, notably the Ahuriri and the Hakataramea Rivers. The Waitaki passes Kurow and Glenavy before entering the Pacific Ocean between Timaru and Oamaru on the east coast. The township sits between the rural settlements of Kurow and Omarama. It is a 95km drive inland from its nearest major urban centre, Oamaru, on New Zealand's east coast (population 13,000). Oamaru is also the Waitaki District's main administrative hub. The governance of the region is quite complex. The middle of the Waitaki river bed forms a political boundary between the Canterbury and Otago regions. The term "South of the Waitaki" is often used to refer to the Otago and Southland regions as one common area: the two regions share historical and ethnic relationships which make them distinct from the regions to the north of them. Otematata is located in the Ahuriri Ward of the Waitaki District Council. The lakeside camping areas are administered by different local authorities (Waimate District Council on the north side, Waitaki District Council on the south). Otematata and its immediate surrounds are managed by Environment Canterbury, whose boundary extends beyond the river bed to encompass the upper catchment area of the Waitaki river system.



Map: Otematata and the Waitaki Valley

Map Source (Top): Environment Canterbury: <http://ecan.govt.nz/services/online-services/pages/maps-canterbury-region.aspx>

Map Source (Bottom): <http://canterburymaps.govt.nz>

Pastoral farming was the pioneering post-colonial use of the valley and while still important, the introduction of irrigation infrastructure, some associated with hydro-electric power scheme development, has stimulated land use intensification, particularly dairy farming (Maynard et al., 2009). The introduction of an extensive hydro-electric power generation system in the valley has also stimulated dramatic landscape change (Maynard et al., 2009), particularly around Otematata. Interestingly, Otematata has been relatively unaffected by the agricultural land use (and landscape) changes reported by Maynard et al. (2009), which have occurred in upper and lower reaches of the Waitaki i.e., the spread of dairy farms (both around Kurow and the lower reaches of the Waitaki and in the Mackenzie Basin) and establishment of vineyards around Kurow. The dominant rural land use around Otematata is high country Merino farming (a type of sheep bred for their fine fibre). Scenically, the valley's landscape is barren but eye-catching, particularly from those vantage points where the large hydro lakes and their infrastructure come into view against the barren rural backdrop. Benmore Dam is the largest earth dam in the southern hemisphere (Photograph 3).

Notwithstanding the valley's spectacular scenery (whether farmed, modified or natural), traffic on SH83 is relatively light: most tour buses choose to follow the route through the Mackenzie Basin which is a premier tourism corridor, although SH83 also provides a link south on those occasions when the Lindis Pass is closed because of snow. Previously, the poor quality of the Kurow Bridges on SH82 (which cross the Waitaki River and connects with SH82) have been a deterrent for large tour buses, however the bridges have recently been replaced and may result in more tourist traffic between Kurow and Otematata.

Similar to many inland areas, Otematata has weather that ranges from very cold in winter to very hot in summer. In the past five years, temperatures have ranged from 35.7°C to -6.7°C, with annual rainfall ranging from 282mm to 431mm. However, Otematata has its own micro-climate and avoids the extreme temperatures experienced in the Mackenzie Basin, and also the cloudy, cooler, wetter weather of more coastal areas.

### **1.3 Report structure**

After an overview of our research methods, the findings of our desktop and field research are reported. These findings are presented in three main parts. Part 1 provides a social history of Otematata, synthesising an analysis of printed historical records, secondary data sources and historical information gleaned from key informant interviews. Part 2 presents a thematic analysis of the key informant interviews. The focus here is on everyday life in Otematata today and resident perspectives on recent changes, issues and future development opportunities. Part 3 presents the findings of a community (postal) survey of both Otematata residents and holiday home owners. The survey explored community attachment to Otematata and views on the town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, and barriers to development. The report ends with a synthesis of the key findings and a concluding discussion. Throughout the report and where appropriate, the historical, interview, secondary and survey data are supported by photographic images obtained through archive research and those which were taken during fieldwork. Unless otherwise stated, the authors (Jude Wilson and Mike Mackay) are the source of all the photographs displayed in the report.





## Chapter 2

# Research Methods

### 2.1 Introduction

In this section we briefly outline our three main data collection methods: secondary data search and analysis, key informant interviews and (postal) community survey. The use of a range of methods reflected the exploratory nature of the study. The suite of methods also reflected the naturalistic and iterative approach we took to the study, which enabled us to ‘follow our nose’ and adapt the project in light of new information, questions raised, ideas and data collection needs. The project, including the proposed suite of methods, were reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

### 2.2 Secondary data

The research began with a period of secondary data collection and analysis with the aim of developing a rich historical-contextual backdrop for the project. We wanted to know how Otematata had developed over time and the key events in its development trajectory. The initial period of secondary data collection took place in 2012 and 2013, prior to entering the field. In our search for information, we scanned local newspapers, community newsletters, government reports and local histories. In this process, we found a lot of information relating to the building of the new dams and hydro-lakes (Benmore and Aviemore), particularly planning and engineering reports. We also discovered a very useful and well-researched social history of the Waitaki Valley’s hydro towns during the dam construction era (Sheridan, 1995). More difficult to locate was research or media commentary in the post-dam construction days, the only notable exception being several community profiles developed within the Resource Community Formation and Change project (e.g., Taylor Baines, 1999; Taylor et al., 2004). As such, much of our effort went into locating documents which would help build a picture of Otematata’s development in the post-dam building era: local newspapers proved most useful. Our secondary data research continued throughout the research process, often taking new directions based on new leads and information provided by interviewees.

### 2.3 Key informant interviews

In the latter half of 2013, after our initial phase of secondary data collection and analysis, key informant interviews were undertaken (10 in Otematata and one in Oamaru). Interviewees included people who were associated with Otematata either through residence, business interests or in a professional capacity. Specific criteria sought in respect of interviewee selection included having a sufficient length of association with Otematata to be able to identify and report change, participation in local community activities, professional involvement in the holiday home property market and engagement with tourism in Otematata. Potential interviewees were first identified via the internet and local media reports (and then through snowballing). Initial contact with these potential interviewees was by telephone; a follow-up email included a research information sheet describing the project and their participation in more detail (see Appendix 1). To ensure the anonymity of interviewees (drawn from a very small population), direct quotes are attributed in the report to very general interviewee identifiers such as the number of years of residency in the township – short or long-term. Where necessary for context, generic details of an individual’s association with Otematata might also be included (e.g., “local business owner”). These are located either in the text prior to the quote *or* in parentheses immediately after.

The same base interview schedule was used in all interviews, although the order in which the questions were asked (and answered) varied, depending on the flow of conversation. The emphasis in interviews

and the specific questions asked were also adapted to suit the particular interviewee involved. The interview schedule, broadly followed in all interviews, covered the following topic areas (a copy of the schedule can be found in Appendix 2): 1) Length of attachment with Otematata, 2) nature of association, including residence and family history, 3) changes observed across a range of parameters including socio-demographic, economic, natural amenity, tourism, housing and other infrastructure and facilities, and 4) issues and challenges facing the village and its community.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed and then analysed for repeated themes and topics. The qualitative data provided valuable insights into life in Otematata today (the key themes reported in Chapter 4). Interviews with long-term residents also provided a great deal of insight into the development of Otematata since the dam-building days, and for this reason we have included some of their quotes, memories and experiences in our social history chapter, reported next. The interview data set also informed the development of the survey of the Otematata community (Chapter 5).

## **2.4 Community survey**

A questionnaire was developed for a survey of the Otematata community (both permanent residents and holiday home owners) to explore in greater depth and breadth some of the themes that emerged in the key informant interviews. This survey approach, involving the wider Otematata community, facilitated greater understanding of Otematata's current state and future development options. It also provided a means for us to understand the wider population's reasons for buying property in Otematata – whether a permanent dwelling or holiday home. The survey consisted of 13 questions: five open-ended, eight closed. Space was also provided for respondents to comment freely on any other matter relating to life in and/or the development of Otematata. A copy of the survey form is provided in Appendix 3.

The survey was targeted at people owning/occupying Otematata properties over the 2013-14 summer period. A total of 432 survey forms were hand delivered to the letterboxes of all Otematata properties prior to Christmas (i.e., 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December 2013). A further 15 survey forms were given to the postal service to be put in Otematata Private Office Boxes. A reply paid envelope was left with all survey forms along with a research information sheet (see Appendix 4). One person at each property was asked to complete the survey (specifically, the person with the next birthday aged over 18 years).

Altogether, 123 completed surveys were returned. An exact response rate is difficult to calculate as it was not known if all the properties were occupied at the time of the delivery of the survey pack; the presence of For Sale signs suggested that some of the properties were vacant over the survey period, while other dwellings looked derelict and obviously unoccupied. While not exact, an approximate response rate using 2013 Census information can be generated. The 2013 Census data for Otematata showed an occupied dwelling count of 111 properties and an unoccupied dwelling count of 336 properties. Based on these figures, the return rate of surveys from permanent residents amounts to a response rate of 27 per cent (30/111). The return rate from 93 holiday home occupiers represents a response rate of 27.7 per cent (93/336).

Data processing first involved numerically coding the responses for all closed-ended questions and then entering these into an Excel spread sheet. Upon completion, that data set was then exported into SPSS 20 for (descriptive) statistical analysis. The open-ended questions were manually coded before being computed. The initial coding of the open-ended responses was carried out independently by both researchers. The resulting code schedules developed by each of the researchers were then compared and, in cases where there were discrepancies, discussed further. This deliberative process continued until the researchers were able to agree on the coding categories of the open-ended data. The survey results are reported in full in Chapter 5 and the key survey findings synthesised with secondary data and key informant interview data in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 3

### The Development of Otematata: History and Context

*My husband's late father used to tell a great story. The first he knew about the [Benmore] dam was when a bulldozer got off a truck and went past the front fence at the front gate of home. He went down and said "what do you think you are doing?" And the bulldozer driver replied "we're going to change your life" and that was that! (Long-term Otematata resident).*

#### 3.1 Introduction

This first part of the report draws together the findings of our historical-contextual research. It was developed combining information sourced from secondary resources and historical reflections provided by some of our key informants. The aim of the historical research was to develop a contextual backdrop for the study, which mainly focuses on everyday life in Otematata today. The historical narrative covers three main phases in Otematata's development: 1) the emergence and then decline of Otematata as a hydro-workforce village (1950s-1960s), 2) the rise of Otematata as a holiday home village, after the dam construction days (1970s-1990s), and 3) Otematata in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 3.2 Emergence and decline (1950s – 1960s)

Otematata was built in the 1950s as a temporary residential village for Waitaki hydro-project employees (Photographs 5 and 6). The Waitaki project centred on the construction of two new hydroelectricity dams – Benmore and Aviemore – key nodes in the wider Waitaki River power scheme. Today the wider scheme comprises eight hydro-stations and several large man-made hydro-lakes, including Lakes Benmore and Aviemore. The Waitaki scheme was designed to harness the power potential of three large lakes: Tekapo, Pukaki and Ohau which form the headwaters of the Waitaki River. Construction of the Benmore Dam began in 1958 with power first produced for supply in 1965 (Meridian Energy, 2015a). The construction of Aviemore Dam, down river, started in 1962 and was completed in 1968 (Meridian Energy, 2015b). The settlement of Otematata is located 7km from Benmore Dam.

Compared to previous hydro-towns in New Zealand, Otematata was generously resourced (Crean, 2010), the provision of its many modern facilities perhaps reflecting the government's recognition of the national importance of the projects the town was supporting, and lessons learned from previous hydro-town developments. In its first few years Otematata boasted: sealed roads; a sewerage and potable water supply system; educational, recreational and medical facilities; a shopping and community centre; post office; and two churches (a Catholic Church transported from Roxburgh and a newly built St Andrews Presbyterian Church). The development of community recreation facilities also began early with the installation of a sports playing field, tennis court, a bowling green and golf course (Sheridan, 1995). Development was rapid. "In August 1958, the first 11 shopkeepers arrived to open stores to cater for the growing population, and by the end of the year there were more than 450 workers living and working in Otematata" (Meridian Energy, 2014).



**Photograph 5: The rural landscape in which the township of Otematata would be built (1958)  
Waitaki District Archive**



**Photograph 6: Aerial view of the new township of Otematata looking towards the project site  
(1962) Waitaki District Archive**

While Otematata's infrastructure and amenities were new and modern, much of its housing stock was basic and recycled. The bulk of the town's dwellings were imported atop large trucks from the decommissioned hydro-towns of Roxburgh and Hawea. Sheridan (1995, p.5) reports, "After two years 437 houses had been transported ... as well as 400 single men's huts". These transportable homes were necessarily light-weight, small and basic in design. Some were plain single-roomed timber cabins, utilised in the village as 'single-men's huts'. Others, also very basic in design, had multiple rooms (two or three). These dwellings were known as 'Regulation 130 T-shaped houses', a simple design which remains a celebrated feature of Otematata's contemporary village-scape (Photograph 7).

As the town took shape, the imported dwellings were clustered together – each with its own small parcel of land – forming Otematata's distinct worker precincts or 'camps'. While each house was reconditioned and redecorated, tenants often personalised the dwelling by landscaping their section (Sheridan, 1995). A more permanent but smaller residential zone – comprising newly constructed homes made of permanent materials (such as brick veneer cladding) and more sophisticated infrastructure – was also developed, but this was set aside for higher ranking officials of the New Zealand Electricity Department (NZED) (Photograph 8). Commenting on this arrangement, Taylor & Bettsworth (1983) argued that the social stratification of the workforce in Otematata was reflected in the type and size of house a resident was assigned, usually allocated according to workforce status. One interviewee, who lived on the main street of the more permanent zone (Rata Drive) during the dam construction period, described the situation:

*We came to Rata Drive, which was the only place that was meant to survive after the construction [of the dams]. That's why it had curbing and more substantial houses. When we came it was actually called the "Permanent Village". It was always us and them. The workers thought that people in Rata Drive were snobs!*

Another interviewee, who had been employed as a technician on the hydro project, added:

*There was a hierarchy in the houses that were here – the type of house you had reflected how important your job was. There was a village hierarchy. I had quite a low ranking job – a technician – and so ended up in an area with the engineers. Because I was a staff member we had a staff house. It wasn't the most comfortable place to be living because we had two small children – there was definitely a hierarchy of houses.*

Unlike other rural towns in New Zealand, Otematata did not have a town council or local government administrative body. Instead, the Ministry of Works (MOW) assumed sole control, with the newly created Otematata Welfare Association passed responsibility for the management of all social amenities. Few residents contested this governance arrangement. One long-time resident recalled how well the MOW looked after the town's population during the dam construction years through a continuous programme of maintenance and community improvement (also see Sheridan, 1995, p.14):

*The maternity hospital was huge and there were lots of activities and clubs. If we needed a playground in the school it would just get made. Our houses were painted on a regular basis. It seems like it was a communist run town! I suppose it was, but not in a bad way! We even had a Miss Otematata contest. The MOW [Ministry of Works] was the main employer ... The hydro God!*

Another interviewee (a long-term resident) provided a similar positive recollection:

*It was almost like being part of a big family and was comforting to know you belonged to the organisation. We used to joke about it in the old days: "Uncle MOW will fix this," and "Uncle MOW will fix that." It was like being part of a big family.*



**Photograph 7: Montage of Otematata T-Shape houses**





**Photograph 8: The permanent village**

By August 1959 the population of Otematata had reached 1,700 from a base area population of just 26 in 1956.<sup>2</sup> The town's early and rapid growth showed no sign of slowing, creating an ongoing need to expand its resource base (Stenhouse, 1976). By the start of the 1960s the village had: a district high school accommodating 460 pupils; a kindergarten for 60 children; two St John Ambulance vehicles; a local fire brigade with two appliances; and a maternity hospital (Sheridan, 1995).<sup>3</sup> To entertain the burgeoning population, a well-equipped library was also built alongside a 650-seat movie cinema (Photograph 9), which also offered live shows. Additionally, more sports clubs were established including those for: basketball, cricket, darts, badminton, boxing, rugby (Photograph 10), swimming, marching, table tennis and tennis.<sup>4</sup>

Recorded personal accounts of everyday life in the hydro-town during the dam construction years are generally very positive, particularly with respect to the vibrancy of "community" and family life (Photograph 11). The only notable exceptions are stories of coping through extremely cold winters in uninsulated homes and/or the exhausting work-cycles demanded by dam construction. Sheridan (1995), for example, comments on the friendliness, genuineness and generosity of neighbours and the wider close-knit community, and the simplicity and pleasure of living and raising a family in a small rural village which had all the resources of a much bigger town. Sheridan (1995, p.14) also reports, however, moments of monotony and repetition, especially for the 'housewives' of the town's construction workers who worked long hours, often around the clock:

*Loneliness often invaded them, as without companionship a housewife's daily routine held little to look forward to. Friends and neighbours formed an essential link when together with their children they would meet at each other's homes. A friendly chat was like a tonic at times but even that became part of the routine.*

The numerous sports clubs and community organisations which formed in the village provided crucial channels for social interaction and community connectedness. Children also helped to connect families through school activities and the friendships which formed among students of similar age.

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<sup>2</sup> Prior to the development of Benmore the Otematata area comprised only a few 'high country' sheep stations – Rostriever Run, owned by the Munro family, and Otematata Station owned by the Cameron family (Explore Otematata, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> By the end of its first year the maternity hospital had delivered 135 babies a birth rate of almost twice the national average at the time (Sheridan, 1995). The first child was born in Otematata Maternity Hospital in December 1958. By 1966, more than 1000 babies had been born, with a record number of 179 births in 1964. That year the town's population was at its peak of 4166 people (Meridian Energy, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> There was also a local brass band who's "finest moment came when it played at the South Island marching girls' championships" (Meridian, 2005, p.45).





**Photograph 9: Otematata's modern shopping centre and cinema (c1962)  
Waitaki District Archive**

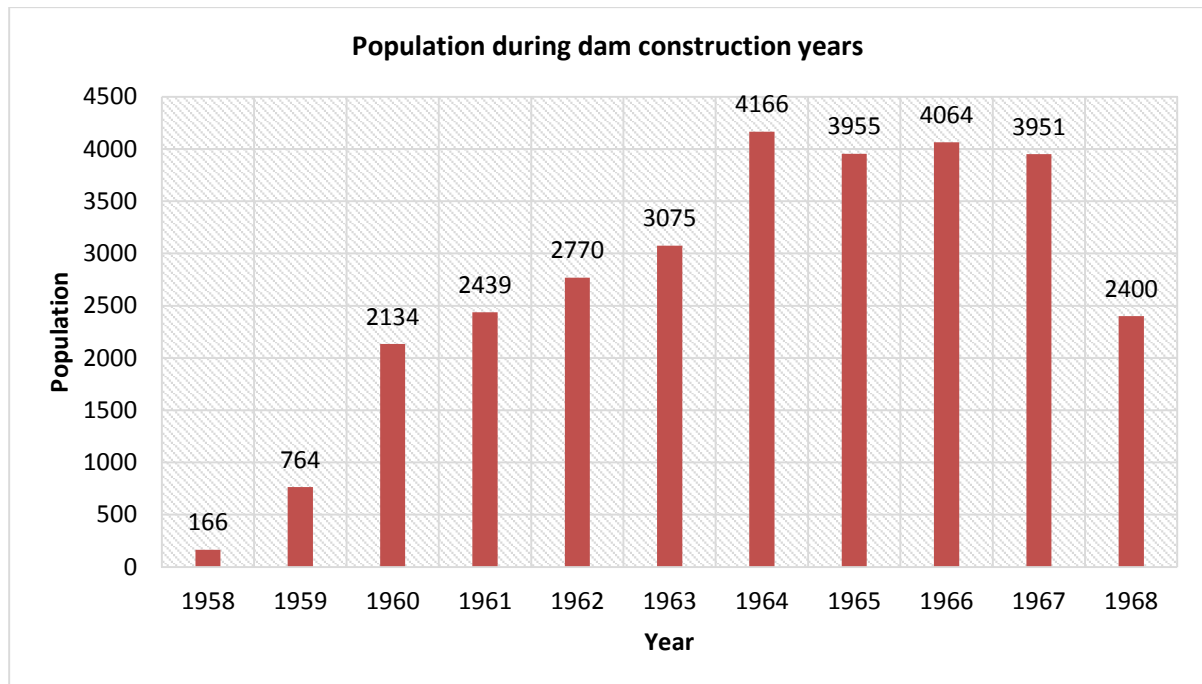


**Photograph 10: Sport – an important part of community life (1959)  
Waitaki District Archive**



**Photograph 11: The social life of Otematata. From top: building a snowman (c1967). Middle: school sports day (c1967). Bottom: Miss Otematata contest (c1967)  
Waitaki District Archive**

Figure 1 shows the Otematata total population during the dam construction years (Meridian Energy, 2005). Noticeable is the rapid growth of Otematata's population over its first six years. It also depicts the peak in the population, over a four year period, during the mid-1960s, at around 4000 people, when dam construction was in full flight. Also notable is the swift fall in population in 1968, when the Benmore Dam was completed and work at neighbouring Aviemore Dam began to wind down. Then, Otematata's population dropped from 4000 to 2400 over the period of just a year.



**Figure 1: Total population of Otematata during dam construction (Source: Meridian Energy, 2005)**

While always anticipated, one consequence of the sharp decline in the population of Otematata in the late 1960s was the closing of some local businesses and services, including the departure of the local doctor and dentist. Sheridan (1995, p.19) provides the following first-hand account of the early days of the decline:

*The rundown of labour as Aviemore neared completion meant slow extinction for the town. Shopkeepers also wondered what the future would hold for them as efforts to find use for the 900 houses and amenities had failed ... Gradually as time wound down people left, taking with them the skills that had built an empire. Relentlessly the government stood by watching without compassion as families moved away from the town of their children's birth. The village and its dignity slowly crumbled.*

While the process of out-migration was underway, a small team of hydro-workers remained in Otematata to operate and maintain the power stations; most of them acquiring accommodation in the 'permanent village' which had been designed with this continuing use in mind. This provided Otematata with a small but enduring permanent population base, and to some degree maintained its function as a hydro-station support village. Also bolstering Otematata's population, albeit temporarily, was a government decision to proceed with another hydro project in nearby Twizel (see Taylor et al., 2004). It was the MOW's objective that Otematata-based workers and their families would shift to Twizel to construct the Upper Waitaki Power scheme, but for a short period of time, in the interim,

many of them were to remain living in and commuting from Otematata until the residential workers' quarters at Twizel were ready for occupation (The Press, 2013; McClintock, 1999; Taylor et al, 2004). The Otematata housing stock was not robust enough to withstand another move and was not suitable for Twizel's more rigorous climate; as a consequence the Twizel settlement comprised new housing stock, much of which was constructed in Otematata.

While Otematata had found a lifeline of sorts, questions still remained about the ultimate fate of the temporary hydro-town. The government's original plans were to retain only the small section of the village which now housed the skeleton workforce, disestablishing and removing the remainder. They also intended to set aside a small area of land near Sailors Cutting on nearby Lake Benmore to be used as a lakeside holiday village, once the hydro works were completed. However, the idea of retaining some part of Otematata – to accommodate a mix of permanent and seasonal residents – was raised at a Waitaki Lakes Committee meeting in 1967. In its favour, Otematata was an already established village with good roads, sewerage and water supply, and also houses of sufficient standard to maintain a sizable community. As a seasonal holiday and tourism destination, Otematata offered good fishing, swimming and boating opportunities on the newly-constructed man-made hydro-lakes located nearby, as well as being conveniently located for visits to a variety of attractive day-trip destinations, including Mount Cook. The regional newspaper provided the following prognosis of the situation:

*With the completion of Aviemore, Otematata's usefulness has declined and the next two years will see the steady drift of workers to Twizel and the transfer of hundreds of buildings and services up the valley. Ultimately, only a small permanent village will remain at Otematata to house New Zealand Electricity Department personnel. However, there is a move afoot to retain part of Otematata – probably adjacent to the NZED village – as a tourist centre. It is believed in some quarters that Otematata could be the base for the foremost aquatic playground in the South Island (Timaru Herald, April 12, 1969, p.15).*

While it was recognised that Otematata had great recreational potential and a future as a holiday home village, several concerns were raised. One related to the town's cold winter climate which might put people off buying property, moving to or visiting the area during the winter season. Like many inland areas in New Zealand's South Island, Otematata has weather that ranges from very cold in winter to very hot in summer. As noted in Section 1.3, the temperatures have ranged from 35.7degC to -6.7degC, with annual rainfall ranging from 282mm to 431mm (Explore Otematata, 2015).

Financial aspects – associated with the maintenance, administration costs and a possible lack of public demand for basic houses – were also foreseen as potential difficulties with making Otematata a permanent town. In July 1969, however, the market was tested with 50 houses and 200 sections offered for sale (Sheridan, 1995). There was keen interest and, on this basis, a final decision was made to retain much, but not all, of the village (Sheridan, 1995; McClintock, 1999). The decision marked the starting point of the town's gradual transformation, over subsequent decades, from *temporary* hydro village to a *permanent* settlement comprising a mix of permanent residents (including the remaining hydro workforce) and holiday home owners.<sup>5</sup> The chain of events was summed up well by one long-term resident interviewee:

*What happened was, the MOW had set aside an area of land beside Sailors Cutting for a fishing village – a little paddock sort of thing. They thought that if fishing was ever going to occur then this was the site for it. The recreational people who had been fishing up here and had recognised the potential of the hydro lakes went to the*

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<sup>5</sup> The Otematata Welfare Association held its last meeting in September 1971 with all monies and assets passed over to the new owners – the Twizel Community Council. In 1972, when town control passed from the Ministry of Works (MOW) to the Waitaki County Council, Otematata officially became a permanent settlement (Sheridan, 1995, p.57).

*government and said Otematata is already established and is an ideal fishing village! They asked if some of it could be retained and that's how it came about. The MOW were dead against it because the town had done its dash. They confronted the issue in 1972. They were busy demolishing the village, to leave nothing here in accordance with the plan, but the government now insisted that they sell houses here for the nucleus of a fishing village. The demand for holiday homes was enormous!*

It should be noted at this point, as indicated in the quote above, that while it was eventually made official that Otematata would be saved from full deconstruction, a significant area of the town was, at the time, in the process of being decommissioned, with many workers dwellings and community buildings being demolished or removed from the site (some sold and relocated around New Zealand as holiday homes or to be used out outbuildings). McClintock (1999, p.21), for example, notes that in October 1975, Otematata had only 320 dwellings and 50 vacant sections, whereas four years previously there had been 1,100 houses. Bayliss (2009), a resident of Otematata from 1964, recalls that at the same time houses were being sold, others were being removed by the Ministry of Works, as was planned from the outset, from the outer perimeter of the town inwards. Photographic evidence shows that the 'single-men's camp' which was located on the outer perimeter of the town, where the golf course now stands, was completely dismantled and removed, as was about half of the residential area on the outskirts of the main permanent village. Today, that latter area is fenced off and has reverted to farmland; but the asphalt streets still remain, along with the odd concrete foundation – evidence of where workers' houses once stood (Photograph 12).

As houses and community buildings were being removed, so too were some local shops. One of our long-term resident interviewees recalled their father's involvement in lobbying to keep all the stores from being decommissioned and removed, so that Otematata retained a retail base and basic services for the workers who remained and people who visited:

*My father was very fond of this area and when they were going to remove everything, he was one of the people who lobbied for them to keep something. He put in a good move to keep a shop here – to keep the corner shop as a general store. One half of it had been an old hardware shop so initially that was just used as a store room, before it was opened as a second shop – a gift and clothing shop. The holiday people would come and use it which was good business.*

The ultimate outcome of public lobbying to keep part of the town was the saving of about half the houses and a number of key services, including the local school. But as we report in the next section, over the next three decades, Otematata's resident population continued to fall, resulting in more key services leaving the area. As a counter to this process of decline was Otematata's rise as a rural holiday home village/outdoor recreation mecca, attracting thousands of visitors, mostly domestic, over the summer months. The visitor economy would become Otematata's new lifeline.





