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On The Edge

A History of Adventure Sports and Adventure Tourism in Queenstown

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On the Edge
Abstract

This thesis is a history of adventure sports and adventure tourism in Queenstown. It highlights Queenstown's long tradition of adventure from the 1850s to the 1990s. Principally it focuses on the development of Queenstown's four main adventure tourist activities, skiing, jet boating, rafting and bungy jumping, and the companies and personalities who were involved in establishing these pursuits. Queenstown attracts a large number of tourists to the area each year and the availability of adventure activities is an important factor in this. Some have even attached the label 'Queenstown - Adventure Capital of the World' as a means of marketing and promotion. The aura of Queenstown's scenery and natural surroundings engenders a feeling of excitement and encouraged a number of people to offer tourists an opportunity to challenge nature through adventure based activities. In many instances the pursuits that surfaced in Queenstown were the first to be seen in New Zealand, and in one case the world. The thesis also explores what compels individuals to participate in adventure sports, the rise of Wanaka as a secondary centre for adventure seekers and the all-important issue of safety in adventure tourism. After a series of accidents and fatalities the adventure industry has been forced to address safety. One difficulty that was encountered while producing this work was the relative absence of historiography on the subject. Fortunately a number of the major personalities involved are still living in the Queenstown area and interviewing them was a way to overcome this obstacle.
Acknowledgments

There are a number of people who need to be acknowledged for their efforts in helping me complete this thesis. Principally I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Hew McLeod. His assistance and advice was invaluable. There were also a number of people who helped me gather the necessary information to enable me to write the thesis. Not least of all were the staff of the Hocken Library, and in particular David 'Have You Seen This' McDonald and Aaron 'Tractor Man' Braden. A special thanks also goes out to those who were willing to be interviewed which provided a significant proportion of the source material. Thanks to the History Department and to those who located photographs for me, your help was greatly appreciated.

On a more personal note I would like to thank my parents for their encouragement and hospitality and for their input and expertise during the final stages of production. Cheers to the fellas for the great times. You're all a bunch of little Fonzies - Cool. I just hope we have a few more 'adventures' in the future. Lastly thanks to Catherine for reminding me why I should finish this thesis and for her infinite love and support.
A Note on the Sources

Owing to the contemporary nature of this thesis there have been many factors, some positive, some negative, which have influenced the availability of source material. On the whole, there is very little secondary material on this topic. Exceptions can be made for the chapters on the early explorers and the theory behind why people participate in adventure sports. For this reason, much of the thesis has relied on information gathered from interviews with past or present operators, or others involved in the adventure industry. Fortunately these people are generally still living in the Queenstown area and willing to be of assistance. Without this information it is unlikely that completion of this thesis would have been possible.

A number of other sources were also invaluable. In particular Queenstown's main local newspaper the Mountain Scene. The Mountain Scene has been a weekly publication since it first appeared in November 1973, and provides locals with information regarding the Queenstown area. Because of the prominence of tourism, and in this case adventure tourism, the Mountain Scene has provided a wealth of material. Other newspapers along with magazine articles and journal articles have also been utilised.

The relative absence of secondary sources serves to illustrate the glaring gaps in the histories of both Queenstown and Wanaka. Further research in this area would be vital in uncovering some of the mystery that surrounds Central Otago.

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Introduction

There is a brand of excitement in Queenstown which offers more adventure than a brush with Winston Peters in the corridors of Parliament, an exchange of pleasantries with Richard Loe at the bottom of a ruck, or a tango with a Mongrel Mob member on a Saturday night. From the outside, this form of adventure would be viewed as equally irrational. Every year thousands of people jump off bridges, fall from the sky, get tossed around by a churning river or career down a snow-covered mountain with planks of wood on their feet. Prince Philip once described one of these activities as a 'practice for suicide'. This is adventure sports and Queenstown provides a unique adventure experience that caters for graduated couch potatoes to hard-core adrenalin junkies. Queenstown has always had a tradition of adventure and in the last 40 years the combination of speed, height and water has been transformed into a national pastime.

This thesis examines a history of adventure sports and adventure tourism in Queenstown from its birth, through its adolescent years to the maturation stage of today. Although adventure can mean different things to different people, for the purposes of this thesis adventure tourism is defined as 'commercially operated activities involving a combination of adventure and excitement pursued in an outdoor environment'. It encompasses such things as skiing, white-water rafting, parapenting, jet boating, tramping, mountain biking and bungy jumping. The New Zealand Tourism Board has estimated that approximately 70% of international visitors intend to undertake an adventure or outdoors pursuit while in New Zealand. When one considers that around 1.5 million tourists visit this country annually

2 Ministry of Commerce, Safety Management in the Adventure Tourism Industry: Voluntary and Regulatory Approaches, Wellington, May, 1996, p.1. The term 'adventure' has been defined by the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as a 'chance of danger or loss, risk, jeopardy; a hazardous enterprise or performance; a novel or exciting incident'.
3 For a full list of these see Appendix 1.
this is not only a windfall for the tourism industry as a whole, but also for adventure operators in particular. Adventure tourism has been predicted as the next big overseas dollar earner within an industry which already represents the largest earner of foreign exchange in this country. The 1.5 million tourists spend around $5 billion and some have forecast that the number of tourists could be as high as 2 million by the year 2000. There has been a definite trend over the last twenty years of a change from predominantly windscreen, package tourists to independent travellers, a trend that has been reflected in the growth of adventure tourism.

Queenstown has always had a tradition of adventure. From the time of the explorations of Nathaniel Chalmers in 1853 it became clear that Queenstown was able to bring out the best in people and prompt them to challenge nature head on. This has been epitomised in an adventuring spirit. The exploits of these first adventurers form the basis of the first chapter. It also examines the impact of the goldrushes on the development of the Queenstown area. Many of the facilities and systems of communications that were put in place to service the needs of the goldminer were invaluable as Queenstown's second gold rush, tourism, swept the town. Many individuals were instrumental in developing Queenstown's reputation as a tourist resort, none more so than the Wigley family.

An often-asked question, especially of those of the extreme variety, is 'why?' What compels individuals to participate in adventure sports and to risk life and limb in the pursuit of thrills and excitement? Some of the reasons behind this will be investigated in chapter 2 as will the changing conceptions of nature and wilderness and their subsequent use over the past 100 years. Seeking some form of adventure away from the urban environment seems to be a way for people to escape some of the routines and boredom of everyday life. Although most people feel this need to escape, participants are made up of mainly young, middle