**Photograph 12: Top: aerial view of Otematata after workers' accommodation was removed (1994). Waitaki District Archive  
Bottom: a fenced off street where workers' houses once stood (2014)**

### 3.3 The rise of a rural holiday home village (1970s – 1990s)

Statistics New Zealand’s five-yearly<sup>6</sup> Census of Population and Dwellings provides longitudinal data on the population of Otematata in the post-dam construction era (Figure 2). These data show that in 1971, several years after the completion of the Aviemore hydro project, the population of Otematata had fallen to 1,410. Over the next decade, *permanent resident* numbers continued to fall, reaching a new low of 414 in 1981. This figure held relatively steady until the turn of the century, when it fell again. While indicative of a town in serious decline, the falling population figures tell only part of the story, as it was also over this period that an increasing number of houses were sold on as holiday homes to new part-time, but full rate-paying, residents, whose association with the town is not reflected in the census ‘resident’ statistics. The considerable shift in Otematata’s status as a place of permanent residence to holiday home destination is summed up well by Frost (2009, n.p.):

*There cannot be many towns where houses owned by holiday makers, vastly outnumber those owned by permanent residents. For most of the year the streets of Otematata are quiet and fairly empty. You can walk for thirty minutes anywhere in town and see no-one. During long weekends, school and summer holidays the town fills to overflowing. We came to visit for a few days eight years ago. Three weeks later we returned to buy a house. Now we want to live nowhere else.*

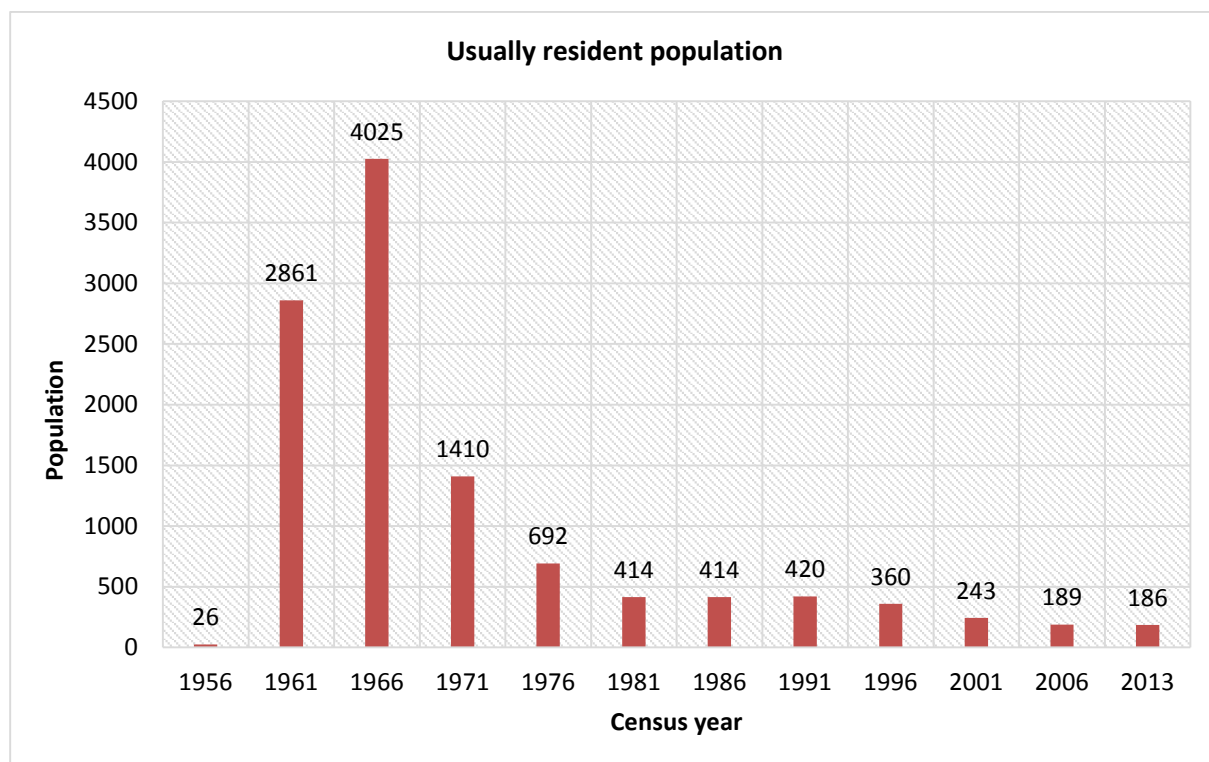


Figure 2: Usually resident population of Otematata: Census years 1956-2013 (Source: Statistics New Zealand)

<sup>6</sup> The time series is irregular because the 2011 Census was cancelled after the Canterbury earthquake on 22 February 2011: as a result, the gap between this Census and the last one is seven years.

The long-term residents interviewed all talked about the 'sell-off' of the MOW's housing stock in the late 1960s and early 1970s both to existing residents and to holiday home owners. Most remembered the low cost of the houses, which made them particularly appealing to those who had worked in the village and grown attached to it during the dam-construction years. One long-term resident interviewed, who had lived in the town for over 50 years, reported that some of the houses in the village were bought by hydro workers who stayed in them until they retired and then passed them on to younger family members. That resident also noted the unanticipated appeal, at the time, of the houses to 'outsiders' – those who could afford and desired a second/holiday home, the outcome of which changed the character of the community forever:

*When the dams finished, the village began to change in character. They sold off many of the homes for \$750. We had four children by that time and we sat round the table and discussed selling our car to buy one and we thought no-one else would want to come out here ... those that were working here jumped at the chance and bought them and then things changed as the government decided they were selling everything off because workers were no longer needed. Then people with the money to have a holiday home started coming in ... and that changed its [the town's] character (Long-time resident).*

Another long-term resident also commented on the bargain these new buyers were getting: "A \$750 holiday home, in a town with rubbish collection, street lights, tar sealed roads, garages – everything! People flocked here" (Long-time resident).

A key attraction for Otematata holiday home buyers was the rural recreation resource-base and scenic landscape created by the Benmore and Aviemore Dams – most notably (man-made) Lakes Benmore and Aviemore. Landscaping, a fish rescue programme (including the first man-made trout spawning scheme in New Zealand) and the protection of bird life were important considerations during the construction of the dams and, at their completion, the area was left with a valuable recreation legacy in the form of public reserve areas, boating facilities and walking tracks in an area enhanced greatly by a lakeside landscaping plan<sup>7</sup> which continued around the lakes for several decades (Photograph 13).

*They say people laughed when they saw the marina built at Sailor's Cutting. There was nothing between the marina and the hill but shingle and river plain. But the engineers had planned and calculated the water level to a matter of inches. And when the lake filled the water spread across the shingle plain to where it lapped just beneath the newly built marina. The lake provided a new landscape (Meridian Energy, 2005: 48).*

Meridian, (the current manifestation of electricity ownership – see footnote 9), has continued to support the communities of the Waitaki Valley – including Otematata – via the Waitaki Community Fund. This fund supports community driven projects and locally run initiatives. In its most recent funding round announcement, Meridian committed \$1 million to community-based projects over the period 2013 – 2015 (Meridian Energy, 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> The Waitaki Lakes Committee, which formed in 1964 prior to the filling of Lake Benmore, takes particular interest in on-going tree planting around the lakes, the up-keep of camping grounds, picnic spots and walkways and the vegetation of native growth on the islands. The establishment of the committee was prompted by the post-Tekapo dam development and the failure to capitalise on the recreational values of the lakes to provide an economic boost for communities left behind (Bruce, 2013). The first lakeside development and landscaping undertaken by the committee was at Sailors Cutting and Haldon on Lake Benmore; over time facilities around Lake Aviemore were added. The committee extended its overview to the Waitaki River around 20 years ago, adding "river" to its name (Bruce, 2013). Bruce (2013) also reported that, despite its longevity – a 50th anniversary celebration was planned for April 2014 – the committee was struggling to attract members.





Photograph 13: Sailors Cutting and Loch Laird – parts of the Waitaki hydro project's recreation legacy

Through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, use of Lakes Benmore and Aviemore for recreation and camping increased greatly, to the point where, in 1996, it was recognised that the recreation amenities which had been installed in the 1960s and 1970s were under (unanticipated) pressure, particularly the boat launching ramps and camping spots (McMillan, 1996). Four years later, this same issue generated an urgent discussion around the need for recreation infrastructure improvements and better lake/campground management; however, at the centre of this spirited debate was the question of exactly whose responsibility it was to pay for and resolve these matters.<sup>8</sup>

While the area's recreation offerings drew visitors and holiday home purchasers/owners to the area through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the township itself experienced a shock in the late 1980s when the permanent (albeit small) team of hydro-staff – those who had remained in the village after the dams were built – were relocated to new headquarters in Twizel. For a town with an already small permanent population, this would have an immediate effect. A number of the long-time residents interviewed mentioned this keystone moment in the lifecycle of the town, noting critical losses (in terms of population, which had a strong negative impact on the school role), but also gains for the community, most notably, the acquisition of a large and relatively new office building which would eventually become the heart of community activity. The following quote illustrates some of these changes:<sup>9</sup>

*In the last 20 years one of the biggest changes I've seen, well after the dams were built we had a lot of engineers, and project managers and public relations type people working here because they opened up the big ECNZ building. It's now been sold and part of the shop. There used to be a great mix of people working there, right up to the 1990s, but then the offices went to Twizel and the people started to go too (Long-term resident).*

The ECNZ building, referred to above (Photograph 14) was one of only a handful of new buildings to be erected in Otematata in the post-dam construction years:

*The NZED had their offices in the big building and then they abandoned it. When the opportunity came up to purchase it the community got it – it was a wonderful accomplishment with various loans and donations and hard work – we now own that building as a community and a lovely hall that has been well used, a lovely café, lovely shop and the outside has been turned into a parking area – it's a real asset. That's been one of the great things that's happened here in the last few years (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*

*We have a community centre. It used to belong to Meridian and the Council purchased it and they leased part of it out to the shop and the café and the other part is our community centre and the gymnasium. It was only about 15 years after it was built that the council bought it (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*

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<sup>8</sup> In 2000 it was reported that a Waitaki District Council management team recommended the council withdraw from negotiations with Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) over future management of the lakeside reserves. The council had growing concern over the cost of upgrading facilities at the reserves, meeting Resource Management Act conditions and obtaining resource consents for water, sewage disposal and other services. Local businesses questioned whether these decision makers understood the importance of camping to the area ('Waitaki lakes camping vital', 2000). A year later the dispute was still running with Waitaki District Council continuing to express their reluctance to take responsibility for campgrounds that did not meet Resource Management Act standards ('Waitaki camps may close', 2001).

<sup>9</sup> A number of changes have also occurred with respect to the management and operation of the Benmore Dam, chief amongst which was the change in ownership in 1999 from the New Zealand Electricity Department (NZED) to Meridian Energy. The Electricity Corporation of New Zealand Ltd (ECNZ) was a transition entity established in an interim period between NZED and Meridian ownership.

Since the closing of the NZED offices and the relocation of its small team of permanent staff, contracted dam-workers intermittently stay in the town, using village accommodation, including holiday homes, as a base from which to work. The teams have varied in numbers and length of stay depending on the nature of the work being undertaken at the dam sites.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, for example, a team of over 100 staff had resided in the town to undertake a significant new programme of work on the dams, lasting two years.<sup>11</sup> At the time of this research, that work was winding down and local businesses were adjusting to the decrease in population and fall in level of local trade:

*The big change at the moment is that they're upgrading all the power stations ... the town is doing quite well out of that. They started with Benmore a couple of years ago ... that doubled the size of the town! And they were renting holiday homes and rooms at the hotel. One thing about the contractors is that they stay here and support us. We've got plumbers at the moment and they come from the North Island. They're going home tomorrow and they haven't been home for 5 weeks. They work pretty much 10 days on and a few days off (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*

*We had a boom ... we were cleaning up to 32 houses a week so that provided part time employment for me and three ladies (Resident since 2005, ex-holiday home owner).*



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<sup>10</sup> The power stations are now operated by remote control, with staff located in Wellington and Christchurch. One resident noted that: "There are no workers in any of the power stations now. Aviemore, Benmore, Waitaki and the Ohau stations, even Twizel is unmanned. It's all done by remote control from Wellington and Christchurch ... you don't need a lot of people living here. Even the maintenance is done on contract. We've just had a lot of contractors here because they've been doing some work, but that's just finished and of course now they're gone!" (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker)

<sup>11</sup> This was the Pole 3 project at Benmore Dam, which increased the capacity of the high voltage direct current (HVDC) inter-island link that connects Haywards substation in the North Island and Benmore substation in the South Island (Transpower, 2010). Using state-of-the-art thyristor technology, the new station replaced the 45-year-old Pole 1 equipment. The project was critical for enabling renewable generation to supply the North Island, and for supporting South Island electricity demands in dry years. According to one of the project contractors: "Adverse weather conditions, with temperatures down to 8 degrees in winter and up to 35 degrees in summer, made the job challenging at times" (Leighs Construction, 2015).

### 3.4 Otematata in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

For most informants, the dam-related upgrades and temporary population influx described above were welcomed, but recognised as being only a temporary respite from both population and economic decline. The first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have presented Otematata's resident population with significant challenges (most notably the loss of their school and the continuing ageing of the population). In contrast, holiday home owners and visitors have continued to be attracted to the town by affordable property, myriad recreation opportunities and access to the small cluster of public services and facilities which still exist in the town. In 2014 these included: a volunteer fire brigade and first response medical unit; a small grocery shop with postal services; a café and several restaurants; social meeting places including the Lakes Hotel and the Otematata District Club; an unmanned 24-hour petrol pump; playground and skate park; bowling green; golf course; tennis courts; community gym; and small library. A full prolife of Otematata today can be found on town promotion websites (see, for example, <http://www.exploreotematata.co.nz/>). The next section examines four key aspects of life in Otematata in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: recreation, property, loss of a school and the Census picture.

#### 3.4.1 Recreation

Otematata's status as a hub for outdoor recreation activity continues to grow, reinforced (most recently) by its official designation as a stopping point on the Alps to Ocean (A20) cycle trail (a part of the government's National Cycleway Project). The A20 was a key talking point among interviewees, with most anticipating the future positive effect it would have on the village (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). The recreational use of the wider (Waitaki) catchment has attracted considerable interest over the last 10 years, in part driven by proposed changes to water use and allocation and the effect these proposals might have on patterns of recreational activity and access.

One such study – a collation of secondary data sources combined with interviews – was carried out by Leisure Matters (2004) for the Ministry for the Environment. While not focused on Otematata per se, a number of relevant facts about the recreational use of nearby Lakes Benmore and Aviemore and their environs can be drawn from the report. For example, the Otematata area is recognised for its high quality boating opportunities (on the local hydro-lakes), with an estimated 70-130 boats, weather dependent, launching from Sailors Cutting on a busy day (with up to 3000 on the lakes on a busy weekend). Lake Aviemore is also recognised in the report for its nationally significant sailing and windsurfing values. This is reflected in the fact that annually, each Labour weekend, the Timaru Yacht Club runs the Meridian Aviemore Classic – the biggest trailer yacht regatta in New Zealand. In 2013 the regatta attracted 92 yachts, its second highest turnout in 25 years of the event (Photograph 15).



**Photograph 15: The Meridian Aviemore Classic, Labour Weekend 2013**

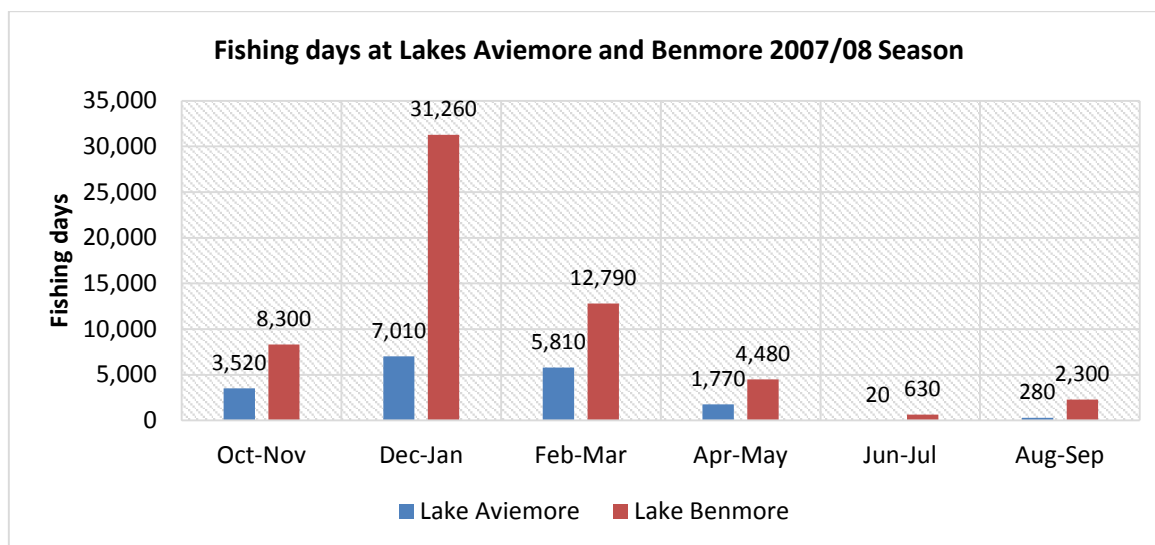


Although the event is run by the Timaru Yacht and Power Boat Club, the local Otematata community is also involved. In 2013, the prize giving was held in the Otematata Community Hall with a meal catered for by the Otematata Hotel. In 2010 the first Aviemore Challenge Trophy event (for windsurfers) was held at Lake Aviemore and attracted 19 entrants; the event has been held annually since. A direct economic benefit is now derived from boat ramp fees. In the 2011-12 summer season the Waitaki District Council introduced these fees at all Waitaki lakes launching facilities to help pay for maintenance, repairs and special projects at the seven boat ramps in the district. The collection of \$50 for a season pass and \$5 for a day pass was expected to generate \$20,000 in revenue over the summer season (Filipe, 2012).

Leisure Matters (2004) notes that Lakes Benmore and Aviemore are also highly valued for recreational fishing. This is supported in the National Angling Survey<sup>12</sup> administered by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) for Fish and Game New Zealand (FGNZ). Table 1 shows the fishing day data from three surveys (in 1994-95, 2001-02 and 2007-08) for fishing locations around Otematata. It shows a large increase in angler days at Lake Benmore, which in the 2007/2008 season was by far the most used lake in the area for angling. Figure 3 shows the bi-monthly distribution of angler days for the 2007-08 season. These data show the concentration of activity in the summer months and, in particular and reinforcing the point made above, the large number of fishing days on Lake Benmore in the December-January months by comparison to Lake Aviemore.

**Table 1: Angler days at fishing locations around Otematata (Source: Unwin, 2009)**

Location	Season		
	1994-95	2001-02	2007-08
Lake Waitaki	5230 ± 1160	3050 ± 880	3570 ± 900
Lake Aviemore	8850 ± 1130	11,580 ± 1490	18,410 ± 2740
Lake Benmore	12,830 ± 1480	21,740 ± 1680	59,750 ± 4600
Otematata River	590 ± 210	180 ± 110	1060 ± 520



**Figure 3: Fishing days at Lakes Aviemore and Benmore 2007/08 (Source: Unwin, 2009)**

<sup>12</sup> These surveys are used to estimate the relative annual use of all rivers and lakes managed by FGNZ. Data is collected via an ‘offsite’ telephone survey of New Zealand-resident fishing licence holders who are asked which waters they have fished in the previous two months and the number of days they have spent fishing at each location. NIWA note that “...angler usage [or angler fishing days] is one of the most fundamental parameters needed to characterise a fishery, as well as being relatively easy to define and measure” (Unwin, 2009).

A survey of recreation guidebooks and council literature indicates that walking, mountain biking, swimming and camping are also popular activities in the area (Photograph 16). Leisure Matters (2004) estimated that (a decade ago) 50,000 campers – mainly domestic visitors – used the area over the summer season. Season and day pass data for the Waitaki District Council lakes camping areas (includes Parsons Rock, Boat Harbour, Wildlife, Loch Laird, Sailors Cutting and Lake Middleton) for the 2013-14 season (running from the 3rd Saturday in September to 1st Sunday in May) are shown in Table 2. These data do not indicate how many times season pass holders visit; day pass holders are those visiting overnight and may be under-reported as an honesty system is used on days that council staff are not present. The table is interesting because it highlights the regional significance of the campgrounds, with Canterbury residents the primary purchasers of season passes. Four campgrounds located on the northern side of the Waitaki (Briars Gully, Te Akatarawa, Waitangi and Fisherman’s Bend) are administered by Waimate District Council. Over the last three camping seasons (run over the same dates as those operated by Waitaki District Council) the number of season tickets sold have fallen slightly from 370 in 2011-12, to 350 in 2012-13 and 340 in 2013-14.

**Table 2: Season and day passes at Waitaki lakes camping areas 2013-14 season**

Home location	Season passes	Day passes
Canterbury	73	549
Waitaki	7	218
Rest of Otago	11	220
Rest of South Island		53
North Island		53

A prevalent media topic over the last decade has been behavioural issues associated with some holiday visitors – particularly youth staying in the lakeside camping areas. Labour Weekend in the Otematata area is particularly popular with local high school students and youth from nearby towns and a ‘party tradition’ has evolved over the last few years. A number of restrictions have been put in place in an effort to control behaviour including temporary liquor bans during all busy holiday periods and the establishment of a separate fenced-off camping area near Loch Laird for youths at Labour Weekend (Studholme, 2011). Thirty youths were trespassed after out-of-control parties and vandalism during Labour Weekend in 2013: authorities had closed down the Loch Laird campsite after raucous behaviour, but the trouble moved to the Briars Gully campsite on the Waimate District side of the lake (‘Youths leave’, 2013). In 2013 the Waitaki district’s camp supervisor also called for the council to ban glass bottles near the lakes over summer as a result of the mess being left by some visitors (‘Bottle ban wanted’, 2013). Photograph 17 shows that youth camping was also banned at the Boat Harbour campsite while the yachting regatta was on. Most interviewees identified this as one of the few (but significant) negative impacts associated with being a holiday destination:

*One of our biggest problems is camping around the lake. In the holidays the young ones drink a lot so they’ve put a liquor ban on except for in a designated area - what we call the “bull ring”. They basically separate off from the family campers ... but the young ones let loose even within the village. They vandalised the toilets, they’ve wrecked a house! (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*



**Photograph 16: Lakeside recreation and camping**



Photograph 17: Boat Harbour campsite regulatory sign



### 3.4.2 Property

While recreation has been at the forefront of applied research in the Otematata area, there has also been some interest in the local housing market, although much of this is in the form of investigative journalism concentrating on the affordability of holiday homes in the area. An article published in *The National Business Review* in 2002, for example, suggests that the affordability of holiday homes in the Waitaki District's smaller rural towns had been recognised for over a decade, particularly among 'lifestylers' looking for an authentic Kiwi experience – including Otematata – where they could still purchase a sound three-bedroomed home for under \$100,000 as well as higher-priced new properties (Hutching, 2002).

An assessment of key housing statistics supports the view that Otematata property is relatively affordable when compared to other rural lakeside locations. Data from Quotable Value show that 67 Otematata properties were sold between August 2009 and January 2014 (<http://www.qv.co.nz/suburb/area-profile/otematata/2333>). Over this period the Median E-Valuer<sup>13</sup> showed that the market value of Otematata homes peaked at around \$203,000 (in the December 1, 2009 and April 1, 2014 months) and fell to \$182,200 in the December 1, 2011 month. Table 3 shows that Otematata housing prices are around the mid-point of the property price range when compared with other hydro-towns, but are much cheaper than "premier" holiday home destinations, such as Lake Wanaka.

**Table 3: Comparison of median E-Valuer housing prices (at June 1, 2014)**

Town	Median E-Valuer
Wanaka (Premier)	\$670,500
Cromwell (Hydro)	\$371,000
Twizel (Hydro)	\$261,200
<b>Otematata (Hydro)</b>	<b>\$198,650</b>
Roxburgh (area) (Hydro)	\$175,900
Turangi (Hydro)	\$168,250
Mangakino (Hydro)	\$138,400*

\*E-Valuer data from October 1, 2013

A scan of the property websites [www.realestate.co.nz](http://www.realestate.co.nz) and [www.trademe.co.nz](http://www.trademe.co.nz) in June 2014 showed that 38 properties were 'for sale' in Otematata.<sup>14</sup> Eighteen of the properties were permanent houses on their own section of land, with eight described specifically as "cottages" and/ or small "T shaped" homes. Sixteen of the eighteen house/land packages included asking prices, with the average being \$214,000 (range: \$165,000 – \$258,000), which again supports the view that, by today's standards in New Zealand, Otematata remains a relatively inexpensive place to buy either a permanent or holiday/second home. Eleven of the 18 homes were explicitly marketed as 'holiday homes', with the colloquial term 'bach' or 'crib'<sup>15</sup> occasionally used in place of the term 'holiday home' in the associated advertising. Six of the advertisements referred to the outdoor recreation opportunities available to those living (or owning property) in the district. These descriptions included the occasional mention of

<sup>13</sup> An E-Valuer gives an instant estimate of the current market value for a property. It is an Automated Valuation Model (AVM) and is based on recent, nearby comparable sales (<http://www.qv.co.nz/valuations/e-valuer>).

<sup>14</sup> Included among these were 14 separate lots of land, spread across the town's two new subdivisions (discussed in Chapter 4), and six 'other' sections located around the village. It is worth noting that three of these sections of land were being marketed specifically as the ideal site for building a new 'holiday' home, crib or bach.

<sup>15</sup> Both bach and crib are commonly used to describe holiday homes in New Zealand with crib more often used in the southern regions; Otematata falls close to the boundary of usage between the two terms.

dedicated space around the home, generally a garage, for storing one's recreation gear (including boats) on the property. As one interviewee put it: *"the Otematata holiday home owners only want a big section with a shed they can put their boat in"*.

Occasional mention is also made in local real estate advertising of the natural amenity surrounding the township (including the lakes) and the recreation activities afforded in such an outdoor setting, as this advertising excerpt illustrates:

*Surrounded by the rugged peaks and beautiful lakes of the Waitaki Valley, this immaculate furnished holiday home consists of ... After a day on the lakes, fishing, boating – enjoy this sportsman paradise and watch your investment grow ... the valley is a popular spot for people who like fishing and for boating enthusiasts. Visitors flock from throughout New Zealand and from overseas to enjoy the outdoor pursuits and tranquillity.*

### **3.4.3 Loss of a school**

While Otematata can now be characterised primarily as a holiday home/outdoor recreation village, it is also still the permanent place of residence for a small and well-established (and ageing) population, including some original Benmore/Aviemore hydro-workers. It is also a town which has experienced ongoing public service withdrawal, the most significant of which was the closure and removal of the school (Photograph 18).

The Otematata Primary School was closed at the end of 2003 as part of country-wide education restructuring. At the time of the closure the school had a role of 15 pupils. The Otematata community strongly opposed the closure and the government's plan to develop a combined area school in Kurow (Worrall, 2003). For many interviewees, the loss of the local school was a major blow for the community – a community resource which, since the 1960s, had been the 'heartbeat of community life'. As one long-time resident noted *"the closing of the school was a real death in the village"*. One interviewee, who had moved to Otematata just before the school closed, expressed a similar sentiment: *"I think when the school closed here it killed it [the town] a bit. You can't hear the kids [any longer] and they always had lovely festivals and things happening at the school – it was lovely"*. Others talked about how many of the young families with children left town when the school closed because it created logistical/practical challenges for them; it has also had the related effect of detracting new (young) families from moving to the town:

*When the government closed our school that was the tipping point, when they took our school away and made the kids go to [neighbouring] Kurow. The question for us was where do our children go to school? How do they get there? For high school, if you are living here and don't do the boarding school thing it's a 20 minute drive to Kurow and then another hour bus trip to school to Oamaru – and that is twice a day! (Long-term resident).*

*The village is now predominantly an older generation – there used to be a school here and our kids went to it and it was a fantastic community, but when a lot of the parents whose kids were going to high school decided to shift it took the whole family away – so not just the senior child but the 3 or 4 underneath it as well (Long-term resident).*



Photograph 18: Top: Media coverage of school closures in the district (12 December 2003). Waitaki District Archive  
 Bottom: The Otematata School site 2014

### 3.4.4 The Census picture

A snapshot analysis of Otematata Census data usefully presents empirical evidence of some of the more recent socio-demographic changes occurring in the village. As already shown in Figure 2, one of the most observable recent trends is the continuing fall of Otematata’s population in the early 2000s, from 360 in 1996 to 243 in 2001; it then settled at about 200 people across the next two Census years (2006 and 2013). Another notable trend is the ageing population (Figure 4). The median age of the Otematata population is older than that of the Waitaki District: 52.6 years and 46.3 years respectively. In 2013, 32.3 per cent of Otematata’s permanent residents were aged 65 years and over, compared with 22.1 per cent of the total District population. Those aged under 15 years represented 9.7 per cent of the Otematata population, compared with 18.4 per cent for the district. Figure 4 below shows the gradual ageing of the Otematata population over the last four Census years, with the percentage aged over 60 years increasing to 44.6 per cent in 2013, compared to 17.6% in 1996. Over this period, the median age increased from 35 years in 1996, to 45 years in 2001, 53 years in 2006 and 55.1 years in 2013.

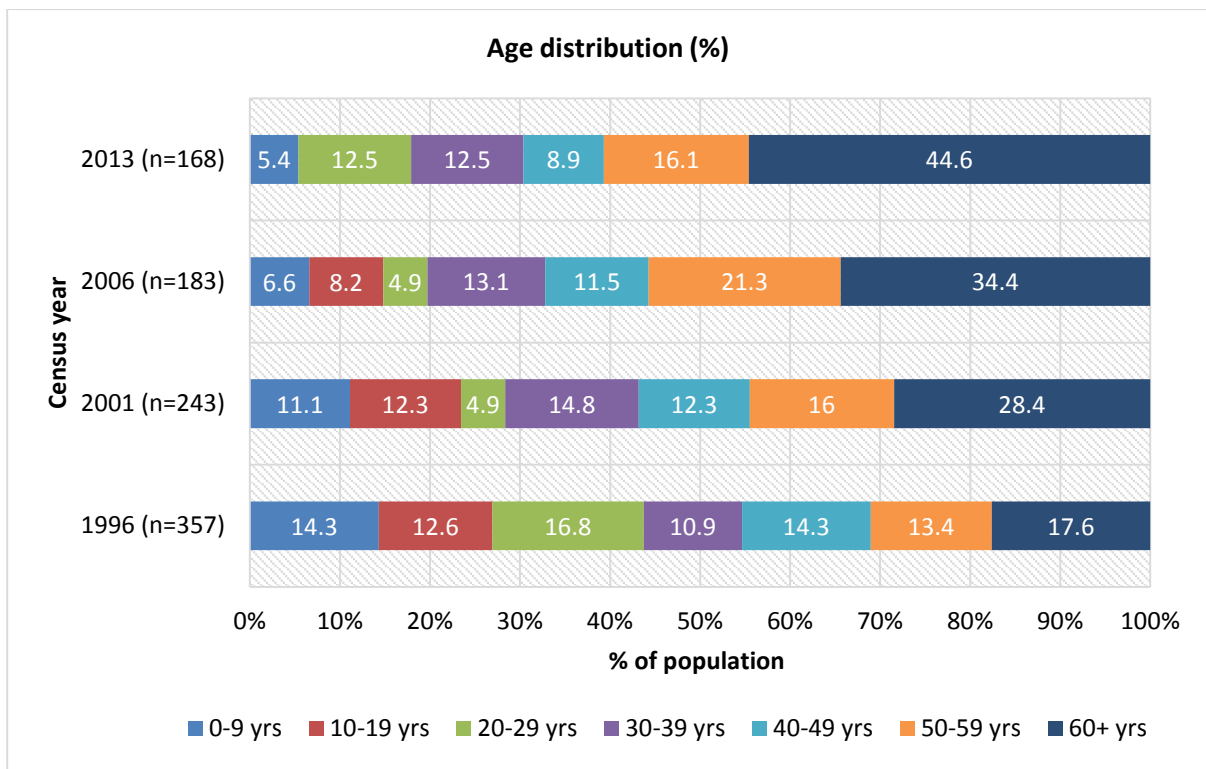


Figure 4: Age distribution of usually resident population at last 4 Census

Census data on *family type* also indicates a low number of young people in Otematata: couples with children make up only 22.2 per cent, and couples without children make up 72.2 per cent of all families (compared with 34.4% and 53.3% in Waitaki District, respectively). The average household size in Otematata was 1.9 people (Waitaki District 2.3 people).

With respect to housing, at the 2013 Census, as noted in the methods section (Chapter 2) there were 111 occupied dwellings and 336 unoccupied dwellings in Otematata, the latter commonly used as a proxy for the number of holiday homes in a location. Seventy two per cent of households in occupied private dwellings in Otematata owned the dwelling outright or held it in a family trust (compared with 72.5% in Waitaki District). There were no dwellings under construction at the time of the last Census (2013), but building consent data for the year ended December 2013 showed that there was one building consent issued for dwellings.

Business data show that for the year ended February 2013 there were 60 paid employees in Otematata (no change from 2006). The accommodation and food services industry accounted for the largest number of employed people ( $n=25$ ), followed by construction ( $n=15$ ), agriculture, forestry and fishing ( $n=15$ ) and retail trade ( $n=6$ ). Of the 171 people aged 15 years and over in Otematata at the 2013 Census, 46 per cent were employed full time and one per cent employed part time. Less than one per cent were unemployed (3 persons) and 37 per cent were not in the labour force. For people aged 15 years and over, the median income was \$27,000 (compared with a median of \$25,300 for all of Waitaki District and \$28,500 for all of New Zealand in 2013).

In 2013, 92.9 per cent of the Otematata population was of European ethnicity, 8.9 per cent were Maori and 1.8 per cent reported belonging to each of the other ethnic groups (i.e., Pacific peoples; Asian; Middle Eastern, Latin American, African; and Other ethnicity).<sup>16</sup> The most common birthplace, for the 17.9 per cent of people in Otematata who were born overseas, was UK and Ireland. English is the most common language spoken in Otematata.

### 3.5 Chapter summary

This part of the report has provided an historical-contextual backdrop for this study of Otematata, identifying some of the key changes that have occurred in the township since its development in the 1950s. It is not intended as an historical treatise, but provides a resource for contextualising and critically interpreting our primary data. We have established that the town was created in the 1950s to support the workforce of the Benmore and then Aviemore hydro-electricity projects and at its peak was home to over 4000 people. The settlement was never intended to be permanent and was developed on the understanding that it would be disestablished once the hydro works were completed (Brand, 2014). But in the late 1960s, when dam construction finished, a decision was made to retain some of Otematata as a recreation/fishing village; a small population of dam-workers also remained. In the decades since, the permanent resident population has declined markedly (and is 'ageing') and there have been various local shocks (such as the loss of the school in the early 2000s). Notwithstanding these changes, the town has evolved/adjusted, taking on a new life as a destination attracting a variety of outdoor recreation and holiday visitors. The challenges associated with more recent changes (and identified by key informants) are explored further in the next chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> Includes all people who stated each ethnic group. Where a person reported more than one ethnic group, they were counted in each applicable group. As a result percentages do not add up to 100.



## Chapter 4

### Life in Otematata Today: A Community Perspective

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this part of the report, we present a thematic analysis of the 11 semi-structured key informant interviews. Interviewees included: permanent residents, local (resident) business owners and a tourism industry administrator. Ten of the 11 interviewees were residents, with 5 of them also local business owners. While some residents had been there since the dam construction era (either working on the dam themselves, or as children of dam construction workers), others had moved to Otematata more recently. Some of the recent arrivals were of retirement age (and attracted by affordable property), others came exploring opportunities to live and work in Otematata long-term. Many interviewees identified a variety of attachment and association trajectories associated with Otematata, including: people camping in the area and then buying a holiday house there; habitual campers and holiday home owners moving permanently to Otematata to live and work; older holiday home owners retiring to Otematata; and, retirees moving from Otematata once they were too old to live so far from services, and so on. Another common experience/practice reported by interviewees, was that having brought their own children up in Otematata (but those children had moved on), they nowadays looked forward to welcoming them back for holiday visits. The residents interviewed all talked about the local 'community' as comprising permanent residents *and* holiday home owners.

The main objectives of the interviews were to: develop a detailed picture of everyday life in Otematata *today*, from the experiences of those who currently live in, or are closely associated with the town; to understand the attributes of the town that residents valued; and to examine in more detail recent changes in Otematata. The key informant interview data ultimately informed the development of the community survey (of residents and holiday home owners) reported in Chapter 5. This chapter is structured around five key themes distilled from the interviews: people, place and lifestyle; the role and contribution of holiday home owners; employment, business and (lack of) winter work; the "Alps to Ocean" cycle trail; and, real estate and land development. As noted in methods (Chapter 2, Section 2.3), to ensure the anonymity of the limited number of interviewees (drawn from a small population) any direct quotes are attributed simply according to their number of years of residency – short- or long-term. Where necessary for context, additional details of individual association with Otematata are included (e.g., local business owner).

#### 4.2 People, place and lifestyle

Whether a long-term resident or a more recent arrival to Otematata, all those interviewed spoke of their strong attachment to the town and its rural surrounds – the people, the place and the lifestyle it afforded. The positive attributes most often mentioned and valued included: strong interpersonal/neighbourly connections (a strong sense of 'community'), a local rural way-of-life (relaxed, quiet, safe, peaceful, stress free), the retro character of the built environment and the village's rural/wilderness surrounds. One long-term resident described their attachment to Otematata as a combination of these attributes, commenting that "*once you get it into your blood... It's the people and the place*".

The most common phrase used by interviewees to describe the social character of the community (comprising both holiday home owners and permanent residents) was 'close knit'. For many, this reflected a community which both 'looked after' and 'looked out' for each other:

*We had our 50th wedding anniversary three years ago and we put out a general invitation and said "we're going to be there and we'd love you to join us and have a*



*meal and make it a village thing” and we were blown away by how many came and how many of them were older people. I think the community thing is still here – we’re a close knit community ... If someone gets ill or something happens the whole community feels it (Long-term resident).*

A common way of expressing fondness for, and attachment to Otematata (as a place to live) was to compare it to other, in their view less desirable, rural places, particularly other hydro and/or holiday home villages. One resident, for example, who had also lived in nearby Twizel, acknowledged that while the two settlements had similar historical origins and attributes, Otematata had developed quite differently, managing to maintain a rural/small town feel. As one interviewee noted, *“it’s just like a small village and its country [life] ... I’d still rather be here than Twizel”*. Another long-term resident also compared Otematata to the neighbouring hydro-town: *“I like the climate which is amazing – better than Twizel. It’s tranquil too. I really like the fact that it’s a holiday town and you get a lot of interesting people come on holiday here.”*

Other interviewees were quick to compare the town to ‘premier’ tourism/holiday home destinations, particularly Wanaka and Queenstown (also located in New Zealand’s South Island), and in a similar way emphasised their preference for Otematata’s relative underdevelopment, which they argued, underpinned the maintenance of its ‘retro’ hydro-town character and rural village atmosphere (i.e., quiet, laid back and uncongested).

Another valued attribute of the town linked to its underdevelopment and small population, was that it was a ‘safe’ and ‘family friendly’ location. Some of the long-term residents we spoke to reminisced (fondly) about growing up in the village, and then raising their own children in the area, pointing out that it had always been a safe place for family excursions, children were able to roam around freely and explore the outdoors. Many of them, along with more recent migrants, were keen to point out that because the town was now so sparsely populated, the streets were safe for children to walk, and play and cycle on – this was seen as a reason for living, moving to, or visiting the area:

*The houses aren’t that big, but you can have two cars up the driveway, ten on the lawn and cars all around the street and kids will play sports on the streets! The village is like one big camping ground. We don’t get people whizzing around the town during the busy time, because you can’t, the locals don’t, and most of the campers don’t. People walk up the middle of the road (Long-term resident)*

*...one of our daughters wanted to bring her children up with the sort of life she had with the lake and the freedom and safety. The other came back from overseas and married a local ... we’ve been exceptionally lucky to have family around (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*

*In all honesty, that’s why people come to Otematata – because it’s a nice little safe place where you can let your kids run on the streets (Long-term resident).*

*My kids came up and stayed for the holidays and they just loved it – these are the sorts of places where you can still let them get in their bike and go for a ride and not worry about where they are (Newcomer).*

*A lot of the holidaymakers say “Wow, the kids can ride their bikes around the streets” and I think “so what” because we’ve always ridden our bikes around the streets – the local village kids do. But obviously they don’t have that opportunity in town. So the standard of living here is high and great for families. They can go up to the lakes and enjoy the walks and that’s simple stuff to do (Long-term resident, ex-hydro worker).*

As a rare counter to the above narratives, which emphasise safety, was one interviewees' protest about the *"overstressed streets and the problems driving in Otematata at Christmas, with all the boats and 4-wheel drive vehicles in town"*, and the associated parking problems in the busy season (Photograph 19). These problems are perceived to be exacerbated by the town layout, as it was built without proper footpaths or street parking (Photograph 20). The streets were designed for safety and there are no four-way intersections and instead are all T-junctions; only a few of these have give-way or stop signs. Over the years there have been numerous calls by residents for the Waitaki District Council to upgrade the Otematata townscape.



**Photograph 19: Holiday visitors in residence**



**Photograph 20: Otematata streetscape**

Otematata was also positively described as the ideal place for family gatherings. Interviewees emphasised the ease of hosting holiday makers in a small town that was so well-resourced (e.g., shops, playgrounds, parks), safe and situated in a spectacular rural setting, with lakes and nature walks only a short distance away “...a town that has it all”. Many of the interviewees commented that they greatly enjoy occasions when family came to stay in the town, particularly their children, many of whom made an annual pilgrimage to Otematata over the summer break, to enjoy time with their families and the recreation opportunities of the surrounding area. Some interviewees noted that holiday homes were often used for extended family get-togethers, with some families renting additional houses to accommodate their holiday group; others reported habitual visitors (who did not own Otematata property) renting the same holiday house year-on-year.

All those interviewed appreciated the fact that the village had more amenities and facilities than is usual for a place its size, and were aware that these assets were linked to the town’s origins as a once bustling hydro-settlement. They mentioned a wide range of ‘town features’ which ranged from hospitality and accommodation businesses to essential services. They believed these assets made the town a nice place to live and pleasant place for holiday home owners and domestic tourists to visit.

*I know people who have holiday houses here and they say how lucky they are to have the shop and the other shop at the camping ground. And the choice of going to have a meal at the Country Inn and meals at the hotel and you can sometimes get takeaways at the campground. The Fire Brigade are here and if you have a medical emergency there is the First Response Team and that’s wonderful. For 186 people that’s a lot (Long-term resident).*

The residents interviewed were uniformly proud of some of the town’s recreation and leisure facilities, particularly those which had been improved by the community. The golf course, the new playground and skate-park and the newly opened Wetlands Walkway were specifically noted by many:

*...the children’s playground – that’s a fabulous asset and the skateboard park has been created and there’s obviously the subdivisions ... the golf course, well that used to be a dusty old gravel thing – that’s looking absolutely fabulous now. There’s the Wetlands Walkway that’s been created within the last few years (Resident since 2005).*

Within the village itself, the library was a popular resource used by both locals and holiday home owners. The bowling club was also popular and a number of community recreation and entertainment activities suitable for an elderly population had been introduced. As one long-term resident explained:

*A wee yoga group has started up and that’s a neat idea. The yoga group has used the Fire Brigade rooms and now there’s a little community group with gentle exercise and this is for the older people and those in need and they get together at the club and it’s a social get together and a physical thing as well. So things happen here. You’ve got quiz nights at the pub – the pub owners are great and they’re very generous – in the summer they have a lot going on especially if there are sporting activities.*

Another point of pride noted by interviewees was the community hall which, as reported in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3), was acquired by the community when the NZED office was closed. This large facility has since evolved into multi-purpose hub, combining the local store and café, and housing the library and community gymnasium as well as providing a community meeting facility.

Otematata’s surrounding rural landscape was also highly valued for its aesthetic appeal and the opportunities it presented for people (locals and tourists) to participate in range of water-based and terrestrial outdoor recreation activities. Lakes Aviemore and Benmore were seen as particularly

important local recreation assets, drawing visitors and holiday home purchasers to the town. Some of the older residents interviewed indicated that they no longer used the lakes for recreation to the degree they had done in earlier years, particularly when their children were young. Those who still visited the designated lakeside areas for fishing, dog walking and general recreation also noted that they tended to avoid these areas during the busy holiday season. Most reported that they did, however, use the recently opened Wetlands Walkway, which was constructed by the community.

While interviewees were extremely positive about life in Otematata, a particular challenge for many of the older residents we spoke to was the lack of essential services, particularly medical facilities (we will discuss the absence of a school later). In light of this situation, most of the older interviewees accepted and acknowledged that the time would eventually come when they would have to leave the village in order to be closer to health care services and medical facilities. Otematata is perceived as an attractive retirement village, but there comes an age when its location/distance makes it hard to manage.

Many interviewees also talked about the inconvenience of living in a town without a large supermarket, post-shop, general retailing etc., with access to such services/commodities requiring a trip to the nearest 'big town', in this case Oamaru. While inconvenient, our interviewees were happy to make the drive – pleased that their small town had not developed a large commercial centre. This is not to say Otematata does not have a retail hub, but a common concern was the high cost of the goods bought locally.

### **4.3 The role and contribution of holiday home owners**

Attitudes towards holiday home owners appeared to have changed considerably over time, a change driven partly by the longevity of many holiday home owners' association with Otematata. The residents interviewed all acknowledged and valued the commitment of holiday home owners to Otematata. As one of them stated:

*In the early days we used to think the holiday home owners and holiday makers didn't really give a stuff about the town – but that has changed a lot. A lot of them have an affinity with the area and have managed to establish themselves here (Long-term resident).*

Those who got involved in community life and supported developments and improvements in the town were particularly respected. One interviewee suggested that Otematata was "well-looked after" by the holiday home owners who, in their view, were always willing to help out with local projects, providing the example of holiday home owner involvement in the community's Wetlands Walkway construction project (Photograph 21).

*We used to call them [holiday home owners] Loopies! Because they would come here and do dumb things (laughs). But not now. We consider a lot of the holiday home owners and holidaymakers as permanent members of our community. And we utilise these people's skills and contacts and good new ideas to improve our town. It's a win-win. A lot of the holiday home owners are tradespeople and they give a lot to the community and they don't even live here permanently. We're quite lucky really (Long-term resident).*



Photograph 21: The Otematata Wetlands Walkway – an inclusive and celebrated community project

Several of the couples interviewed had been resident in Otematata since the dam construction era and commented that they no longer felt able to play an active role in the community preferring “to just live here now”. Some felt that their departure from voluntary positions could create a problem within the community, in that gaps would be left in these important organisations and committees. They were pleased, however, that many of the holiday home owners were taking an active role in community groups and, particularly, the Residents Association:

*We belong to the District Club and we go to do some gentle exercise each week, but we are a bit naughty now on the grounds that we have lived here so long and worked so hard that we just want to live here now. We volunteer occasionally if they are doing something at the playground, but we are both adamant that we are not joining any clubs. Like playing bowls. At our age we feel we can't commit ourselves to a regular routine with community people so we're better off divorcing ourselves from it ... but thankfully the younger holiday home owners have the energy and are filling some of the roles, they're interested to play their part (Long-term resident).*

Holiday home owners were also perceived to contribute to the local economy and the local business owners interviewed said that it was the presence and support of the holiday home owners which ultimately kept them in business:

*For us who have been in business [here] for thirty-odd years, well it wasn't really the local people who supported you, it was the people who came into the town and we'd say to them you've got a job here, but if it wasn't for the holidaymakers – or as they used to call them the 'loopies' – you wouldn't have a job and we really valued the tourists (Long-term Otematata business owner)*

Interviewees suggested that there had been a more frequent turnover of holiday homes in recent years. While the reasons for this were not explored in interviews it may be that the original holiday home buyers (i.e., from the 1970s and 1980s) – having reached an age or lifecycle stage that did not embrace holiday home usage – were in the process of selling their Otematata properties. This was seen positively as it meant that there were always new people in the community. Several interviewees had observed a change in the type of holiday home owners coming to Otematata, with more young and seemingly wealthy individuals purchasing property in the village:

*The holiday home owners have changed over time – I mean we used to know nearly all of them, now we wouldn't have a clue [who they are]. There's still a lot of those who used to come, continuing to come, but there's also a lot of the younger people with their big flash boats and cars – it's a different group of people (Long-term resident).*

*In the old days we had an awful lot of freezing workers – keen fishermen – who could afford to buy these things, but these days it is amazing when you find out what the cribbies actually do for a living in town – you have architects and dentists and doctors ...and BMWs, Audis and Mercedes (Long-term resident).*

One positive change noted by interviewees was that holiday home owners were using their properties more often than in the past. Traditionally, the town had filled with holiday makers over the Christmas and summer and for the Easter and Labour weekends. While the town population still peaked during these times, interviewees noted a new and more consistent flow of holiday home use through the warmer spring, summer and autumn months. While more frequent use of holiday homes over these months was viewed positively, the virtual absence of visitors during winter remained a local problem, particularly for business owners and those who needed employment.



#### 4.4 Employment, business and (lack of) winter work

One of the distinct challenges faced by Otematata residents (and a key concern) was a lack of year-round full-time employment opportunities for permanent residents. While a range of local jobs (full and part time) were generally available in the summer months, when holiday home owners and domestic tourists filled the town, the same could not be said for the winter period when the town was virtually empty. Interviewees pointed out that the seasonal flow of tourists and part-time residents (i.e., local holiday home owners) meant that some local businesses were forced to close over the colder months until the flow of visitors resumed in summer. This situation forced some residents to commute to neighbouring towns in search of winter work, or to hold multiple part-time jobs in an attempt to 'make-do' over the winter period. However, multiple job-holding, along with community involvement and volunteerism has historically been a feature of Otematata life, particularly for the wives of dam construction workers:

*...I did about 6 months for the school relieving for a sick friend ... I worked at the hotel for three years. That was the perfect job with children because I started at 10 and finished at 2. As the kids got older I did more hours, then volunteered here at the club and then a friend and I opened a little craft shop on the main road, for about a year. I then ran a hairdressers from home. My friends and I took Girl Guides and we were on the school committee ... we've been busy (Long-term resident).*

Several of those interviewed had recently moved permanently to Otematata having previously been holiday home owners, but had struggled to maintain a permanent presence in the village. For one of these couples this move necessitated living apart over much of the winter period, with one commuting to Christchurch (3 hours away) for full-time work, while the other remained in Otematata working in a variety of part-time jobs:

*When we arrived here 5 years ago we had to go about creating employment for ourselves. We saw an opportunity and got a cleaning and contract and do garden maintenance and mow lawns. It's mostly for the holiday houses, but we've also got the contract to clean the public toilets and clear the rubbish bins. ...We decided to put notices in mail boxes and we did a flyer up for house cleaning. We would go in to clean people's holiday homes once they departed. But sadly there is not enough work here over the winter in order for us to maintain a reasonable lifestyle. So my husband works up in Christchurch for one week of four. He's been doing that for over three years (Resident since 2005).*

The quote above also notes the impact of seasonality on employment prospects and this issue was raised by many of those interviewed, as the following excerpts illustrate:

*When we were in business it was December and January that we did most of our trade – it was very high in those two months and that was hard to cope with because it was so full on and then in the winter it was so dead. It was a struggle to manage (Long-term resident, ex-store owner).*

*When you're trying to get a business going here, well, it's difficult. I mean the problem here is that the place just closes down for winter – just dead! So I've had to adapt and diversify – find something sustainable. You've got to have multiple forms of income (Resident since early 2000s).*

*Winter is very quiet and we know we've had it lucky with the contractors who have been here for the dam work so there were an extra 100 men here for over two years. But this winter is a lot quieter ... back to usual ... we have to prepare for that and adjust*

*accordingly. You either take a holiday or drop hours (Long-term resident, business manager).*

*If you're running a business like a shop or accommodation there's some fairly lean times (Long-term resident, business owner).*

While the lack of local winter employment opportunities was clearly a big problem for the town, the potential to purchase an existing small business in a high-amenity rural area had drawn several new entrepreneurs to the area. Interview data suggested that these new business owners were determined to make it work, vastly improving and in some instances diversifying the local businesses they had acquired. In December 2012, for example, new owners took over the Otematata Holiday Park after it had been closed for several months. This was a 'positive' development remarked on by several of the residents interviewed. An *Oamaru Mail* article outlined their ambitious future plans for the premises and the benefits they had already brought Otematata through the employment of casual staff and involvement in both the Otematata Residents Association (ORAI) and the Otematata District Club (Ryan, 2013). One of the new owners, interviewed as part of this research, talked about how welcome they felt ("*people say it's great to have me here, you know young and full of ideas and energy*") while also admitting to the significant challenges the business was facing:

*In reality we're a five month a year business. Unless we pull a few tricks out of the hat – and we do, we've got bike rallies and clubs coming – but other than that, we might as well shut up shop. There's little reason for us to open (Newcomer, business owner).*

It was clear that the local community very much welcomed those who were prepared to invest in local businesses and generate local employment opportunities. While the revitalisation of the holiday park was one of the good news stories for the community, the opening of a small laundry business in the village employing several local people was heralded by most of our interviewees as the best model of what could be done in Otematata when creative thinking was combined with local entrepreneurial enthusiasm. Interviewees commented on the opportunity this new business owner had seized upon, and the positive benefits it was bringing the community:

*If you had of said "what would be the next business to open in Otematata?" you wouldn't have said a commercial laundry, but I think it was probably driven by the fact that they were doing a lot of maintenance on other people's laundries and they saw it as an opportunity (Newcomer).*

*The new laundry business has started up in town. It's quite unique because they're bringing the laundry in from the hotels around the area and that's provided about five part time jobs for the locals. That's very innovative and to be quite honest that is exactly what we need to keep people here (Long-term resident).*

While this type of community support for new local businesses was apparent in interviews, the Otematata community has also been quite proactive in order to keep existing businesses open in recent years. For example, in 2004 when the Otematata Garage was sold, a holiday home owner set up a company to keep the service running using capital contributions from community members. It was argued that for holiday makers, maintaining a fuel service was critical at Christmas time, whilst it was nonsense for locals to have to travel 20 minutes for fuel ('Community support', 2004).

Among interviewees, however, one of the most talked about springboards for future local economic/small business development was the Alps to Ocean cycle trail, a joint initiative of the Waitaki District Council, Mackenzie District Council, the Mackenzie Tourism and Development Trust and the New Zealand Cycle Way, and co-funded with funds raised by the community (Photograph 22).



Photograph 22: The Alps to Ocean (A2O) cycle trail on Te Akatarawa Road. Left: A2O signage directing cyclists to Benmore Dam. Right: Fundraising panel in Otematata

## 4.5 The “Alps to Ocean” cycle trail

Interviewees were generally optimistic that the Alps to Ocean (A2O) would raise the profile of Otematata as a place to visit, and potentially attract investment and new residents to the village. Existing business owners in the community were gearing up for increased tourist flows and believed that the economic opportunities the trail presented could potentially revitalise Otematata. The A2O, which runs from Aoraki/Mt Cook to Oamaru, was lauded by Tourism Waitaki’s General Manager as the greatest tourism opportunity the Waitaki Valley region had ever seen, but residents’ attitudes, while positive, were slightly more measured. Part of the concern was that, while Otematata is located at the end of one of the stages of the A2O, it is not a ‘natural’ overnight stopping point on the trail. According to an Otematata resident (who worked in the neighbouring small town of Kurow, also located along the A2O route and a better-placed overnight stop):

*There has been a bit of a buzz about it in Kurow, but I think this is a nicer place to stop than Kurow, but I have to be careful what I say! This is an attractive sort of place with the trees and the hills.*

There was also concern around the fact that the A2O trail does not enter the Otematata village itself<sup>17</sup>, instead turning up the Benmore Dam access road on the SH83 corner. Some residents were concerned that because of these particular route characteristics Otematata would not be able to fully harness the benefits of cycle tourism. As one simply said: “*Like with the new cycle way coming through [the Waitaki Valley] Otematata is sort of being missed out*”. While there were some suggestions as to ways Otematata businesses might benefit from the A2O, others debated the risks of committing new resources to something that was perceived to be in a ‘potential’, rather than reality phase:

*I think if someone uses some entrepreneurial wisdom they could put a coffee cart on the corner and make a real success of it (Long-term resident).*

*We could put more in for the cyclists, but there are already people doing a good job, like at the hotel, so I suppose you just have to wait and see how it all goes. We should support what we have here rather than developing more (Newcomer).*

There was also considerable debate about the appeal of Otematata to international tourists. The cycle trail could potentially attract more international visitors who, according to one long-time resident “*would be able to stop and see the nitty gritty of New Zealand*”. The new holiday park owner admitted that many of his ideas for tourist ventures (e.g., boat/fishing charters on Lake Benmore) were reliant on the cycle trail bringing those visitors to Otematata. Other interviewees talked about the current difficulty of attracting visitors to Otematata:

*The camper vans come through, but they don’t stop – they go and have a look at the beautiful lakes, but Otematata doesn’t have anything to offer. One issue is that the houses have a retro quality that international people wouldn’t get (Long-term resident).*

*We have three small villages down the valley and that is quite rare. Omarama, Otematata and Kurow, and also Duntroon, but it’s quieter. But I guess we’re the one in the middle and we don’t have a niche like Kurow and farming, and Omarama and tourism – but we do have our lakes and we do have the fishing and we have a great wee community (Long-term resident).*

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<sup>17</sup> At the time of the interviews there was also some talk of the cycle trail being diverted away from the Otematata corner on SH83 and instead going across Rostriever Station land.

The Tourism Waitaki General Manager also talked about the destination potential of Otematata:

*I like to think of this whole area as 'getting off the beaten track and meeting the locals' so that your experiences are going to be a real Kiwi New Zealand experience and in place like Otematata they are really going to find these real Kiwis.*

The Mackenzie District Council Mayor was similarly positive about the A2O as a lever for stimulating tourism and economic growth in the small towns of the Upper and Lower Waitaki Valley: "The Alps to Ocean Cycle Trail offers a diverse range of scenery that can't be duplicated anywhere else in the world. It provides unique opportunities for individuals and towns adjacent to the trail ... to expand and develop tourism opportunities" (Mackenzie District Council Mayor, NZ Cycle Trail Media Release, 2010).

#### **4.6 Real estate and land development**

All the Otematata residents interviewed talked positively about the affordability and distinctive character of the town's housing stock. With respect to affordability, and as noted in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.2), interviewees were quick to compare the local real estate prices with those of other premier holiday home destinations in the South Island (such as Queenstown and Wanaka), noting that Otematata was one of the last high-amenity areas in the surrounding regions where the average New Zealander could still afford purchase a holiday (or permanent) home. As one long-term resident commented: "*When Wanaka was getting really expensive, people from Wanaka were coming here and buying a bach, a brand new car and a brand new boat and still have change in their pockets from what they would be paying over there.*"

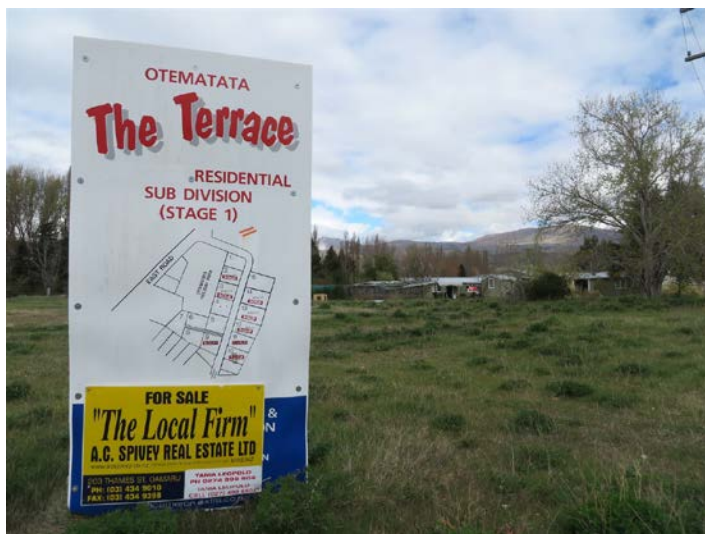
While the affordability of existing houses in the village was considered one of the strengths of Otematata, there were *mixed* views regarding several new residential developments in the township, and the possibility of more. For one interviewee, a longstanding local problem was the lack of new land available for development in Otematata which, in their view, had compromised the town's ability to fully develop:

*A lot of people wanted to buy land here and they couldn't. It's Crown Land behind the fence and it's been handed back to the Cameron family so it's back to private land. If they'd kept more of the land like they did in Twizel then this town would've gone ahead in leaps and bounds. It was constrained by a lack of land (Long-term resident).*

In recent years, two new residential subdivisions had been permitted and at the time of this research, were identifiable by Real Estate signs and the obligatory paved roads with lighting and curbing (Photograph 23). Some of the residents interviewed were of the view that these land developments and the impending construction of new houses was a step in the right direction – they would bring new life to the village. Others, however, were much more cautious and less optimistic. A key concern was that the style and quality of any new houses built could potentially alter the unique 'retro' character of the village, which they currently enjoyed. As one regular holiday home visitor, now resident, explained:

*What I was worried about was that there was an ad hoc development starting with three or four subdivisions... and there's one beside the electrical depot and they've put all kinds of houses in there and there didn't seem to be any kind of standard – a lot of cheaper houses went in there and its right on the road and it doesn't look very good.*





Photograph 23: Residential subdivisions in Otematata



Discussions with residents about housing affordability and residential development frequently drifted into conversations about the unique character of Otematata’s housing stock, particularly the T-shaped houses which were brought to the village during its formative years and which remained in the town (Photograph 7 and Photograph 24). These were appreciated for their heritage value and distinct character and charm. Several of the long-time residents who had lived and worked in Otematata during the hydro construction years commented on how much they still enjoyed the traditional Otematata housing stock, with one suggesting that they had always had a “*love affair with the T shape houses – we love it – it’s slightly like being on holiday*”. The partner of this interviewee added that holiday home owners “*obviously quite like the attraction of the little houses too*” and that the original huts and homes represented the ‘soul’ of the town. Many of the T-shapes have been proudly restored by their owners and this activity was greatly appreciated by the permanent residents who viewed these restoration efforts as a form of investment in the town. While most interviewees commented on how well some of the older properties had been ‘fixed up’ there was the occasional negative comment directed at those who had let their properties deteriorate.



Photograph 24: FOR SALE: A modified T-Shape

## **4.7 Chapter summary**

The length of residence (and pathway to residence) of the residents interviewed was representative of the current Otematata community with a mix of long-time residents – some with connections to the dam construction era and some more recent retirees – and some people who had been holiday home owners and holiday visitors, but who had moved to Otematata permanently. While the interview data conveyed a strong sense of a need for change/revitalisation to ensure future prosperity in Otematata this was challenged by the lack of business and employment opportunities for new residents. Although the Alps to Ocean was perceived to offer considerable hope for the future there was some caution with respect to how much this might benefit the existing community. Of particular note in the interviews was the role played by holiday home owners in Otematata community life and the extent to which residents considered holiday home owners to be part of the Otematata community. The community survey (involving both permanent residents and holiday home owners) presented in the next chapter explores life in Otematata today from the perspective of this wider Otematata community.



## Chapter 5

### Survey of Residents and Holiday Home Owners

#### 5.1 Introduction

In order to investigate the views of the wider community with respect to life in Otematata today a survey was undertaken in the 2013-14 summer. The survey explored: the nature of each respondent's association with Otematata, including length of property ownership; perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and development barriers in Otematata; level of attachment to Otematata; and basic demographic information. The survey methodology was described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4).

A total of 123 surveys were completed: one survey was excluded from the analysis as the respondent was a first-time holiday home visitor (having won a place in the Otematata PSA holiday home in a ballot). Herein, the findings for each survey question are presented as two subsets – residents ( $n=30$ ) and holiday home owners ( $n=92$ ). Where appropriate, the two subsets of results are compared. Due to the difference in size of each subset, and to enable comparison, all results are reported as percentages.

Data on property type and length of ownership/occupation is presented first followed by data describing the survey sample. The remainder of the questions are presented in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 3.

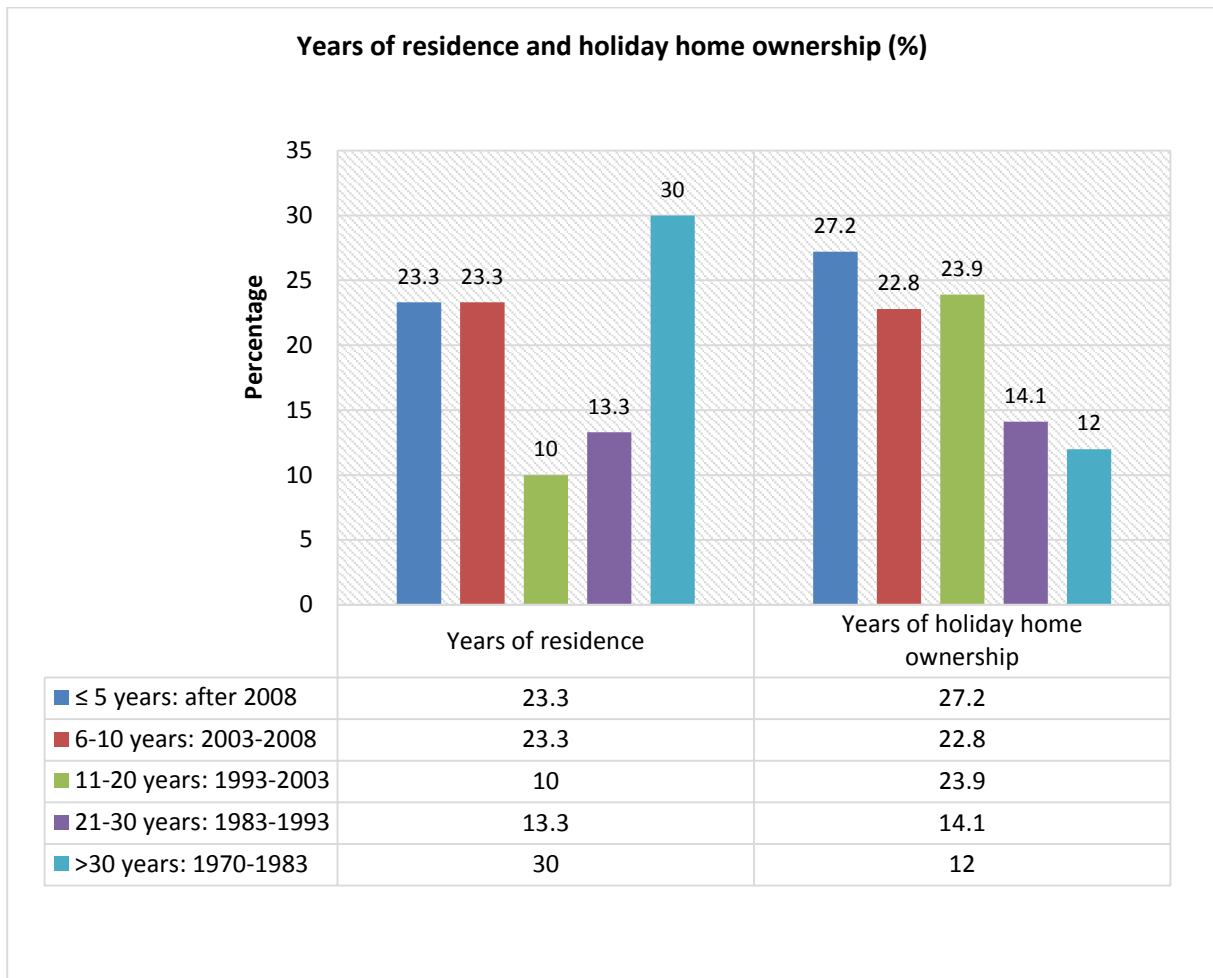
#### 5.2 About this property

Question 1 of the survey had two parts. The first part collected information about survey respondents' length of time owning property in Otematata (permanent residence or holiday home). The second part of the question sought to establish where Otematata holiday home owners were from (i.e., their *usual* place of residence). The key data for length of residence and of length of holiday home ownership are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Key property data (Residents  $n=30$ ; Holiday home owners  $n=92$ )**

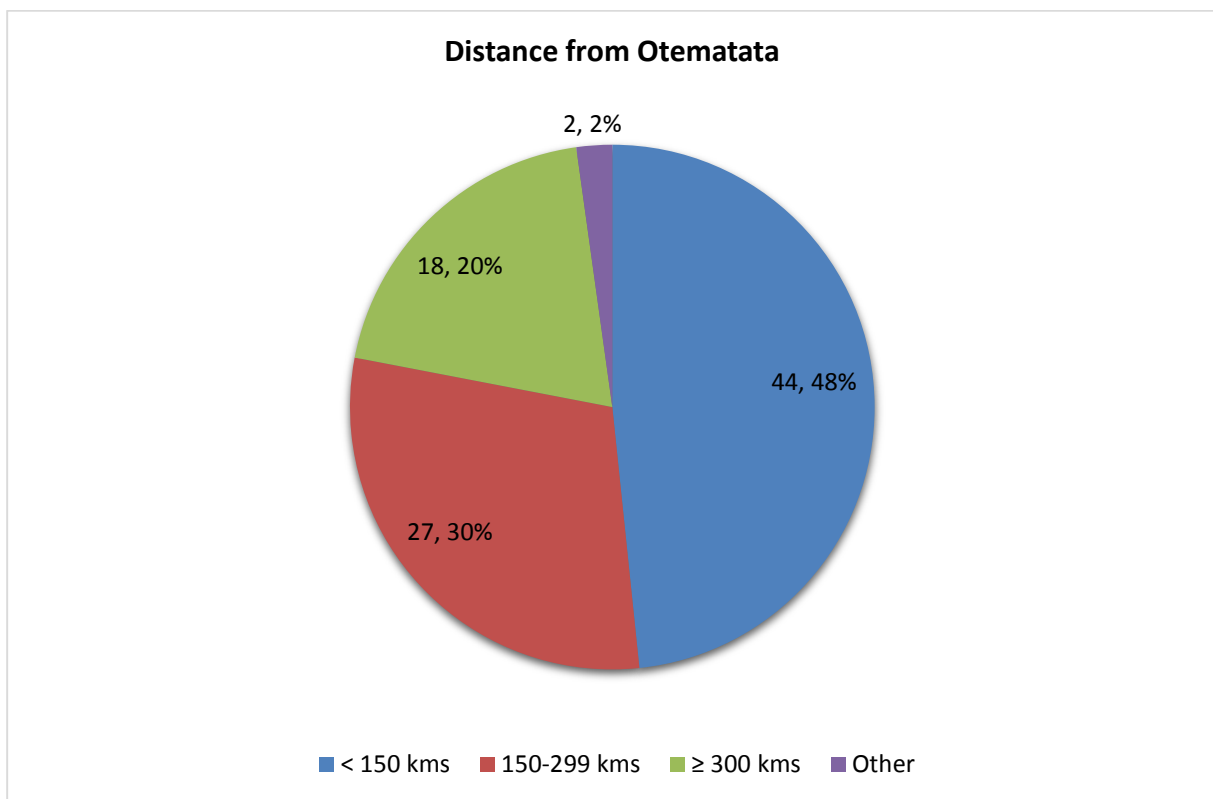
	Residents ( $n=30$ ) Length of residence	Holiday home owners ( $n=92$ ) Length of ownership
<b>Range</b>	1 – 56 years	4 months – 43 years
<b>Mean</b>	20.17 years	14.15 years
<b>Median</b>	11.50 years	10.50 years

As shown as Figure 5, half of the holiday homes had been owned for 10 years or fewer (50%,  $n=46$ ), while a quarter had been owned for 10-19 years (23.9%,  $n=22$ ). About a third of the resident sample had lived in Otematata for 30 or more years (30%,  $n=9$ ) while just under half had lived there for 10 years or fewer (46.6%,  $n=14$ ).



**Figure 5: Years of residence ( $n=30$ ) & holiday home ownership (grouped) ( $n=92$ )**

Almost half of the holiday home owners (48%,  $n=44$ ) lived within 150 kilometres of Otematata (Figure 6); about a third lived between 150 and 300 kilometres, and a fifth lived 300 kilometres or more away. Of the two people recorded in the 'other' category, one reported living in both Oamaru and Christchurch and the second lived in the USA. One person did not answer the question.



**Figure 6: Distance of holiday home owners' usual residence from Otematata ( $n=91$ )**



Figure 7 shows the holiday home owners' usual residence data in more detail. As might be expected, the towns of Oamaru and Timaru accounted for the majority (77%) of those visiting from less than 150 kilometres away. Other nearby Otago locations included the rural area around Oamaru (Airedale, Enfield, Weston and Herbert), Coastal North Otago, Dansey Pass and the Waitaki Valley (Duntroon and Kurow). Almost two thirds of holiday home owners in the middle distance group were from the city of Dunedin (63%) with a further three from other Otago locations (Mosgiel, Waikouaiti and Queenstown). Three of the six Canterbury visitors were from Ashburton; the others lived in Geraldine, Pleasant Point and Ruapuna. One person lived in Lumsden in Southland. The majority of visitors from 300 or more kilometres away were from Christchurch (83%), two were from other Canterbury locations (Rangiora and Swannanoa) and one from Dacre in Southland.

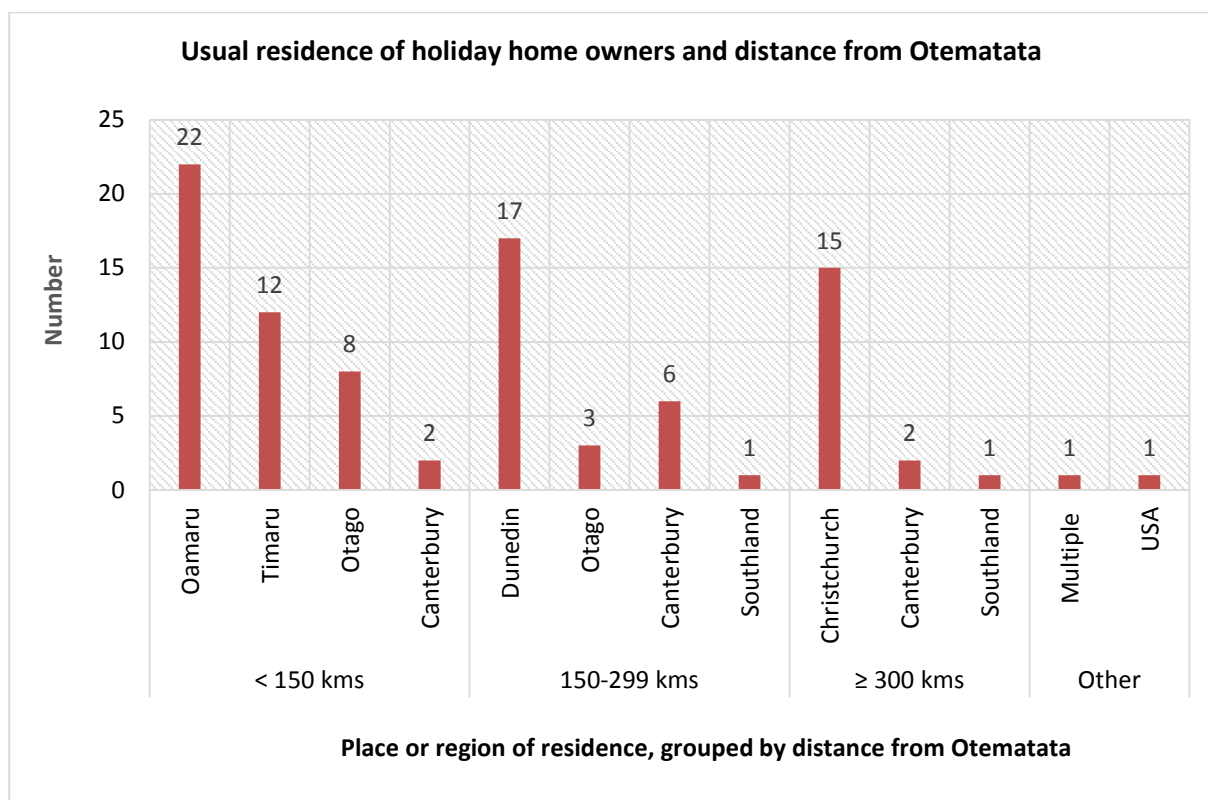


Figure 7: Holiday home owners' usual residence and distance from Otematata (n=91)

### 5.3 Age and gender

Altogether, more than two thirds (69%) of all respondents were aged between 50 and 74 years. Figure 8 shows, however, that there were considerable differences in age distribution of the two sample groups. Almost one quarter of the resident sample were aged 65-69 years and a fifth were aged 70-75 years (together these accounted 43.3% of the resident sample). This age distribution reflects the retired nature of the Otematata community. Although older people were slightly overrepresented in the resident sample in respect of the 2013 Census population data (for example, 44.6 per cent of usually resident population were aged over 60 years compared with 60 per cent of the survey sample) this may be a result of the confidentiality rounding of the Census data (i.e., no numerical figures are given for any age groups over 80 years). The holiday home owners surveyed were slightly younger than those in the resident sample: the largest single age group, accounting for almost a fifth of this sample group were those aged 60-64 years, followed by those in their fifties (16.3% aged 55-59 years and 15.2% aged 50-54 years). This possibly reflects the fact that people have to be older to have the financial capital to invest in a second home: it may also be that Otematata has greater appeal for older people because it is quiet and relaxed.

There was an equal split of male and female respondents in the residents' sample while males were slightly overrepresented (males=54.3%; females=45.7%) in the holiday home owners' sample.

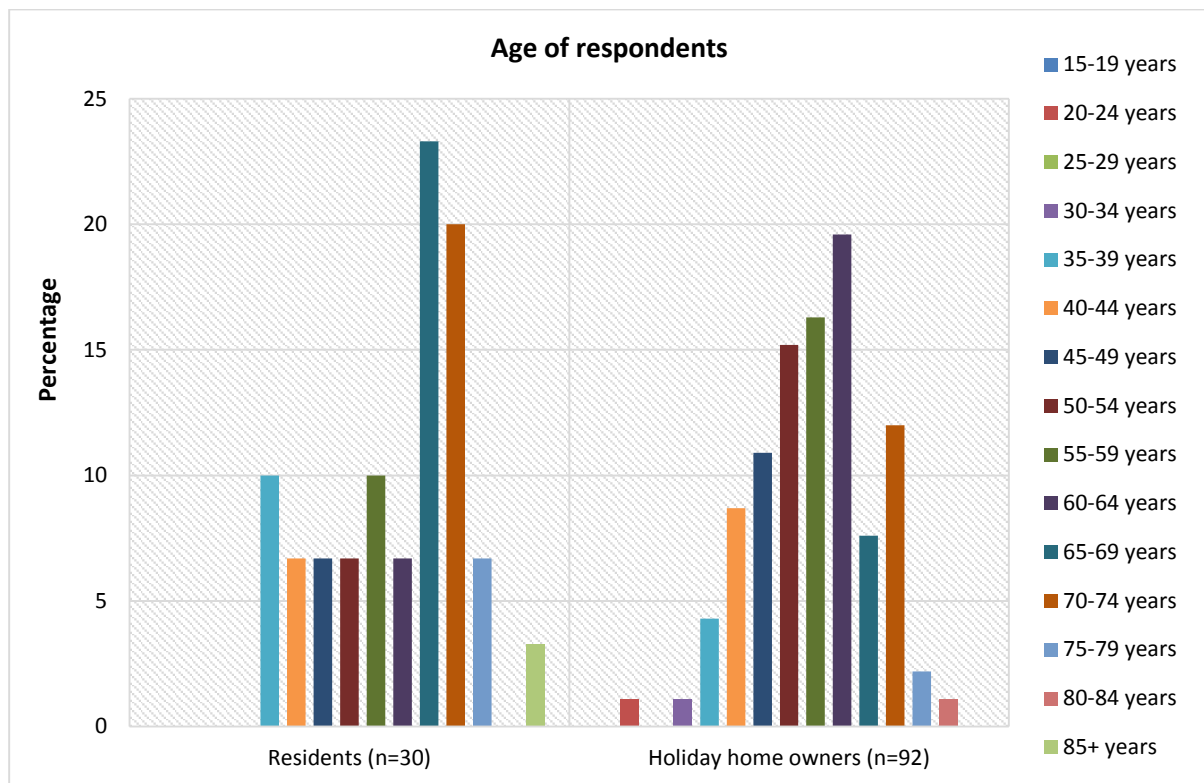


Figure 8: Age of respondents by sample group (n=122)

### 5.4 Employment status

The older age of those in the resident sample contributed to a larger percentage of this sample reporting that they were not in the workforce (Figure 9). The proportion of self-employed was similar for both sample groups whilst the holiday home owner sample group had a larger proportion of both full-time and part-time employed. Neither sample group included any unemployed people.

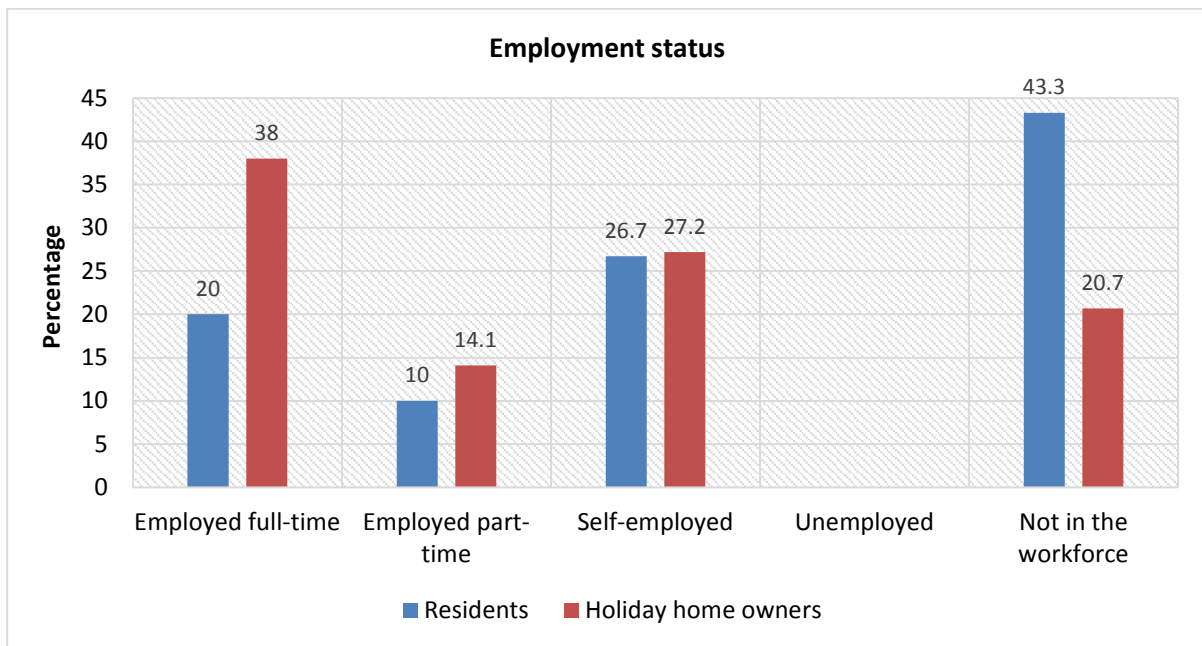


Figure 9: Employment status (Resident n=30; holiday home owners n=92)

## 5.5 Working in Otematata

Just under half of the resident sample (46.7%,  $n=14$ ) worked in Otematata; three other Otematata residents were in the workforce (i.e., two reported being self-employed and one employed part-time in Question 12) but did not work in Otematata. Six of the fourteen Otematata workers worked full-time, six were self-employed and the other two worked part-time. One holiday home owner (who was self-employed) worked in Otematata. The resident respondents who worked in Otematata were evenly spread across the age groups, with two workers in each of the seven age groups from 35-69 years; the holiday home owner who worked in Otematata was aged 60-64 years.

Four respondents in the resident sample reported that they worked in more than one job; of these, two were employed full-time, one part-time and one was self-employed.

## 5.6 Reasons for coming to Otematata

In Question 2, respondents were provided with a list of possible reasons bringing people to Otematata and asked to indicate which of these had influenced their decision to either live, purchase a holiday home, or to visit Otematata. Multiple responses were possible. A number of the reasons provided were not relevant to both sample groups, e.g., 'employment opportunities' or 'retired here' to the holiday home owners, and 'proximity to my permanent home' for residents.

For the resident sample, the four most common reasons for living in Otematata were: employment opportunities (56.7%), climate (50%), proximity to the lakes and quiet (each 40%). For holiday home owners the four most common reasons for staying in a holiday home or visiting were: proximity to the lakes (88%), climate (83.7%), outdoor recreation opportunities (77.2%) and quiet (75%) (Figures 10 and 11, respectively).

Altogether, nine holiday home owners and three residents reported 'other' reasons (i.e., not on the list provided) that brought them to Otematata. Two of the holiday home owners had previous personal experience of visiting Otematata, two specifically mentioned fishing as an attraction, two mentioned 'the friendly people', one noted that it was 'safe for young children', one planned to retire in Otematata and the other came because it was a 'place to relax'. The three 'other' reasons reported by residents were clean air, having visited friends and loved it, and the food at the hotel.

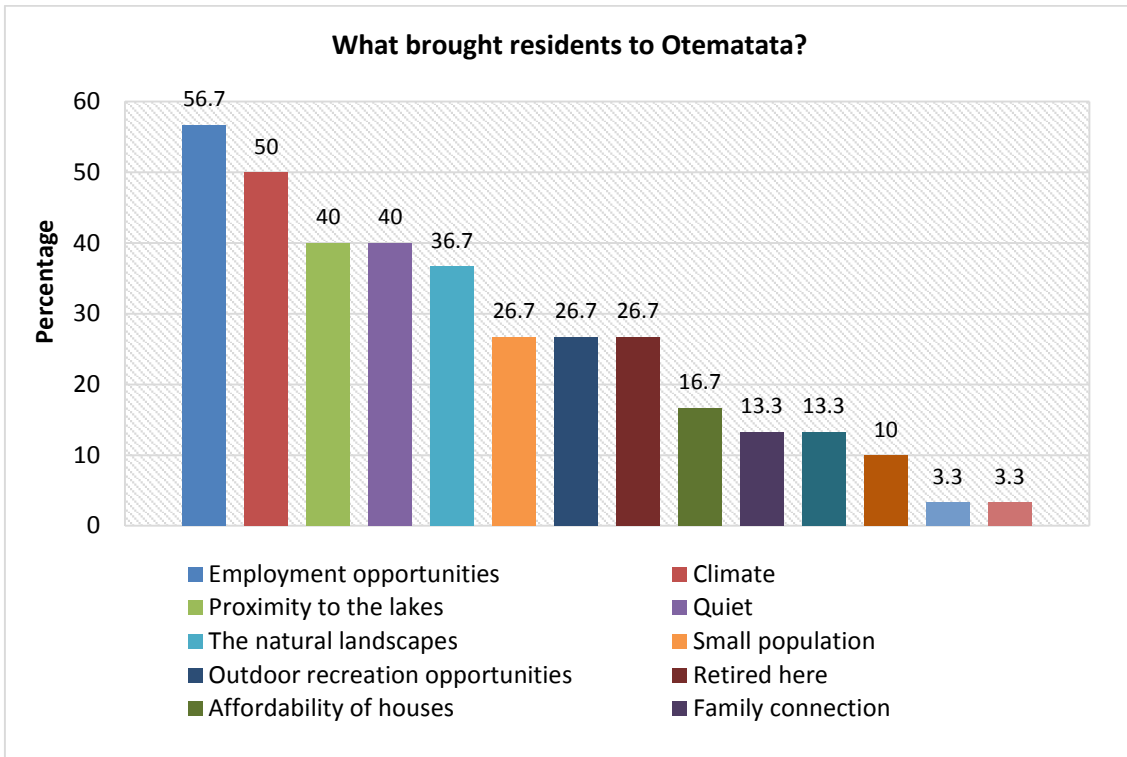


Figure 10: What brought residents to Otematata? (n=30)

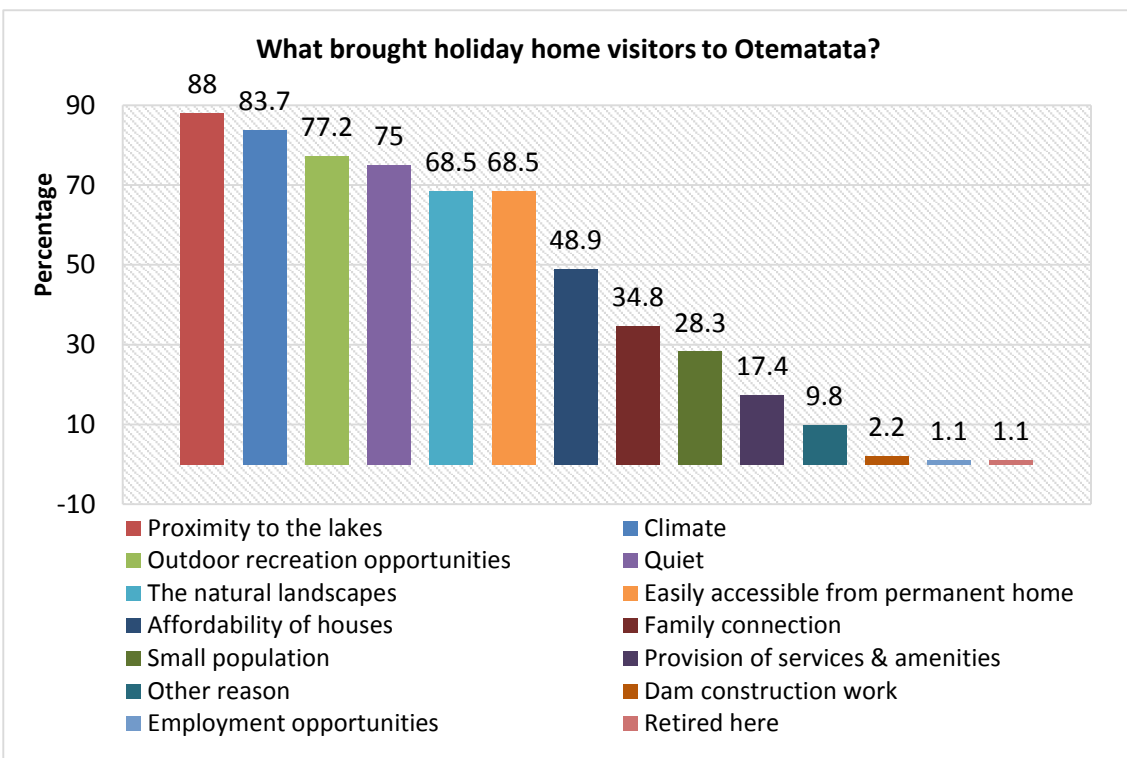


Figure 11: What brought holiday home visitors to Otematata? (n=92)

Three of the four top reasons were common across both sample groups, albeit with considerable variation in the percentage of respondents reporting each reason (Figure 12) – in the Figure the outer ring represents 100%, and reduces in increments of 20%. The two sample groups had the closest level of agreement on the attraction of a ‘small population’ (26.7% of residents and 28.3% of holiday home owners).

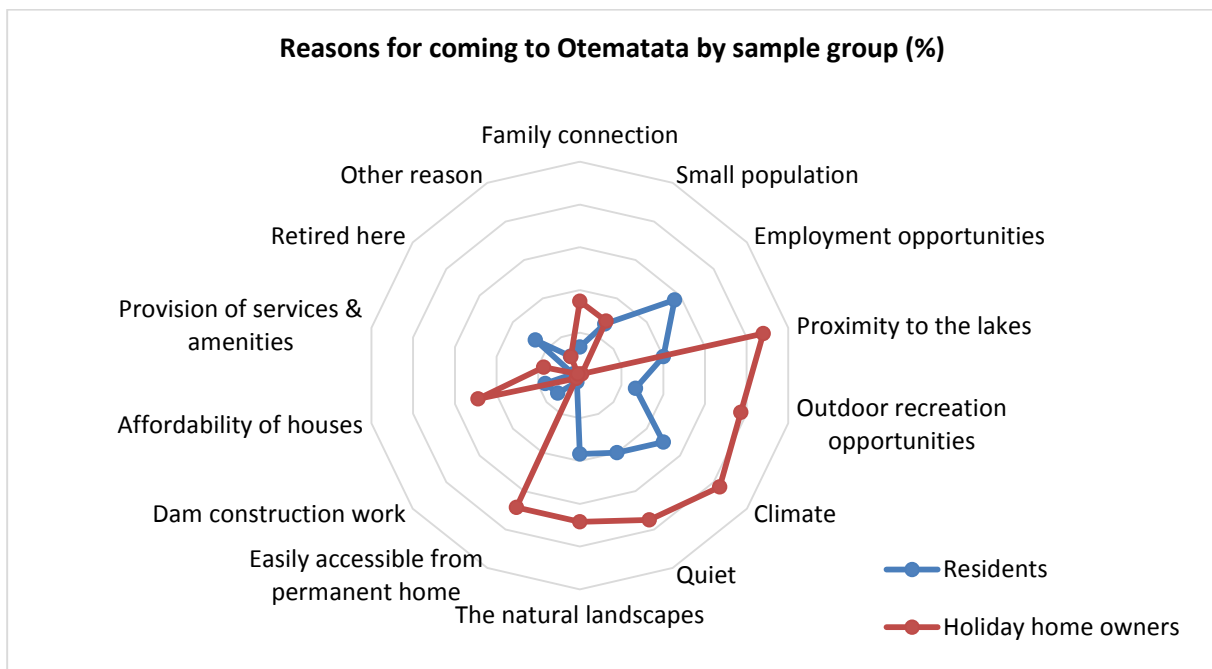


Figure 12: Reasons for coming to Otematata (Residents n=30; Holiday home owners n=92)

Other key differences between the two sample groups were that residents were more likely to report an association related to dam construction work (13.3% compared with 2.2% of holiday home owners) whilst holiday home visitors were more likely to have a family connection (34.8% compared with 13.3% of residents). Almost half (48.9%) of the holiday home visitors reported the attraction of affordable housing and 17.4 per cent were attracted by the services and amenities offered in Otematata.

Altogether, 68.5 per cent of the holiday home owners surveyed indicated that Otematata being ‘easily accessible from permanent home’ as a reason for owning property in Otematata. A statistical relationship was found between respondents reporting this as a reason and distance from home reported in Question 1 [ $\chi^2=28.998$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.000$ ]. As Figure 13 shows, the likelihood of this being a reason decreased as distance from permanent home increased. As noted earlier, three holiday home owners were not included in these distance from home calculations.



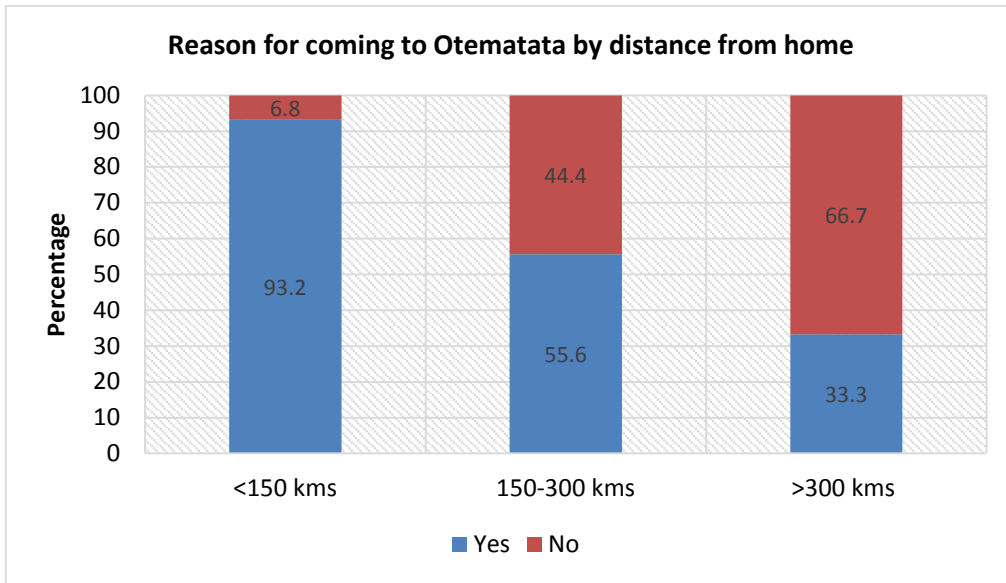


Figure 13: Reason for coming to Otematata by distance from home (n=89)

### 5.7 Belonging to and/or use of Otematata clubs and services

Respondents were asked to indicate (from a list provided) which Otematata clubs and services they either belonged to or used. Multiple responses were possible. The most commonly used services by the resident sample were the local shop (83.3%, n=25), local restaurants and café (76.7%, n=23), the Otematata Chronicle (76.7%, n=23), the District Club (73.3%, n=22) and the library (63.3%, n=19) (Figure 14, also see Photograph 25).

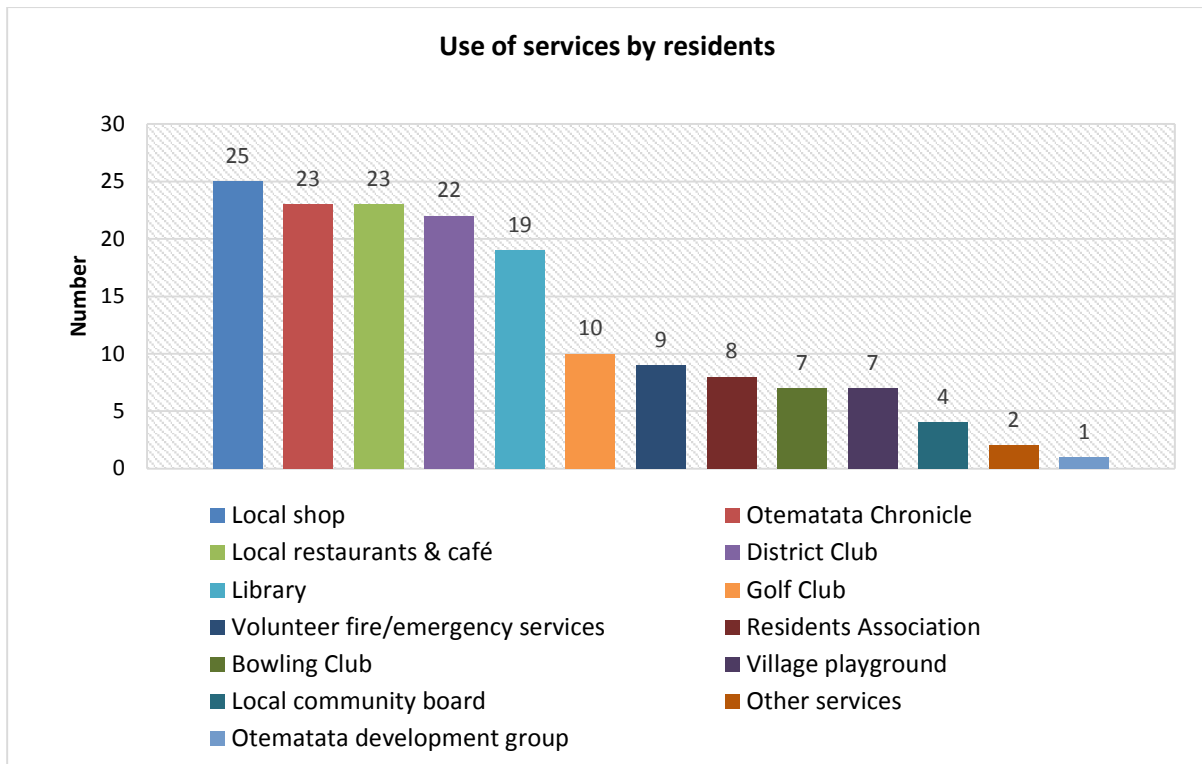


Figure 14: Use of services by resident sample (n=30)



Photograph 25: A selection of Otematata clubs and services

The most commonly used services by the holiday home owners sample were the local shop (84.8%, n=78), local restaurants and café (71.7%, n=66), the District Club (53.3%, n=49), the village playground (51.1%, n=47) and the golf club (50%, n=46) (Figure 15).

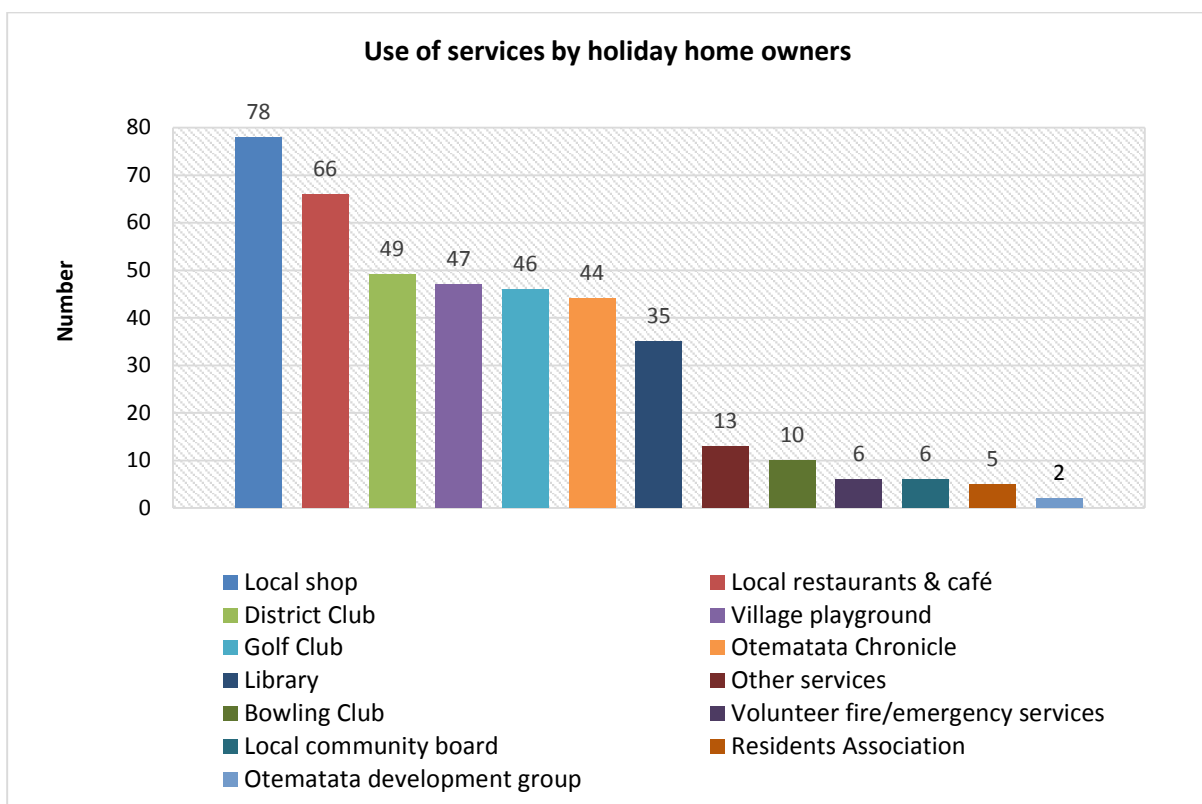


Figure 15: Use of services by holiday home owner sample (n=92)

Figure 16 compares the two sample groups and shows a similar pattern of use/membership (the outer ring represents 100%, the smallest ring represents 20%). As might be expected, however, the holiday home owner sample showed greater interest in recreational facilities and services whilst the resident sample made greater use of community social services.

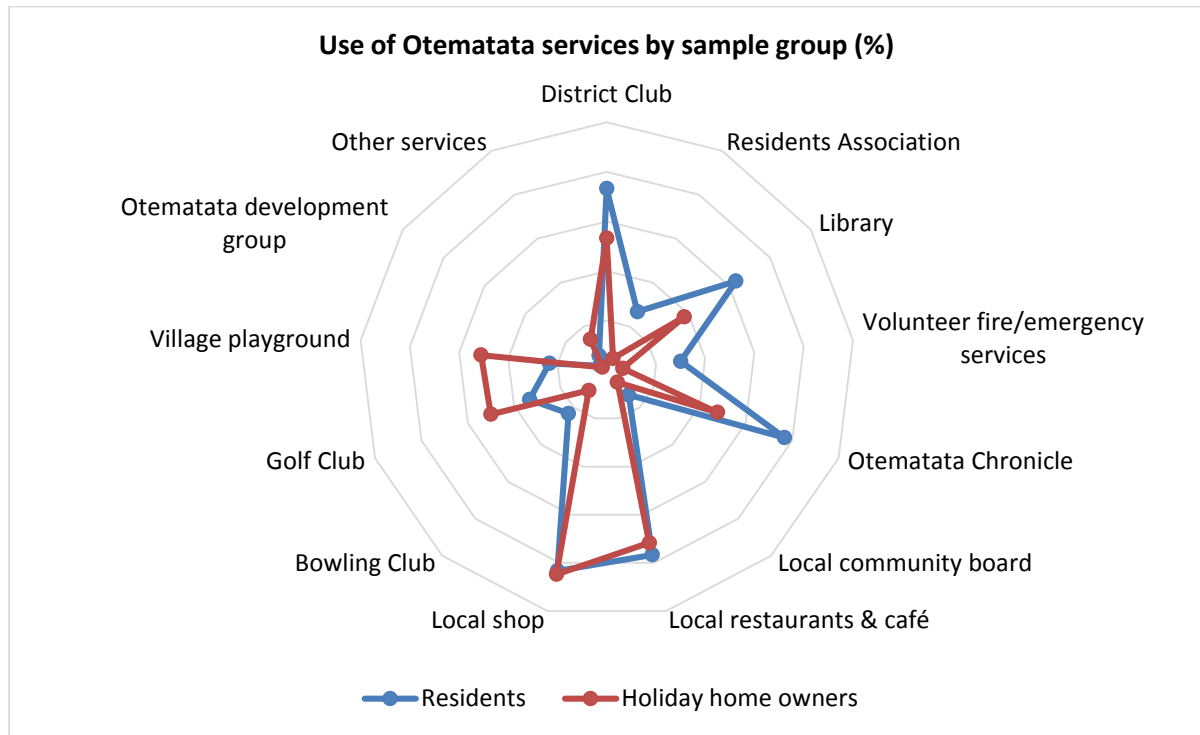


Figure 16: Use of Otematata services by sample group (Residents  $n=30$ ; Holiday home owners  $n=92$ )

### 5.8 Involvement in Otematata community projects

Respondents were asked to list any Otematata community projects they had been involved in during the last ten years. Altogether, 17 of the residents and 14 of the holiday home owners reported being involved in Otematata projects with the involvement in the Wetlands Walkway being the most common for both groups (Table 5).

Table 5: Involvement in community projects

Involvement in community projects	Residents ( $n=17$ )	Holiday home owners ( $n=14$ )
Playground development	7	1
Wetlands Walkway/planting/bird sanctuary	10	4
Planting – unspecified	3	-
Golf club activities	3	2
Social/community services & groups	6	3
Other village developments	2	3
Lakeside recreation development	-	2
Offered – but not permanent/not wanted	-	2

## 5.9 Otematata’s strengths

Respondents were asked to identify what they thought were the good points or strengths of Otematata as a place to live in or to visit. Space was allowed for up to three strengths. Respondents were also asked to indicate which of these three strengths they thought was the most important (as reported in the second column of Tables 6 and 7). The responses were coded into similar broad categories for both residents and holiday home owners with the *natural environment* mentioned most often by both sample groups. There were some key differences in the specific attributes most appreciated within these broader categories, however, and these are reported below by sample group. Tables 6 and 7 break down the broad themes into subcategories; the number of times particular words/subthemes were noted (e.g., quiet, relaxed etc.).

### 5.9.1 Strengths identified by residents

The 30 respondents in the resident sample reported 95 good points/strengths of Otematata. Over half of these (54.7%,  $n=52$ ) related to the natural environment, atmosphere and people (Figure 17).

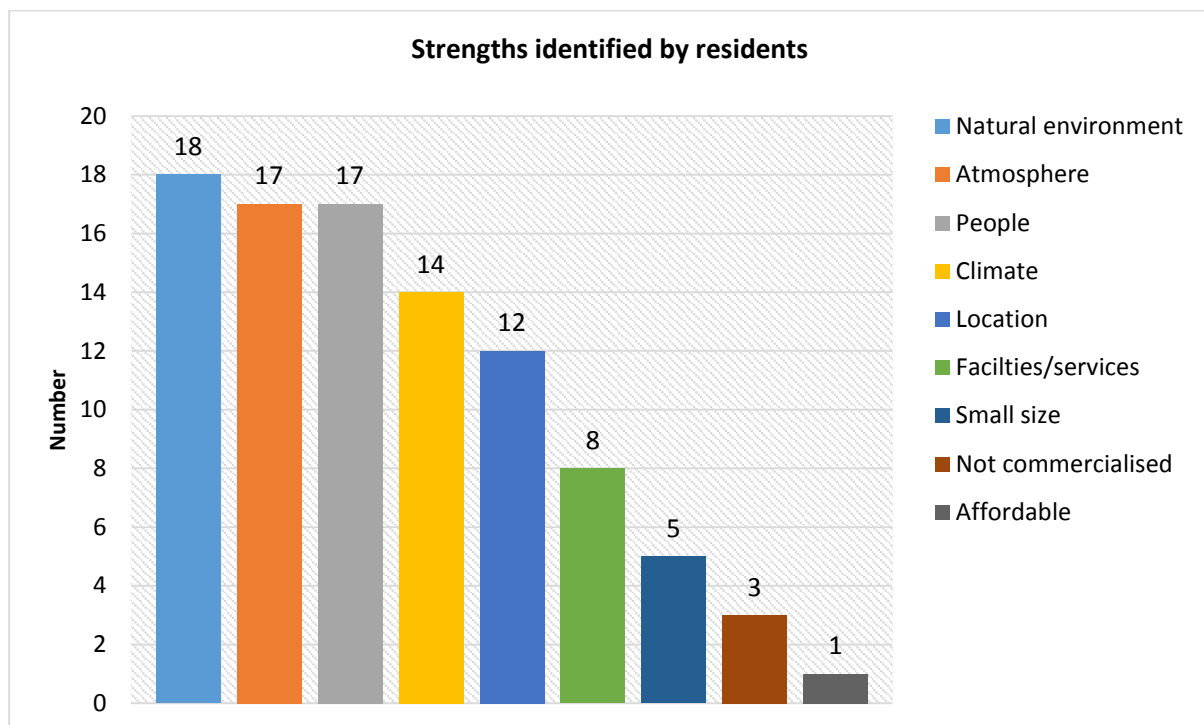


Figure 17: Strengths identified by residents ( $n=95$ )

Strengths associated with the natural environment (the dominant theme among residents) fell into three sub-themes: (1) the *variety* of recreation available from Otematata with the word *'opportunity'* was used a lot (this theme represented half of the strengths reported), (2) the *'lakes'* (with no mention of recreation) but which generally referred to the close proximity of the lakes to the township, and (3) the generic scenery/nature comments, which included references to clean air (Photograph 26).



**Photograph 26: The natural/modified environment: one of Otematata's key strengths**

The strengths coded as *'atmosphere'* were more difficult to classify as separate sub-codes as often several words were used in combination (e.g., *'peace and quiet'*, *'quiet/relaxed'*, *'quiet and safe'*). *'As a place to live'* was added by many when reporting *'safe'* and *'quiet'* as strengths.

The majority of the *'people'* strengths identified were generic and no detail was provided beyond *'community'* or *'small community – take care of each other'*. *'Community spirit'* was specifically noted by two people.

The climate strengths reported also did not provide detail beyond stating that Otematata had a *'great climate'*, *'good weather'* and simply *'the climate'*. It is notable that almost half of those who reported climate as a strength also rated it as the most important strength.

Location was primarily identified as a strength related to the accessibility of larger population centres for services and Otematata's central location in respect of the rest of the South Island (e.g., *'centre of South Island, only 3 hours to the West Coast, one hour to the east'*).

For the resident population the range of recreation facilities available in the town were important (with the golf and bowling clubs specifically noted). Having a local fire brigade was also seen as a strength.

The small population of Otematata – contributing to safety and a *'small community'* feel – was seen as a strength by five of the residents surveyed. The majority of community-related comments, reported under the *'people'* strengths noted above, did not specifically mention population size.



A further three respondents perceived the non-commercialised nature (in respect of both community and structures) of Otematata as a strength: e.g., *'It reminds me of the 1970s – not being judged on what you have or have not got'* and, *'The essence of the village in terms of housing remains the same, yet most owners now believe in renovating and maintaining small, but great structures'*.

Only one resident mentioned *'affordability of housing'* as a strength, qualifying the comment with reference to the quality of housing.

**Table 6: Details of strengths identified by residents**

<b>Broad category</b>	<b>Times identified as 'most important'</b>	<b>Specific strengths reported</b>	<b>Times *</b>
<b>Natural environment (n=18)</b>	6	Recreation	9
		Lakes (no mention of recreation)	5
		Generic nature/scenery	4
<b>Atmosphere (n=17)</b>	6	Quiet	8
		Safe	6
		Relaxed	3
		Rural/isolation/country/atmosphere	4
<b>People (n=17)</b>	3	Generic/community support	15
		Community spirit	2
<b>Climate (n=14)</b>	6	Good/great weather/climate	14
<b>Location (n=12)</b>	0	Close to larger centres	5
		Location within South Island	5
		General comment	2
<b>Facilities (n=8)</b>	1	Golf/bowling club	4
		General	3
		Fire brigade	2
<b>Small size (n=5)</b>	0	Small population	5
<b>Not commercialised (n=3)</b>	1	Like life was in the past	2
		No malls	1
<b>Affordable (n=1)</b>	0	Affordability of a nice house	1

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

### 5.9.2 Strengths identified by holiday home owners

The 92 holiday home owners surveyed identified 291 good points or strengths of Otematata. Just over a quarter of all strengths identified related to the natural environment (25.7%); the next two largest categories were atmosphere and climate (19.9% and 12.7% respectively) (Figure 18).

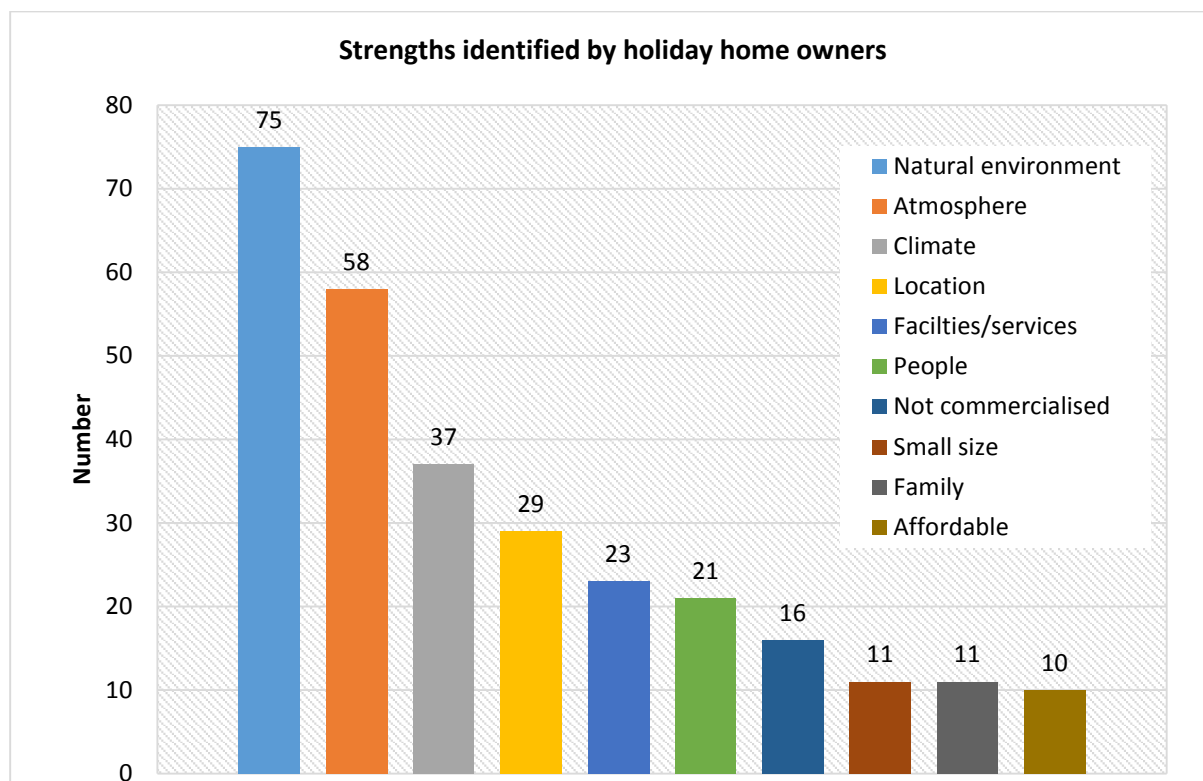


Figure 18: Strengths identified by holiday home owners (n=291)

The same broad coding categories were used to analyse these data as those used for the resident sample. Table 7 shows, however, that the sub-groups of strengths identified within these categories differed slightly. The holiday home owners also had an additional strength category relating to *'family'*.

The natural environment represented the greatest strength for the holiday home owners with the primary focus being on the nearby lakes (Photograph 27). The largest group of comments referred to the lakes in respect of recreation opportunities (e.g., *'lakes for fishing'* and *'lakes - recreation i.e. boating'*): the proximity of the lakes to Otematata was also commonly noted (e.g., *'close to 3 lakes'*) along with generic lake comments (*'the lake (Benmore)'* and *'great lakes'*). A final lake-related group of strengths specified easy access: e.g., *'the lake access - clean water, plenty of space'* and *'accessibility to several lakes'*. The *'non-lake recreation'* comments included any that did not specifically mention water or lake recreation: these included both generic comments (e.g., *'close to recreational opportunities'* and *'variety of recreation activities'*) and the identification of specific land-based activities (hunting, walks, picnicking, biking, and so on). A number of generic comments also related to *'the scenery'* and *'the natural surroundings'*.



**Photograph 27: Boating on Benmore**

The second largest group of strengths, classified as 'atmosphere' related to the village of Otematata, rather than its surroundings. Similar to the resident sample data, the strengths coded as '*atmosphere*' were more difficult to classify as separate sub-codes as often several words were used in combination (e.g., '*peace and quiet*', '*quiet/relaxed*', '*peaceful and relaxing*').

The data in Table 7 represents the number of times particular words (quiet, peaceful, relaxed) were noted. The use of the word '*peaceful*' by the holiday home owners represented the key difference in the atmosphere strengths identified by the two sample groups. For holiday home owners '*safety*' was a prominent component of atmosphere and was noted both generically (e.g., '*safe environment*' and '*safe and secure*') and in respect of being '*safe for children*'. Other atmosphere strengths related to the friendliness of the community (e.g., '*friendly-township*' and '*friendly atmosphere*') and more generically to the '*unique original village*', the '*good town vibe*', the '*village feel*' and Otematata representing '*a piece of kiwiana*'. Altogether, 38% of the holiday home owners' sample reported an atmosphere strength as being the most important.

Climate was reported as an important strength 37 times. While the majority of climate strengths were generic, similar to those identified by the residents, the seasonal weather (e.g., '*it has a warm dry summer climate*' and '*great seasons, wonderful climate*') and some specific climate attributes (e.g., '*climate better than coastal*' and '*micro climate*') were also noted.

For the holiday home owners, the majority of '*location*' strengths related to the accessibility of Otematata to their permanent homes (e.g., '*not too far to travel from home*' and '*handy for weekend getaways*'). The other main location strength was the location of Otematata in relation to other holiday areas (e.g., '*the central location - easy access to activities and other locations e.g., Omarama, Oamaru*').

The non-commercialised nature of Otematata, without further clarification, was noted as a strength (e.g., '*not over commercialised*' and '*uncommercialised*'). In this same context, some commented on the simplicity/ease of owning a home and holidaying in a location which was not highly commercialised. A number of people also saw the low level of tourism-related development as a strength (e.g., '*not over-stated like Wanaka - no big houses and all the lake edges free of houses*').

The small population and small size of the village were perceived as strengths, with several comments relating to Otematata being *'not yet overcrowded'*. The family friendly (e.g., *'children friendly'* and *'family friendly town'*) and family oriented nature of the village (e.g., *'ideal family environment'*) were also reported as strengths. The final group of strength related to the generic affordability of holiday homes (e.g., *'affordable'*) and, in particular, that holiday homes in Otematata are *'still affordable'* and *'affordable housing for people wanting to buy holiday property'*.

**Table 7: Details of strengths reported by holiday home owners**

<b>Broad category</b>	<b>Times identified as 'most important'</b>	<b>Specific strengths reported</b>	<b>Times*</b>
<b>Natural environment (n=75)</b>	27	Lakes – recreation	29
		Recreation – non-lake	20
		Lakes – proximity	17
		Lakes – generic	11
		Lakes – access	8
		Scenery – generic	8
<b>Atmosphere (n=58)</b>	22	Quiet/peaceful/relaxed	71
		Safe – generic	13
		Safe – children/children friendly	2
		Friendly community/township	4
		Village feel/vibe/old style	4
<b>Climate (n=37)</b>	7	Generic – climate/weather	27
		Seasonal – summer	9
		Climate specific	4
<b>Location (n=29)</b>	7	Close to home	18
		Central location – other places	8
		General location	3
<b>Facilities/services (n=23)</b>	1	Mix of services	8
		Playground/play areas	8
		Community services (e.g., library)	8
<b>People (n=21)</b>	6	Generic – good/friendly people	13
		Other holiday home owners	5
		Locals	4
		Personal attachment	4
<b>Not commercialised (n=16)</b>	3	Generic	7
		Little development/simple	6
		Tourism-related	3
<b>Small size (n=11)</b>	3	Small population	8
		Not overcrowded	3
<b>Family (n=11)</b>	2	Family friendly/oriented	11
<b>Affordable (n=10)</b>	0	Generic	7
		Holiday home/still affordable	3

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

## 5.10 Otematata weaknesses

Respondents were asked to identify what they thought were the present weaknesses (i.e., aspects of life there that they were not completely satisfied with) of Otematata. Space was allowed for up to three weaknesses. Respondents were also asked to indicate which of these they thought was the most important of the three weaknesses they had identified – these are reported in the second column of Tables 8 and 9). The responses were coded in a similar fashion (first into broad categories and then into sub-categories) as in the previous strength question. There were greater differences between the two sample groups in respect of the weaknesses identified.

### 5.10.1 Weaknesses identified by residents

Altogether, the 30 residents surveyed identified 67 weaknesses. The largest category of these (31.3%,  $n=21$ ) related to people; the only other categories to reach double figures were those associated with village services and amenities, and location (Figure 19).

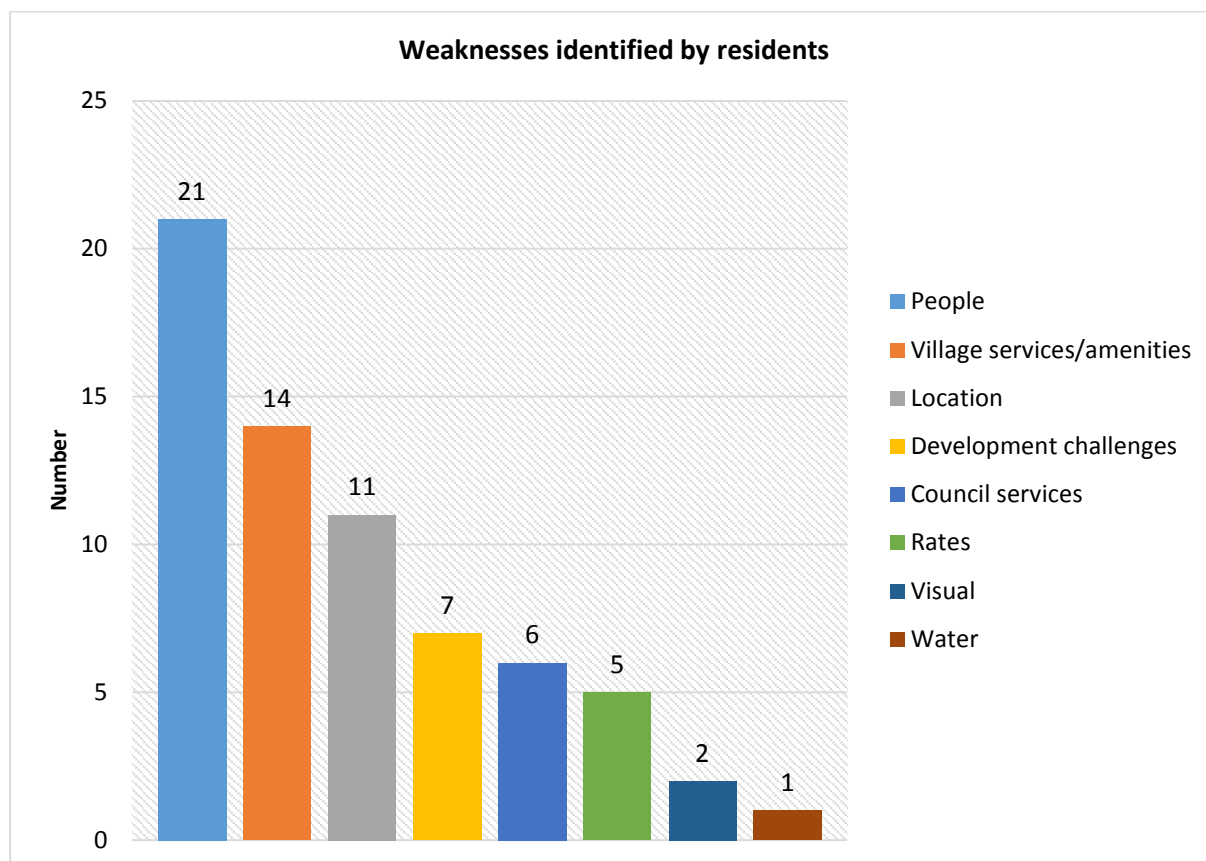


Figure 19: Weaknesses identified by residents ( $n=67$ )

Table 8 provides more detail of specific weaknesses noted within each of the broad groups; the bracketed figure after each broad category indicates how many times attributes in this category were rated as most being the most important weakness. Altogether, six out of the 21 people-related weaknesses reported by residents were perceived to be most important (Table 8). The largest number of comments referred to lack of employment opportunities (e.g., ‘*employment opportunities are limited*’); these comments were often related to the size of the permanent (and ageing) population (e.g., ‘*no jobs for young people*’ and ‘*business opportunities are scarce and, realistically, with such a*

*small permanent population the risk in my opinion is too great to set up a business based in Otematata*). The behaviour of holidaymakers and their impact on the resident community was specifically noted four times (e.g., *'lack of consideration of holiday people – basically don't give a shit'* and *'youths often think this is a great place to visit to camp and run amok without their parents – very annoying for residents and other holidaymakers and puts extra stress on our volunteer fire brigade'*).

The lack of village services and amenities, and particularly education and medical services, were noted 14 times as a weakness in respect of Otematata's attractiveness to new people (e.g., *'no primary education or pre-school to entice young families'* and *'lack of basic services – service station, school, doctor'*). The distance to access such services was also of some concern (e.g., *'difficulty accessing medical help'*). Another category of weaknesses related to location more generally, with 11 comments made about the distance from Otematata to other main centres (e.g., *'the distance from Oamaru, Timaru and Dunedin'*) and the services and opportunities they provide (e.g., *'distance to travel to be involved in sports etc., especially for children'*). Travelling costs and difficulties associated with travel over winter were also noted (e.g., *'the distance to Oamaru for the ageing population could be a barrier – in the winter months especially'*).

Issues associated with being a small community set within a larger district council area was a strong theme across the remainder of the weakness categories. Comments ranged from the generic (*'Waitaki District Council (WDC) don't seem to want anything to do with Otematata'*) to more specific complaints about rubbish collection services, the cost of rates, the quality of water services, and lack of town maintenance (e.g., *'council's lack of care for all parks and reserves. Properties fronting the main road are watered/mown regularly, but others get no water and are only mown twice a year'*). The quality of the existing housing stock (*'85% of the houses are old T shape cribs which are well past their best-by date'*) and the lack of suitable land for expansion for village development (*'lack of land available for expansion'*) and *'the WDC's lack of vision for the lakes area'* were also perceived to be weaknesses.

**Table 8: Details of weaknesses identified by residents**

<b>Broad category</b>	<b>Times identified as 'most important'</b>	<b>Specific weaknesses reported</b>	<b>Times*</b>
<b>People (n=21)</b>	6	Employment	9
		Low permanent population	6
		Behaviour of holiday makers	4
		Ageing population	2
<b>Village services/amenities (n=14)</b>	3	No school	6
		Lack of aged care/medical facilities	5
		Generic/cost/public transport	5
<b>Location (n=11)</b>	1	Distance to main centres	11
<b>Development challenges (n=7)</b>	1	Issues with WDC	4
		Lack of land/costs/implementation	3
<b>Council services (n=6)</b>	3	Lack of care/maintenance	4
		Rubbish collection	2
<b>Rates (n=5)</b>	1	Expensive rates	5
<b>Visual (n=2)</b>	1	Lack of maintenance/scruffy properties	2
<b>Water (n=1)</b>	0	Council mains poor	1

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups



### 5.10.2 Weaknesses identified by holiday home owners

Altogether the 92 holiday home owners surveyed identified 178 weaknesses. The largest category of these (21.3%,  $n=38$ ) related to rates, followed by people (17.9%,  $n=32$ ), water (13.5%,  $n=24$ ) and village services and amenities (12.9%,  $n=23$ ) (Figure 20). The weaknesses identified are described in more detail below in Table 9.

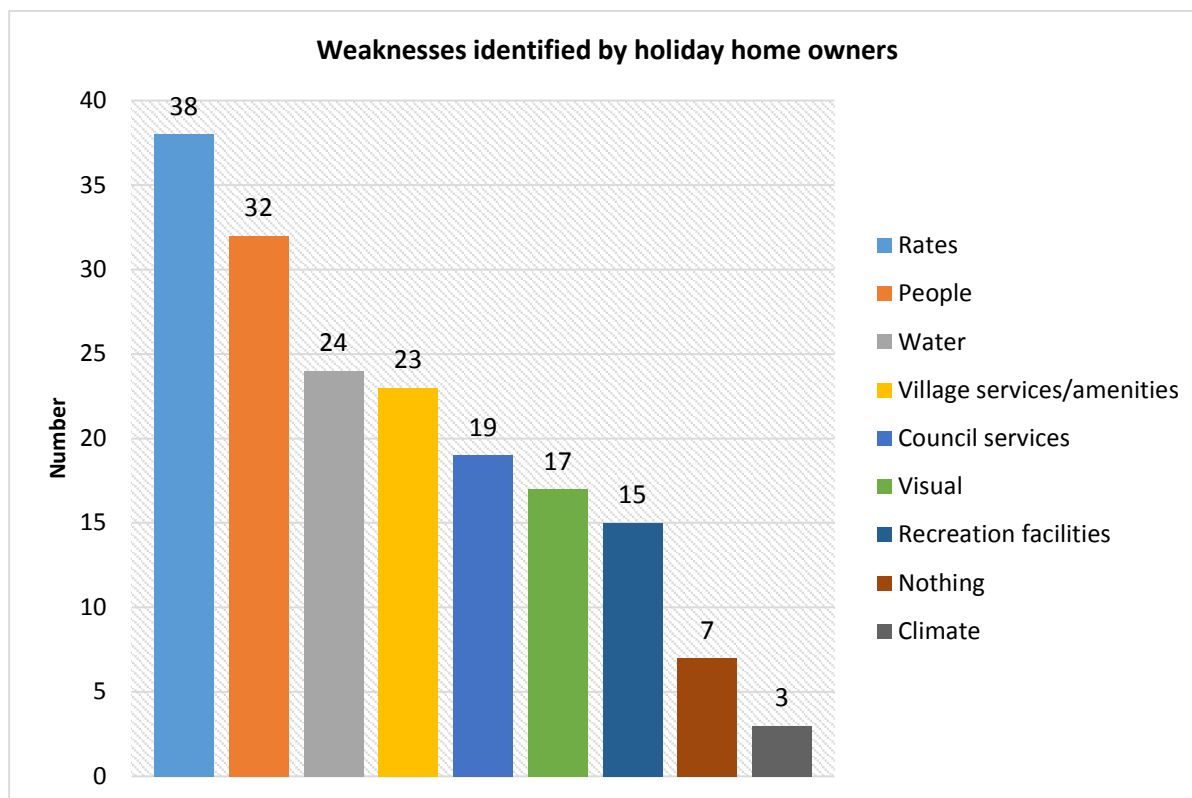


Figure 20: Weaknesses identified by holiday home owners ( $n=178$ )

The majority of the rates complaints were generic, with respondents simply indicating that rates in Otematata were expensive; some, however, noted that they received little in return for the rates they paid (e.g., *'WDC is charging huge rates for little return in Otematata'*) or they compared Otematata rating levels with those in other locations (e.g., *'rates are set too high for the services provided – [we pay] similar rates in Christchurch for more services'*). Having to pay extra for rubbish collection services was an issue for some (e.g., *'having to pay for rubbish even though we pay rates'*) and a number of specific comments related to boat ramp charges (e.g., *'boat ramp fees for crib owners who already pay rates'*). Rates were noted 14 times as the most important weakness by the holiday home owners.

Many holiday home owners also recognised community issues associated with a settlement that has *'small rate payer numbers'* and a *'declining local population'*. Being able to sustain current levels of amenities and services was challenging with a small population (e.g., *'not enough permanent residents which may make it difficult to sustain all the amenities i.e., shop, golf club, bowling club, District Club'*). While there were a number of issues with how welcoming the local residents were to visitors (e.g., *'a clear lack of good hospitality'* and *'[the] long term local population can be a little aloof/unwelcoming'*) there was more concern with crowding over holiday periods, the behaviour of other visitors (e.g., *'alcohol situation at New Year and Labour weekends'* and *'excessive drinking and partying, to all hours from local and visiting youth, to the detriment of the other residents. Also the fast/erratic driving (when*

*sometimes under the influence) and putting people's safety at risk')* and the enforcement of regulations (e.g., *'uncontrolled freedom camping around lakes and related pollution'* and *'no noise control in busy season'*). Altogether, 24 of the 92 holiday home owners surveyed (26.1%) reported the water supply as a weakness (Table 9) with one third of these reporting it as the most important issue; in comparison the water supply was noted as a weakness only once by residents surveyed. The quality of the water was the most reported issue (e.g., *'having to boil water – and it's been so long (we have a filter tap)'* and *'the questionable water quality'*) but the water pressure and general supply was also noted in respect of Otematata's *'decaying infrastructure – in particular water'*.

Weaknesses associated with village services and amenities fell into three groups with the limited range and high price of goods available in Otematata reported by 11 respondents: lack of public transport options, the limited number of food and other retail premises, no TAB, slow and unreliable broadband, and a lack of a village swimming pool were specifically mentioned. Community services were also problematic with the *'cost of getting jobs done (limited tradespeople)'* and *'lack of access to materials for home improvement'* specifically noted. A lack of tourism services was also of concern (e.g., *'[Otematata] has not got a modern motel accommodation, all accommodation 50 years old'* and *'Meridian should shift their information site from Benmore Dam down to the State Highway - this would make visitors and travelling public stop to see what is there'*).

**Table 9: Details of weaknesses identified by holiday home owners**

<b>Broad category</b>	<b>Identified as 'most important'</b>	<b>Specific weaknesses reported</b>	<b>Times*</b>
<b>Rates (n=38)</b>	14	Expensive	19
		Little return	11
		Boat ramps	8
		Comparison to home rates	4
<b>People (n=32)</b>	9	Small resident population	12
		Anti-social behaviour visitors	9
		Other visitor issues	7
		Unwelcoming locals	4
<b>Water (n=24)</b>	8	Quality/having to boil	22
		Water pressure/supply	4
<b>Village services/amenities (n=23)</b>	6	Range/price of retail services	11
		Community services	9
		Tourism services	3
<b>Visual (n=17)</b>	4	Village upkeep/maintenance	10
		Entrance to town	7
		Upkeep of some housing stock	2
<b>Recreation facilities (n=15)</b>	2	Tracks/new facilities	8
		Boat harbour/launching ramps	5
		Alps 2 Ocean	2
<b>Nothing (n=7)</b>	0	Nothing wrong with it	5
		Happy with it	2
<b>Climate (n=3)</b>	0	Summer wind (easterly)	2
		Cold winters	1

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

Holiday home owners expressed more concern than did residents about the look of Otematata, highlighting a number of visual issues as weaknesses. These included: the poor upkeep of public spaces around the village (e.g., *'the overgrown alleyways - dry grass is a potential fire hazard'*) and, in particular, the visual impact of disused buildings and empty sections (e.g., *'old wooden hall makes town look scruffy'* (Photograph 28) and *'old school site in state of disrepair'*); the entrance from the main highway (e.g., *'we need more beautifying of town in the way of trees etc. is needed especially along main road entrance to town'* and *'lack of visual appeal from highway'*); and the poor maintenance of individual properties and housing stock within the village e.g., *'upkeep of some cribs and properties'* (Photograph 29).



**Photograph 28: Original Otematata hall**



**Photograph 29: Ageing housing stock**

Fifteen of the holiday home owners expressed a desire for more/improved recreation facilities. These included: *'more cycle and walking tracks'*; *better 'access to the back country'*; *'boat access at Benmore Dam'*; and *'recreational add-ons i.e., mini golf, volleyball net'*. Two respondents specifically mentioned the current lack of amenities and facilities associated with the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail.

Seven of the holiday home owners reported that they were happy with Otematata noting that it was *'just fine as it is'* or that *'as this is a holiday home, nothing really'*; another reported that they were *'happy the way it is - we even go in winter'*. The weather, however, was specifically reported as a weakness by three of the holiday home respondents, two of whom disliked the summer easterly and the other noting the *'very cold winters'*. Low winter temperatures cause numerous problems, including water freezing in and bursting pipes. It is common to turn off water supply over winter when holiday homes are not in use (Photograph 30).



**Photograph 30: Sign on toilets at Loch Laird**

## 5.11 Improvements/opportunities

Respondents were asked to identify what they thought would make Otematata a better place to live or to visit. Space was allowed for up to three improvements or opportunities. Respondents were also asked to indicate which of the three improvements or opportunities they had reported was, in their view, the most important, as reported in the second column of Tables 10 and 11. The responses were coded in a similar fashion (first into broad categories and then into sub-categories) as in the previous strength and weakness questions. While a number of respondents simply reiterated their previous comments with respect to weaknesses, recording these issues as opportunities also suggests that they think something is able to be done to address these.

### 5.11.1 Opportunities identified by residents

Altogether, the 30 residents surveyed identified 57 improvements or opportunities for Otematata (Figure 21). Suggestions associated with tourism or visitor attractions were reported almost twice as many times as those falling in the other improvement or opportunity categories and accounted for 40.4 per cent of all improvement or opportunities suggested by residents. The other three categories attracted an almost equal number of suggestions. Table 10 provides further detail of the opportunities identified, along with the number of times an opportunity in each sub-category was reported.

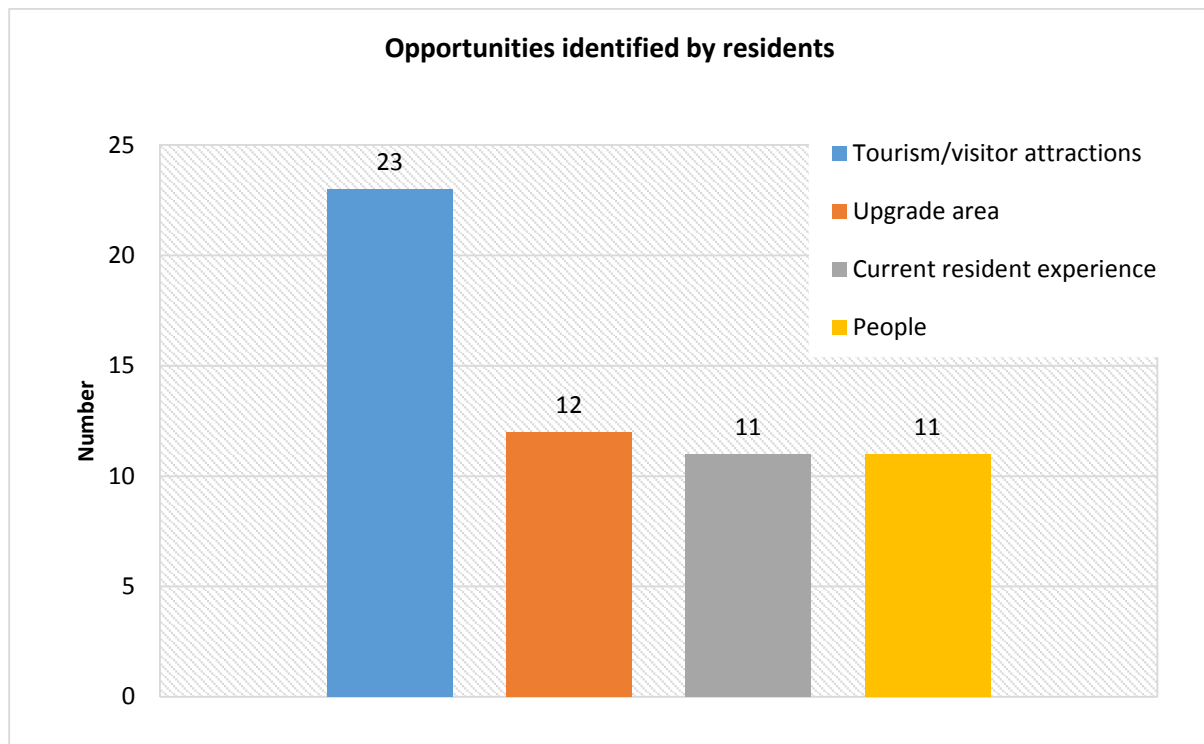


Figure 21: Opportunities identified by residents (n=57)

As noted, the largest group of opportunities related to tourism and visitor attractions and these fell into four main groups (Table 10). Improving or adding to existing facilities/activities and amenities was noted 13 times with different visitor types identified by some (e.g., *'further investment in amenities that will attract visitors and tourism e.g. cycleways, camping areas, walkways'* and *'upgrading the playground in Otematata could be a possibility to draw families into the town'*). A further set of comments related to increasing promotion and thus raising the profile of Otematata as a visitor destination (e.g., *'more advertising of what is available and happening in Otematata'* and *'more signage to attract tourists'*). Improved information services were specifically noted five times, and the potential associated with the Alps 2 Ocean noted four times (e.g., *'bike hire for Alps 2 Ocean Trail'* and *'upgrade toilets and increase size for Alps 2 Ocean patrons'*). As photograph 31 shows, many of the signs around the town are dated (Photograph 31).

**Table 10: Details of opportunities identified by residents**

Broad category	Times identified as 'most important'	Specific opportunities suggested	Times*
<b>Tourism/visitor attractions (n=23)</b>	6	Facilities/activities/amenities	13
		Increase numbers/promote	9
		Improve information services	5
		Alps 2 Ocean	4
<b>Upgrade area (n=12)</b>	3	Improve/better maintain	7
		Rates/council	5
<b>Current resident experience (n=11)</b>	3	Medical services	4
		Other services	4
		Business investment/encouragement	3
<b>People (n=11)</b>	1	Population/employment/businesses	8
		Listen to locals	3

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups



**Photograph 31: Information centre sign showing wear and tear**



The potential to upgrade the village area was perceived to be an opportunity by 12 of the residents surveyed, with many noting the role the council should play in this (e.g., ‘*council to spend more of rates in town on playground, parks etc.*’ and ‘*if council spread their responsibilities more efficiently, the place would be kept in better condition*’). There was also opportunity to improve the current resident experience through the provision of ‘*local medical facilities - regular clinics*’ and other community facilities and services (e.g., an ATM and/or banking facilities). There was a call by some for ‘*government to create incentives for country businesses*’.

There was some recognition that community, employment and business opportunities were associated with having a larger population base (e.g., ‘*larger permanent population to sustain more businesses and services and a school*’) and some calls for greater community autonomy (e.g., ‘*independent management of our community finances, services and facilities*’) and for the council to ‘*listen to what the locals have to say*’.

### 5.11.2 Opportunities identified by holiday home owners

The holiday home owners surveyed suggested a wider array of improvements or opportunities, although four of the six broad categories were similar to those suggested by residents (Figure 22). The additional category of ‘*recreation facilities*’ included comments associated with current recreation opportunities, whereas the tourism/visitor attractions category relates to new products and attraction of new visitors. The holiday home owners surveyed also had a ‘*keep it as it is*’ category. Table 11 shows the sub-categories of opportunities identified by holiday home owners and these are discussed further below.

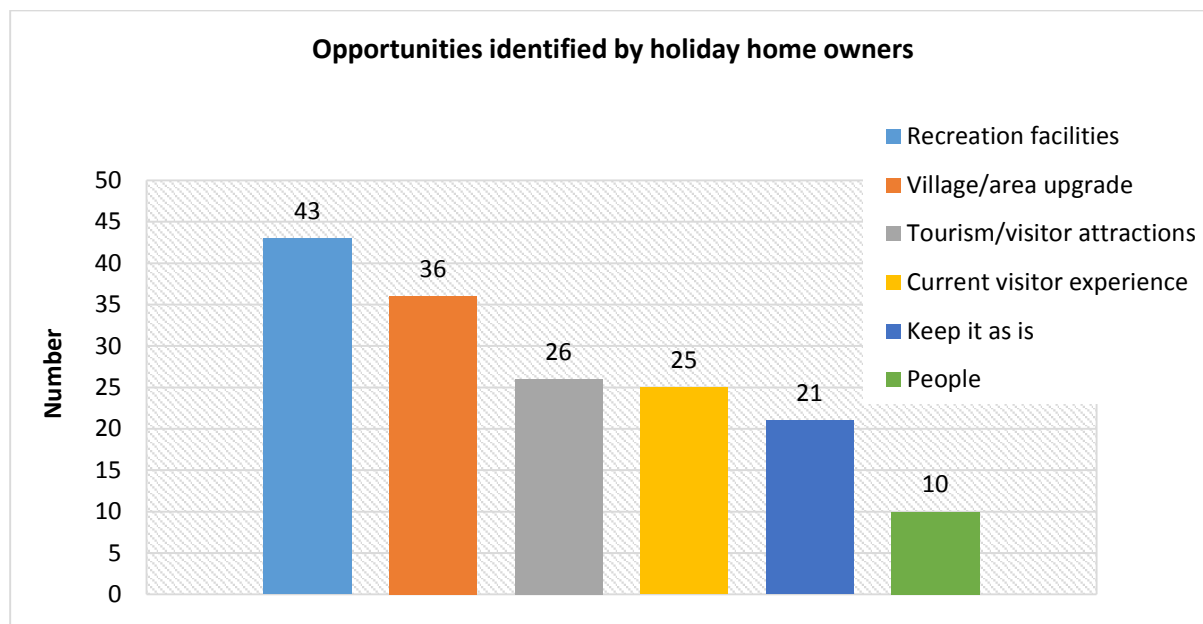


Figure 22: Opportunities identified by holiday home owners (n=161)



**Table 11: Details of opportunities identified by holiday home owners**

Broad category	Times identified as 'most important'	Specific opportunities suggested	Times*
<b>Recreation facilities (n=43)</b>	12	New/additional facilities	13
		Improve/develop existing	14
		Lake access/boating facilities	12
		Swimming pool	6
<b>Village/area upgrade (n=36)</b>	9	Improve water supply	12
		More/better public amenities	11
		Maintenance of roadway/footpaths	8
		Highway enhancement/signage	8
<b>Tourism/visitor attractions (n=26)</b>	4	Alps 2 Ocean	12
		Promotion/marketing	9
		New ventures/attractions	7
<b>Current visitor experience (n=25)</b>	5	Increase entertainment options	5
		Rubbish collection/recycling	5
		Rates return	4
		Visitor behaviour	4
		Improve services and amenities	4
		Boat ramp fees	3
<b>Keep it as it is (n=21)</b>	8	Stay the same	11
		Unique	6
		Non-commercialised	4
<b>People (n=10)</b>	0	More people	8
		Increased business/support development	2
		Maintain strong community leadership	1

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

For holiday home owners, the two areas presenting the greatest opportunities for improvement were recreation facilities (26.7% of the total 161 improvements suggested) and village/area upgrades (22.4%, n=36). Opportunities for new recreation facilities included 'off road recreational walking/mountain biking tracks around lake (safe for kids)', 'kayak hire, more equipment at Loch Laird, such as a water slide' and 'construction/further development of the Wetlands Walkway area'. There was also keen interest in further development of the village playground area (e.g., 'continue to develop the 'green' area, playground, skate park etc.') and in additional or improved boating facilities (e.g., 'more boat ramps') and enhanced lake access (e.g., 'better lakeside access/beach areas').

Similar to the responses to weakness question, many of the opportunities for village improvement were associated with the water supply (e.g., *'drinkable water'*) along with more or better public amenities (e.g., *'combining of the fuel station with shop/café area (1-stop shop)'* and *'more retail outlets'*), improved maintenance of roadways, an *'upgrade of footpaths'* and highway enhancement (e.g., *'main highway needs some landscaping and extra picnic tables'*).

The Alps 2 Ocean was noted 12 times as a tourism opportunity (e.g., *'cycleway (Alps 2 Ocean) could be a great opportunity for local business'* and *'opportunities for Alps 2 Ocean accommodation - rental of houses'*) although there was some concern over the amount of benefit Otematata would receive (e.g., *'I think Otematata will miss out on the money to be generated by the Alps to Ocean cycle path as it looks as though it is going to bypass us'*). There were also perceived opportunities associated with better promotion and marketing of Otematata (e.g., *'promote the foods of the region'* and *'more advertising about what you can see and do in Otematata i.e., a better website'*) and associated with the development of new tourism ventures and attractions (e.g., *'greater tourism - water-based on Lake Benmore e.g., an Earnslaw-type trip to see Mt Cook'* and *'dam tours/4 wheel drive trails'*).

In respect of the holiday home owners' current visitor experience, there was perceived to be an opportunity to generate better rates return in respect of village services (e.g., *'rates more in line with facilities'* and *'reduce rates - very little of the rates paid by Otematata residents goes into the town - Otematata is a "cash cow" for the WDC'*). A particular 'bone of contention' for some was having to pay boat ramp fees in addition to rates. There were also suggestions on how the visitor experience might be improved (e.g., *'[it] would be great if you could pay one sub to belong to the golf club, bowling club, district club and gym, for bach owners say \$350 for a couple and the clubs all take a share'*). Better control of some segments of the visitor market was also perceived to have potential to enhance the holiday home visitor experience (e.g., *'better control of freedom camping i.e., no camping in designated water-ski lanes. Campers in areas where there are no toilet facilities must be self-contained'*). There was also perceived to be some opportunities to increase entertainment options for current visitors (e.g., *'continue concerts in the park, [which were] stopped 3-4 years ago'* and *'more entertainment type of events could be organised'*).

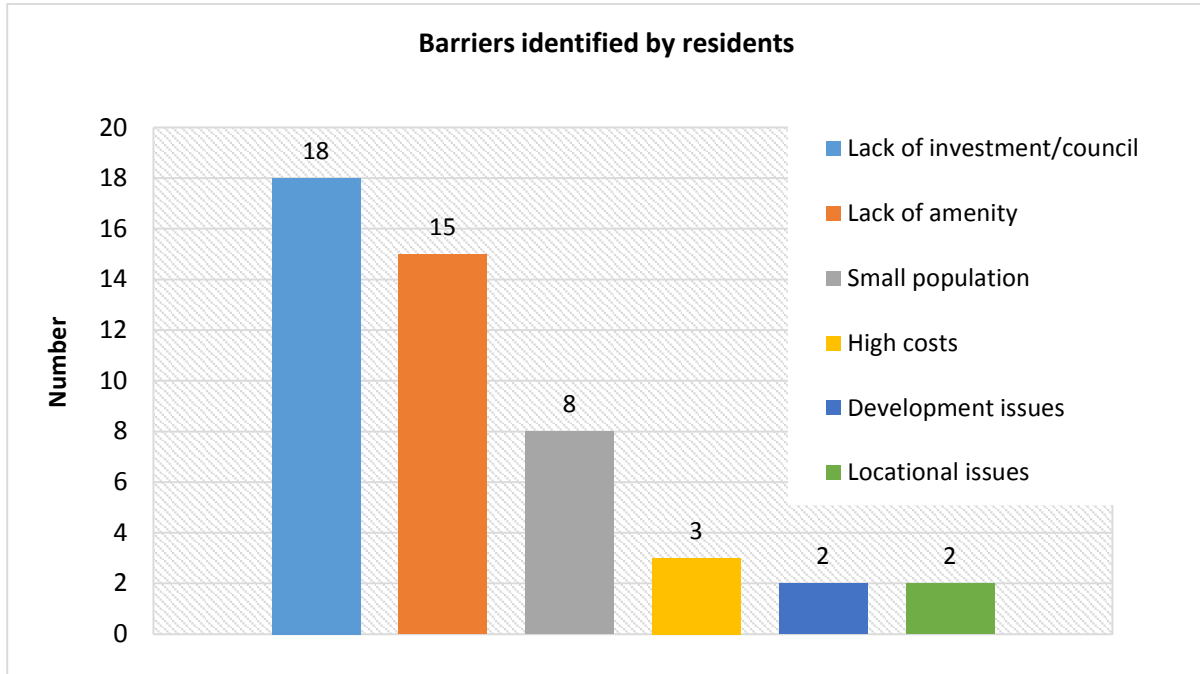
Altogether, 21 of the 92 holiday home owners (23%) indicated that, in respect of opportunities or improvement, Otematata should stay the way it currently is (e.g., *'we like it the way it is'* and *'it's just fine as it is'*). While more than half of these comments expressly alluded to it 'staying the same' others noted that they enjoyed the uniqueness (e.g., *'there is a certain "unique character" about the village and to that extent as a family we enjoy Otematata as it is, the status quo is fine!'*) and non-commercialised nature of Otematata (e.g., *'keep it small and non-commercialised'* and *'ensure it stays as is for the kiwi family enjoyment'*). There were, however, opportunities associated with increasing the permanent population (e.g., *'more permanent residents, therefore more job opportunities'* and *'increasing the population numbers to decrease costs'*) and the knock-on effect that could have in respect of increased business and commercial development (e.g., *'perhaps some more permanent residents requiring [more] local business'*).

## 5.12 Barriers to the future

A final open-ended question asked respondents to identify what barriers they thought stood in the way of, or stopped, Otematata being the place they wanted it to be. Space was allowed for up to three barriers. Respondents were also asked to indicate which of these they thought was the most important of the three, as reported in the second column of Tables 12 and 13. The responses were coded in a similar fashion (first into broad categories and then into sub-categories) as in the previous strength, weakness and opportunities/improvements questions.

**5.12.1 Barriers identified by residents**

The 30 residents surveyed identified 48 barriers in total, with the largest number (37.5% of barriers reported) relating to lack of investment and issues with the council (Figure 23). Lack of amenity accounted for 31.3 per cent of the barriers reported, while issues associated with Otematata’s small population accounted for a further 16.7 per cent of barriers. Table 12 provides a more detailed breakdown of the barriers reported by the resident sample and these are discussed below.



**Figure 23: Barriers identified by residents (n=48)**

**Table 12: Details of barriers identified by residents**

Broad category	Times identified as 'most important'	Specific barriers reported	Times*
<b>Lack of investment/council (n=18)</b>	4	Attitude, competence of council	10
		Allocation of rates to Otematata	5
		Specific investment needs	3
		Money for improvements	2
<b>Distance from/lack of community amenity (n=15)</b>	4	Schools	3
		Medical	3
		Sections for development	3
		Amenity lacking (distance/tourism)	6
<b>Small population (n=8)</b>	3	People	5
		Jobs/employment	4
<b>High costs (n=3)</b>	0	Housing/living expenses/rates	3
<b>Development issues (n=2)</b>	0	New homes threaten character	1
		Visitor behaviour	1
<b>Locational issues (n=2)</b>	1	Low profile within region	2

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

For the residents, the largest number of barriers were associated with lack of investment and attitude of the local council towards Otematata. There was a perception that the council gave Otematata minimal consideration or attention (e.g., *'the WDC's bias towards Oamaru'*) and the attitude of the council was criticised (e.g., *'district council "old school mentality"'* and *'council not listening to community voice'*). Reinvestment of rates money in Otematata was specifically noted (e.g., *'the failure to spend the rates monies in the area from which they are collected. Rates from the three hydro dams are absorbed into a greater pool'* and *'under-expenditure up the valley'*), along with a number of specific investment needs (e.g., *'the terrible condition of SH83, needs a major upgrade to seal and align'* and *'better parks, roading, village maintenance'*).

The distance to (and lack of) community amenities and facilities which had been noted in response to the previous weakness and opportunity questions, were also reiterated here, with schools and medical facilities specially identified. There were some concerns about the implications for Otematata *'if any of the local businesses closed'*; one respondent, for example, noted that *'the loss of the shop/café would be a huge loss for the township – [it is] sustained only by visitors during peak holiday times. The shop remains open as a 'service' in my opinion, but would have big repercussions should it close'*. There was perceived to be a need to develop more tourism facilities and amenities, but overall development in the town was perceived to be hampered by the limited availability of sections for sale (e.g., *'land availability for new houses - we are surrounded on all sides by high country stations'*).

The small population (and concomitant lack of employment opportunity) featured as a barrier, with one respondent attributing this to *'[the] attitude of "townies" around New Zealand that need to get out and repopulate rural centres'*. The high costs associated with life in a distant rural centre were also reiterated as a barrier.

Other barriers noted included: concern that new homes being built would threaten the character of Otematata; poor visitor behaviour deterring new visitors from coming to Otematata; and the low profile of Otematata within the wider Waitaki/Otago region.

### 5.12.2 Barriers identified by holiday home owners

The 92 holiday home owners surveyed identified 119 barriers (Figure 24): the largest group of barriers identified were associated with development (23.5%,  $n=28$ ), followed by barriers created by high costs (21.8%,  $n=26$ ), lack of investment (17.6%,  $n=21$ ) and Otematata's small population size (16%,  $n=19$ ). Table 13 provides more detail of the barriers identified.

Altogether, three quarters of development barriers identified by the holiday home owners related to the impact of overdevelopment. There was considerable concern about changes to the nature of the place (e.g., *'local body enforcing restrictions on minor changes that give it the 'crib' factor'*, *'[take] care not to change the character'* and *'too much development/commercialisation will ruin small village atmosphere'*) or the type of visitors it attracts (e.g., *'overseas tourists creating a Queenstown-type commercialisation'*, *'if property becomes more expensive it will change to mix of people who can afford to buy here'* and *'pricing out of ordinary person's reach - changing the "do it yourselfer" to the "nouveau riche"'*). There were also specific concerns raised about attracting too many people (e.g., *'too many people finding this wee gem of a place'*). While four respondents did identify some improvements that they considered necessary (in respect of employment opportunities and policing visitor behaviour) an equal number noted that they *'wouldn't want it changed at all'*.

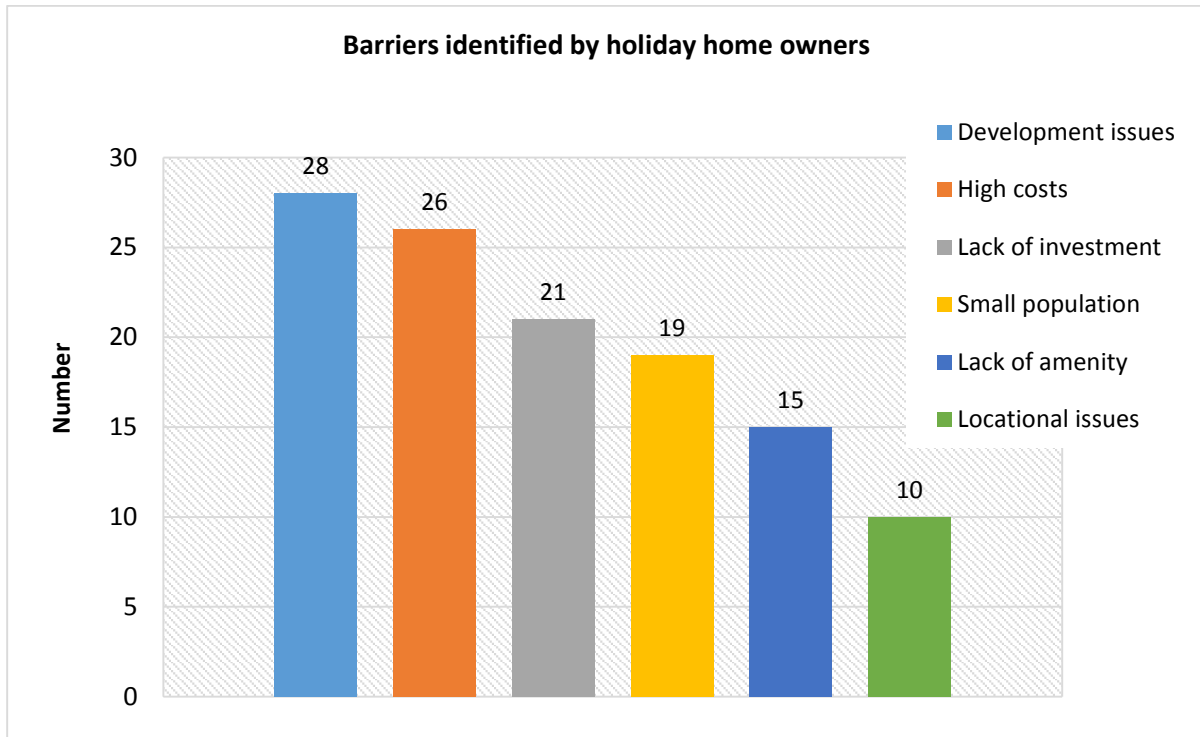


Figure 24: Barriers identified by holiday home owners (n=119)

Table 13: Details of barriers identified by holiday home owners

Broad category	Times identified as 'most important'	Specific barriers reported	Times *
<b>Development (n=28)</b>	9	Concern about overdevelopment	21
		No change wanted	4
		Need some improvements	4
<b>High costs (n=26)</b>	7	Rates	16
		Other costs	9
		Affordability	5
<b>Lack of investment (n=21)</b>	5	Generic	11
		Council	9
		Home owners	3
<b>Small population (n=19)</b>	6	Limited development/funding opportunity	7
		Declining population	6
		Small permanent population	6
		Ageing population/limited employment	3
<b>Lack of amenity (n=15)</b>	0	Community services	9
		Entertainment/recreation/tourism	5
		Land for development	2
<b>Locational issues (n=10)</b>	3	Remoteness/off main routes	5
		Access/pollution re recreation resources	3
		Alps 2 Ocean	2

\*does not always add up to total as some answers coded across two (or more) sub-groups

Once again, the cost, and returns on rate payments attracted most of the comment with respect to the high costs associated with home ownership in Otematata. Other specific (high) costs noted included insurance, rubbish collection, travel and camping fees. The affordability of owning property in Otematata – and changes to this – was also perceived to be a barrier (e.g., *‘moving towards a place for affluent people’*).

‘Lack of investment’ attracted 21 comments with nine respondents specifically mentioning council-related investment (in footpaths, business, and facility maintenance). Other areas highlighted for investment included business in general, the Alps 2 Ocean and the overall maintenance of Otematata. There were also issues around a lack of funding sources, the current perceived poor maintenance of community assets and limited human capability and commitment to progress in a small community (e.g., *‘no further development of community assets - lack of funding, volunteers for the playground/wetland’*). There were three complaints about lack of investment in their properties by homeowners (e.g., *‘home owners not interested in the maintenance and upkeep of their properties’*) and with *‘some locals’ mind-set and ways’*.

The majority of population comments merely referred to the ‘small population’ without providing any further detail. Some respondents, however, did specify barriers arising from a ‘declining’ and ‘ageing population’ and associated lack of employment. The small permanent population of Otematata also was perceived to present a barrier to development (e.g., *‘lack of people with skills and drive to coordinate and motivate progress’* and *‘elderly community, declining population, resist progress’*).

The current limited range of community amenities available in Otematata were noted as a barrier; the lack of a garage, access to tradesmen, limited medical services and access to building supplies were specifically identified by the holiday home owners as barriers. A lack of entertainment, recreation and tourism services were noted by five respondents with some indication that the residents should take more responsibility for their provision (e.g., *‘the residents will have to think more to the future and get more things for visitors to do’*). Two people commented on the *‘lack of available sections’*.

The final group of barriers identified by the holiday home owners related to location: the largest group of these noted that Otematata was in *‘a remote area’* and *‘not on main route to Central Otago’*; two respondents commented on possible re-routing of the Alps 2 Ocean (e.g., *‘[the] Alps 2 Ocean should come through Otematata – if it doesn’t locals miss out on opportunities’*). Three respondents also indicated potential barriers associated with *‘access to the lake’* and pollution of recreation resources (e.g., *‘[there is] potential for major pollution of Waitaki lakes if dairying goes ahead in the Mackenzie Basin’*).

### 5.13 Residents vs holiday home owners: key similarities and differences

Figure 25, over page, draws out the key similarities and differences, (with respect to Otematata’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and barriers), between the two survey groups: holiday home owners and permanent residents. With respect to strengths, the key point for both groups was the importance of Otematata’s location, in a rural setting with high natural amenity value, noting the lakes and ‘rural’ village. Our analysis revealed more differences across the two groups with respect to weaknesses, with residents highlighting limited employment opportunities and the small population, while holiday home owners were more concerned about the ongoing costs of dwelling ownership in Otematata, specifically local taxes (rates and boat ramp fees). The differences between both groups were most marked around the opportunities and barriers identified. Residents were most in favour of local development, especially if it generated employment opportunities (so the town could grow). While interested in enhanced local service provision and more recreation opportunities, holiday home owners were more cautious about development, particularly that which could change the quiet and peaceful (un-developed and un-commercialised) rural character of the town and its surrounds.

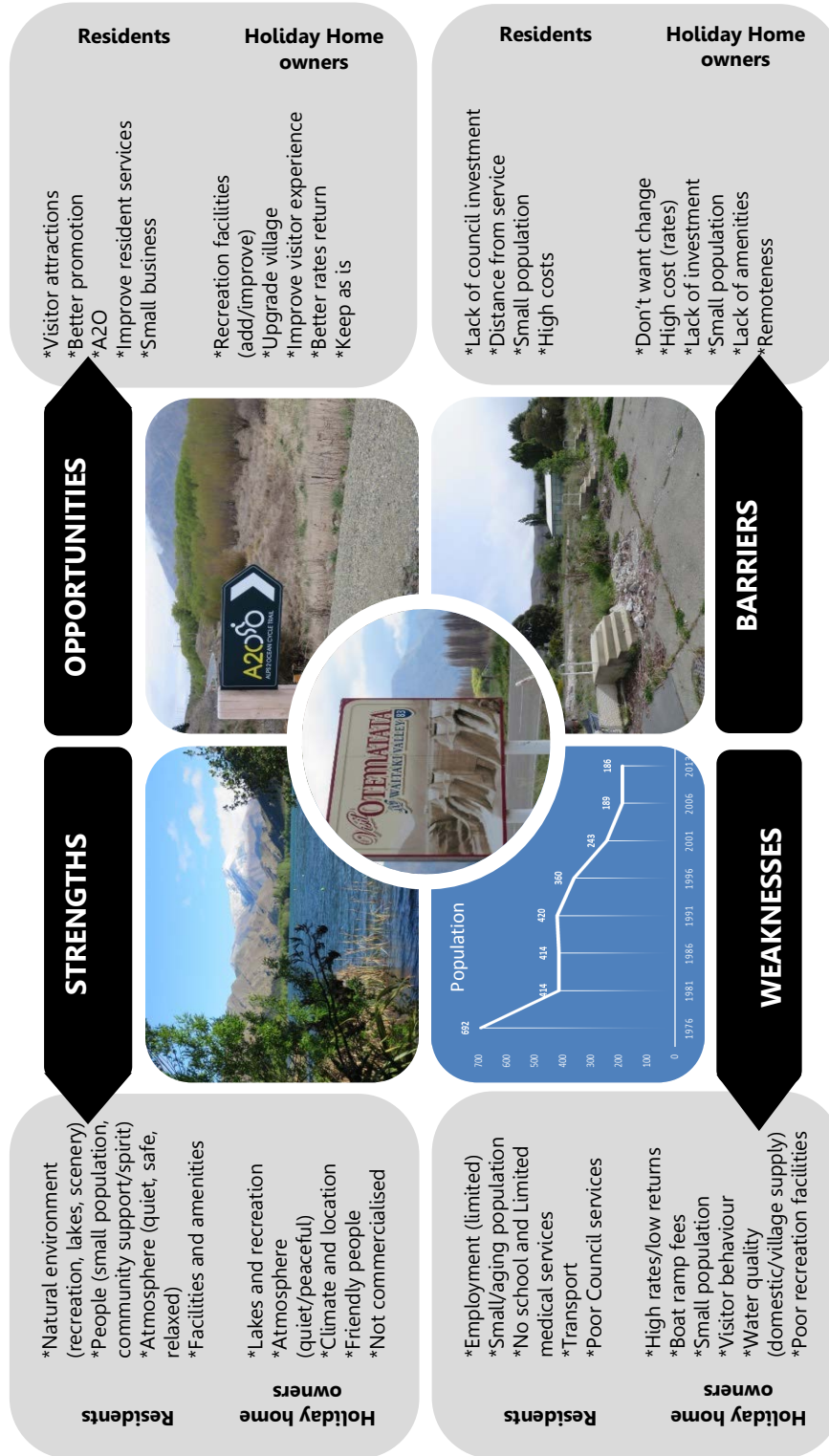


Figure 25: Residents vs holiday home owners: key similarities and differences



### 5.14 Attachment to Otematata

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-10 how attached they were to the Otematata area. Altogether, 23 residents and 84 holiday home owners answered this question and the distribution (in percentages) across the scale measures is shown in Figure 26. Overall, the holiday home owners had a higher mean attachment score (Mean=8.42) than did the residents (Mean=8.00).

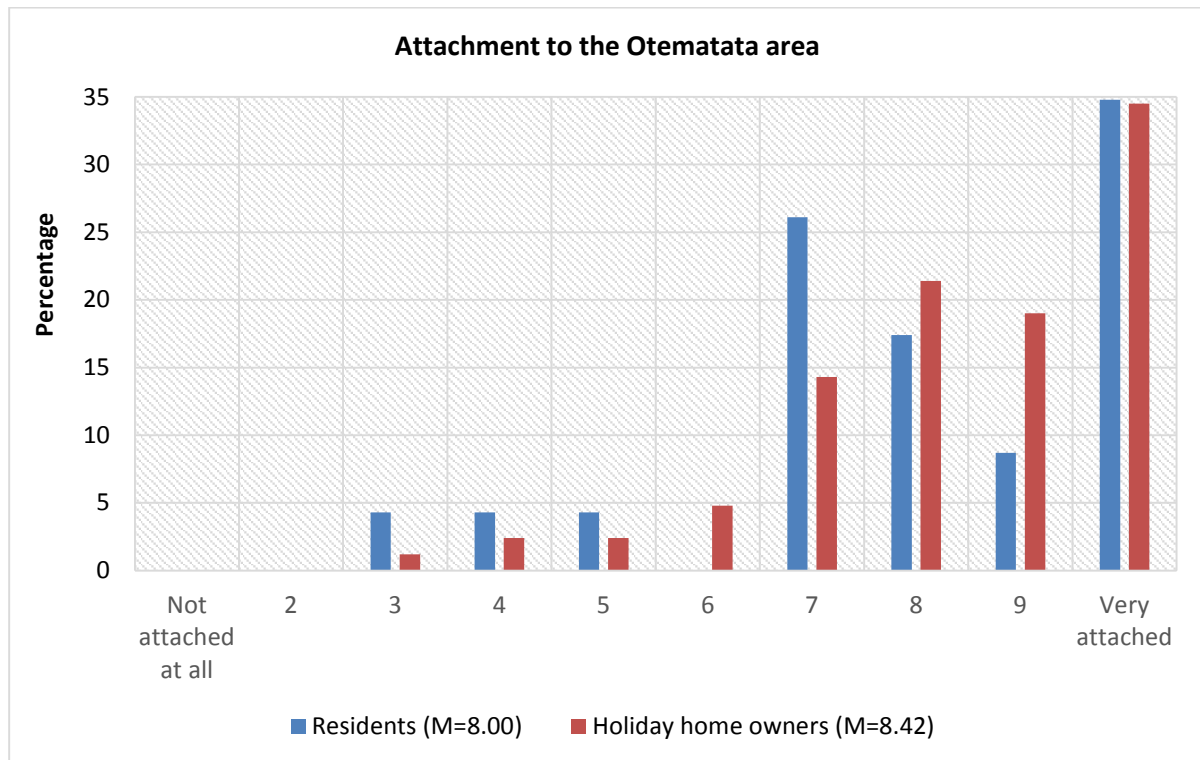


Figure 26: Attachment to Otematata (Residents n=23; Holiday home owners n=84)

### 5.15 Chapter summary

This survey, of both residents and holiday home owners, explored the community’s association with Otematata and their views on its current state and future development. The survey sample appears representative of the Otematata population with 43.3% of the residents surveyed aged 65-70 years. The mean residence was 20 years whilst the mean years of holiday home ownership was 14 years, suggesting that both sample groups have lengthy association with Otematata. Almost half of the holiday home owner sample lived within 150km of Otematata. The survey results also supported the findings from the interview data relating to: a retired rather than unemployed population; the multiple jobs undertaken by many of the residents who do work in Otematata; and the relative newness of some holiday home owners (half had owned their holiday home property for 10 years or fewer). The importance of holiday home owners to the Otematata community, and their role in that community, were key themes in the qualitative data. These are explored further and synthesised with the interview data in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

# Synthesis of Findings and Conclusion

### 6.1 Commentary

This research examined the current life of Otematata and changes of the last decade. While the early history of Otematata was presented as context to the study, the research data suggest that it is difficult to separate Otematata today from its hydro-town history. The settlement represents a 'moment in time' from the hydro era and Otematata has not *materially* changed since its construction in 1958. The lifecycle of New Zealand's hydro towns have been well-documented as they move and transform through four phases: an original settlement phase; consolidation and expansion; a wind-down period; and, an afterlife phase (Bendien, 1983, p.2-3):

**[Phase 1]** The settlement phase incorporates identification and securing of the location, land development, construction and placement of housing, public facilities and plant, creation of a local governing body and the sudden inflow of large numbers of people directly or indirectly involved with hydro construction.

**[Phase 2]** Settlement is followed by a consolidation and expansion period during which inhabitants settle in, services are refined and extended, and commercial, infrastructural and cultural ties with the local area and region are established. This is accompanied by a slow increase in the population and the build-up to a peak of construction activity.

**[Phase 3]** The wind down period is characterised by the staged withdrawal of the workforce, a rapid and large outflow of population, the removal of houses and reduction of the town area and the transfer of local authority to relevant local bodies.

**[Phase 4]** The 'afterlife' phase is depicted by the survival of a small community in a reduced town area, the influx of new residents, stabilisations of the population with a changed age/sex structure, change in economic base and (partial?) integration into the local and regional infrastructure.

In Otematata, the first three of the phases described above were relatively rapid whilst the afterlife phase has, to date, lasted for almost 50 years. Despite this extended afterlife, Otematata is still defined by its hydro-town status and identity, with some people still resident who were present during the hydro-town era. The reunion of hydro-town workers held in March 2015 was attended by 400 people (Ryan, 2015) and was the springboard for a new publication featuring a series of conversations from a Facebook group sharing memories of life in Otematata during the dam construction years (Frost, 2015).

Physically, there has been little change in Otematata since the departure of the hydro workforce (original houses, roads and community infrastructure remain) and there is scant evidence that there has been any major boost to or change in the economic base of the village. Instead, the new (since the hydro era) population consists mostly of new retirees and holiday home owners, neither of whom provide impetus for significant economic growth.

While most of the properties remaining in Otematata are holiday homes, Otematata is still primarily referred to as a (persistent) hydro-town and many of the issues experienced are directly related to this – the village was constructed a long time ago, from temporary materials and with temporary infrastructure, and was not designed to last. Otematata was created from scratch for an express purpose, rather than developing organically in response to population demand. Many of the

weaknesses and barriers identified in the survey (Chapter 5, sections 5.10 and 5.12) relate directly to this historic circumstance.

In Chapter 3 (section 3.4) we presented four indicators of place: recreation, property, loss of a school and the census picture and together these help to both represent and explain the Otematata community today. Interest in recreation is what has drawn people to Otematata for holiday visits (and has been an important part of the lives of those resident in Otematata) and is, perhaps, the most important social legacy of the hydro scheme that created the lakes and recreation areas enjoyed in the Waitaki Valley today. For both residents and holiday home owners, the popularity of Otematata is facilitated/constrained by the price and availability of property. Post-hydro, Otematata offered a ready-made holiday home village for some and affordable retirement homes for others, albeit with some locational and service constraints for the latter group of permanent settlers. The loss of the school, in particular, was keenly felt and has presented a significant impediment to population growth and to Otematata's ability to attract families with school age children; the impacts of this can be seen in the Census picture of Otematata's shrinking and ageing resident population.

The in-depth analysis of interview data presented in Chapter 4 and the survey data in Chapter 5 also highlighted these historic indicators of place, while identifying some significant changes over recent decades. Both sets of actors in the Otematata community have changed over time, as has the relationship between the two groups. The ageing/shrinking resident population is recognised by all as not being exclusive to Otematata, but rather is representative of a nationwide phenomenon of rural depopulation. What is perhaps different in Otematata is the role played in the community by its holiday home owners. The contribution of these property owners to local rates does provide Otematata with community funding that it might otherwise not receive (albeit with the return on rates a bone of contention with many), but it also delivers the Otematata community with much needed community support through the contribution of skills, time and engagement on a variety of local projects. While many of these suit their own needs (e.g., holiday home owners working on a new skate park which will obviously benefit their own children more than the primarily retired people of Otematata) these contributions do nevertheless contribute greatly to the 'afterlife' of Otematata.

The Otematata holiday home owners also appear to have considerable social involvement in community life, through membership of sport and social clubs, and as active members of the Otematata Resident Association. Their economic contributions to Otematata have helped keep the town alive, as they represent the greater proportion of rate payers and provide an important customer base for those local businesses that are still operating. The survey results also showed that the Otematata holiday home owners' attachment to Otematata extends to taking pride in village aesthetics, as evidenced by the complaints about some holiday home owners not maintaining their properties, reported in the survey.

Although, outwardly, Otematata may not have changed, changes in the people occupying and visiting Otematata was a key theme in both the interviews and the survey. While there were reports by residents that the type of holiday home owners have changed over time, there was also greater acceptance of the holiday home owners by the residents, perhaps associated with the reliance on them for Otematata's survival. In the survey, similar reasons for coming to Otematata were reported by both groups, with the lakes, climate and scenic amenity featuring strongly, although the holiday home were more active users of these resources. What was interesting was how highly the holiday home owners rated the qualities of the village itself, enjoying both the community feel and their own engagement with the local population. Both groups recognised that Otematata village offered much more in the way of facilities and amenities than is usual for a place of its (resident) population size.

There was, however, some clash of opinions between the two groups with respect to change in Otematata. There was a perception by some holiday home owners that residents were resisting progress and change and/or not engaging with changes that could benefit the Otematata community. This finding is in marked contrast to other holiday home literature, which suggests that the holiday

home owners are the ones who resist change and the local population who sought change and development. For the residents of Otematata, some of the lack of desire for change was associated with them having 'done their bit' in the past and wanting to pass the responsibility for both change, and community action more generally, over to someone else. There are, unfortunately, few new residents coming in to take up these reins. Overall, however, the Otematata community appears to exist in relative harmony, despite wanting slightly different things from the place.

During its entire afterlife phase, the Otematata community has struggled to become properly integrated into the local and regional infrastructure, and a number of battles have been fought (and re-fought) over the years to save the resources they inherited after the hydro works were finished. The maintenance of lakeside areas and boat ramps and the policing of holiday makers behaviour are issues affecting both residents and holiday home owners. Many of the issues are associated with money and the competition for council funds and resources. Otematata's 'persistent hydro town' moniker is still an apt descriptor today. But what of its future?

## **6.2 Future directions**

This research examined the 'life' of a rural holiday home village in New Zealand's South Island. A key question is how long Otematata's afterlife might be? It is feasible to expect that will Otematata become just a holiday home village, as the resident population continue to and the overall numbers of permanent residents continue to decline? What are the implications of this for the holiday home owners?

The Alps to Ocean was heralded by many interviewees, and by many of those surveyed, as having considerable potential to foster growth and development in Otematata. Expectation of exactly how much Otematata might benefit was, however, tempered by the recognition that the A20 project not only needed community support, but also required people with entrepreneurial vision and interest in new business development. Further, it was noted that, even if such development occurs, there remain well-founded concerns over how the A20 might 'connect' with Otematata's current visitor market, which is primarily domestic in nature. While these domestic visitors contribute significantly to the local economy, they are perhaps less likely to support the types of visitor services that international tourism demands. The domestic visitors in Otematata, for example, mostly camp or stay in their own holiday homes (rather than using commercial accommodation) and they bring their own vehicles, boats and other recreation equipment, which precludes their need to rent equipment or to take local tours. This research also highlighted the importance of the hydro character of Otematata – described variously as 'retro', 'old-fashioned', 'kiwiana', 'the way life used to be' in New Zealand – qualities that are much admired and appreciated by many, but which may have minimal appeal to international visitors.

The particular qualities of Otematata noted above also may also be threatened by future change, especially if the form or speed of development begins to erode, rather than enhance, the original character of place. For both the holiday home owners and the residents who contributed to this research, the maintenance of such character appears crucial to their enjoyment of Otematata. The potential for conflict – between development and maintenance of the status quo – is not uncommon and, in fact, in Otematata appears relatively homogenous with only simmering surface tensions. This may change if rural changes around them become more significant.

### **6.2.1 Future research**

This research has generated a number of additional research projects, including one using the A20 as a focal point. Funding has been received to investigate users on the A20 cycle trail. This research, to be undertaken during 2014/15, will explore who the A20 users are, what form their trail use takes, and perform a SWOT analysis (similar to that asked of the Otematata community) from a user perspective. It is anticipated that the baseline user data collected through this research will provide the basis for future research exploring community and business involvement in the establishment and operation of

the cycle trail and an assessment of community benefits accruing from the A20. This could potentially extend beyond Otematata to incorporate the other settlements of the Mackenzie Basin and Waitaki Valley and thus present a finely detailed regional perspective of rural change in New Zealand. It is our view that Otematata is a 'hidden gem' and has a lot to offer visitors (Photograph 32).



**Photograph 32: Otematata's distinct and spectacular surrounds**

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Research Information Sheet

*Lincoln University*  
*Faculty of Environment, Society and Design*

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled:

#### **The making and maintenance of a holiday (home) village: A case study of Otematata**

The aim of this exploratory study is to investigate what social and economic processes have, and continue to influence, change in Otematata with a focus on how the town became a predominantly holiday (home) village.

The study will help us understand the ways in which hydroelectric scheme settlements have survived and changed (in function) once construction work on related projects (e.g., dam building) has been completed. More specifically we are interested in: Otematata's emergence and on-going existence as a holiday home location; the challenges associated with settlement maintenance, and infrastructure and amenity provision, in respect of retaining some level of permanent population (and community); and, the perceived future opportunities associated with recreation and tourism in light of new regional developments such as the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail. The project is supported by Lincoln University divisional research funding.

Your participation in this project will involve a face-to face interview of approximately 30-40 minutes duration. This interview will include questions about: the length and nature of your attachment to the Otematata community; changes in Otematata and the surrounding district you have observed during this time; and your perceptions of the greatest issues and challenges facing the Otematata community. Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may decline to answer any question. You may also withdraw from the research at any time (up to 6 weeks after completion of the interview) by contacting me by email or phone. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place to suit you and will be digitally recorded. The interviews will be transcribed in full and you will have the opportunity to review your own interview transcript if you wish. If you prefer not to be recorded we will take notes throughout the interview - these notes will also be available for review once they are written up.

The results of the project will be written up and published as a Research Report, as a paper in an academic journal, and may also be presented at an international conference. When completed, an electronic copy of the Research Report will be made available to you. You may be assured of your anonymity in this investigation: the identity of any participant will not be made public, or made known to any person other than the researchers without the participant's consent.

To ensure confidentiality we will be the only people with access to the interview recordings and to ensure your anonymity only broad descriptors will be used in the presentation of any data in both verbal and written forms.

The project is being carried out by:

Dr Jude Wilson, Senior Research Officer, Lincoln University Email: [jude.wilson@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:jude.wilson@lincoln.ac.nz) Tel: (03) 423 0502

Dr Mike Mackay, Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Lincoln University Email: [michael.mackay@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:michael.mackay@lincoln.ac.nz)

We will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project or you may contact the Dean of our Faculty at Lincoln University:

Dr Greg Ryan, Dean, Faculty of Environment, Society & Design, Lincoln University

Email: [greg.ryan@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:greg.ryan@lincoln.ac.nz)

Telephone: (03) 423 0401

The project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

## Appendix 2: Indicative research framework for all key informant interviews

Interviews will cover four main topic areas. The exact relevance of these will depend on each interviewee's association with the town. Points 1 and 2 below are designed to gain contextual information about the interviewee and their connections with the town. The primary foci of the interview are the points listed in section 3. While we will use this schedule as a structure for the interviews, our iterative/exploratory approach means that the exact questions will be refined as the interviews progress. This also allows us to follow new lines of inquiry as they emerge.

1. Length of attachment
  - Resident: How long have they lived in the town (length of residence)
  - Visitor: Years of visitation (including first time visited)
  - Length of any formal association with the town (e.g., local politics, business, second home ownership)
2. Nature of association
  - Permanent or full time resident of the town
  - Resident of surrounding area
  - Employment or business interests
  - Community association
  - Family history
  - Holiday visitor
3. Changes observed, across a range of parameters
  - Socio-cultural and community (including demographic change)
  - Economic and business
  - Natural amenity (including land and water use) and landscape change
  - Provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities
  - Tourism, recreation and visitor services
  - Housing and real estate
  - Any other observed changes (open question)
4. Issues and challenges for the village and its community, as identified by each interviewee. These may focus on particular areas of each interviewee's expertise and experience, but we would expect the conversations to cover the topics listed above in 3.

## Appendix 3: Questionnaire

### A survey of Otematata residents and holiday home visitors



This survey is part of a study looking at people’s connections with rural and small town New Zealand. The survey includes questions about your association with Otematata village and its community, and what you think of Otematata as a place to live or visit. It also collects some basic demographic information. We would like to hear from permanent residents, holiday home owners and visitors as they ALL have a contribution to make to this research project.

A survey form has been delivered to every letter box in Otematata village. We hope to get a completed survey back from one person at each property. In order to ensure that a good mix of people are represented in this survey, **we would like the person who is aged 18 years or over and who has the next birthday to complete the survey.** There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer all the questions as they **apply to you**. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to answer. If you chose to participate in this survey we ask that you return the completed form by posting it back to us at your earliest possible convenience - we have left you an addressed **Freepost (i.e., no stamp required)** envelope for the survey return. Returning this completed survey form will be taken to indicate your consent to participating in the research.

#### **Q1** About this property

*Please tick the appropriate boxes and then follow the arrows below to complete this question*

<input type="checkbox"/> This is my permanent home	→	How many years in total have you lived in Otematata?  _____ Years (Please go to Q2)
<input type="checkbox"/> This is a holiday (or second) home	→	Where do you normally live? _____  Do you own (or part-own) this holiday home? <input type="checkbox"/> Do not own (Please go to Q2) <input type="checkbox"/> Own/part-own <div style="text-align: right;">↓</div>
		How long have you owned or part owned this holiday home?  _____ Years

**Q2 What brought you to Otematata to live, to stay in a holiday home, or to visit?**

*From the list below please tick all that apply to you - there is also space for you to add others if necessary*

Family connection		Easily accessible from my permanent home	
Small population		Worked here during dam construction	
Employment opportunities		Affordability of houses	
Proximity to the lakes		Provision of services and amenities	
Outdoor recreation opportunities		Retired here	
Climate		<b>Other (please specify):</b>	
Quiet		<b>Other (please specify):</b>	
The natural landscapes		<b>Other (please specify):</b>	

**Q3 Do you belong to/use any of the following Otematata services?**

*From the list below please tick all that apply - there is also space for you to add others if necessary*

District Club		Local shop	
Residents Association		Bowling club	
Library		Golf club	
Volunteer fire/emergency response		Village play area	
Read Otematata Chronicle		Otematata development group	
Local community board		<b>Other (please specify):</b>	
Local restaurants and café		<b>Other (please specify):</b>	

**Q4 Please list any community projects you have been involved in during the last 10 years**

*(e.g., wetland walkway, planting, play area development, planning)*

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**Q5 Otematata strengths**

*Please list what you think are the **good points or strengths** of Otematata. In other words, what are the things which make Otematata a great place to live in, or to visit? List up to three strengths and tick the one you think is the most important.*

	I think the good points or strengths of Otematata are....	<i>Most important</i>
1		
2		
3		

**Q6** Otematata weaknesses

Please tell us what you think are the **present weaknesses** of Otematata. What aspects of life here are you are not completely satisfied with? List up to three weaknesses and tick the one you think is most important.

	I think the weaknesses of Otematata are....	Most important
1		
2		
3		

**Q7** Improvements/opportunities

Please list those things you think would make Otematata **a better place to live or to visit**. List up to three opportunities for Otematata and tick the one you think is the most important.

	I think the opportunities to make Otematata a better place are...	Most important
1		
2		
3		

**Q8** Barriers to the future

These are the things that **stand in the way or that might stop** Otematata being the place you want it to be. List up to three points and tick the one you think is most important.

	I think the main things that will prevent Otematata from being what I want are....	Most important
1		
2		
3		



**Q9 Attachment to Otematata**

People often become attached to the places where they live, play in and/or visit. By attached we mean that someone has built up a strong, enduring and positive relationship with the location. Please mark an 'x' somewhere along the line below that reflects how attached you are to the Otematata area

Not attached at all  Very attached

**Q10 What is your age?** *Please tick only one option below*

15-19 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-44 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-69 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
20-24	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	70-74	<input type="checkbox"/>
25-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-54	<input type="checkbox"/>	75-79	<input type="checkbox"/>
30-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	55-59	<input type="checkbox"/>	80-84	<input type="checkbox"/>
35-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	60-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	85+	<input type="checkbox"/>

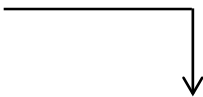
**Q11 What is your gender?** *Please tick only one option below*

Male  Female

**Q12 What is your employment status?** *Please tick only one option below*

Employed full-time   
 Employed part-time   
 Self-employed   
 Unemployed   
 Not in the workforce (e.g., retired)

**Q13 Do you work in Otematata?** *Please tick only one option below and then follow the arrow*

Yes  

No

Do you have more than one job? Yes  No

**Any further comments:**

Thank you for completing this survey

## Appendix 4: Information sheet (survey)

### To the person at this property aged 18 years or over who has the next birthday

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled: *The making and maintenance of a holiday (home) village: A case study of Otematata*

The aim of this exploratory study is to investigate what social and economic processes have, and continue to influence, change in Otematata with a focus on how the town became a predominantly holiday (home) village. The study will help us understand the ways in which hydroelectric scheme settlements have survived and changed (in function) once construction work on related projects (e.g., dam building) has been completed. More specifically we are interested in: Otematata's emergence and on-going existence as a holiday home village; the challenges associated with settlement maintenance, and infrastructure and amenity provision; and, the perceived future opportunities associated with recreation and tourism in light of new regional developments such as the Alps2Ocean Cycle Trail. The project is supported by Lincoln University faculty research funding.

You may be assured of your anonymity in this survey as no identifying information will be collected about you. Collected data will be presented in aggregate form and no person will be individually identifiable. All completed survey forms will be kept in a secure location and the Lincoln University secure facility once analysis is completed. The data obtained entered into a password protected computer. The results of the project may be published in an academic journal.

Your involvement in this survey is completely voluntary - you are free to refuse to answer any question and are not obliged to complete the survey and return it to us. If you have any concerns after completing and returning the survey forms you may contact us to request that we delete your survey data - in order for us to identify your survey, however, we require that you take note of the survey number written at the top of the survey form you completed (these numbers are included for our data entry purposes only). The cut-off date for withdrawing your data is the end of March 2014.

It is important that all participants in the survey are able to provide informed consent regarding his or her involvement in this research project. As such, the completion and return of this survey to Lincoln University will indicate that you consent to these conditions.

The project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

### **The research is being carried out by:**

**Dr Jude Wilson, Tourism Researcher, Lincoln University**

**Email:** [jude.wilson@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:jude.wilson@lincoln.ac.nz)

**Phone:** 03 423 0502

**Dr Mike Mackay, Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Lincoln University**

**Email:** [mike.mackay@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:mike.mackay@lincoln.ac.nz)

They will be pleased to discuss any questions or concerns you have about participation in the project.

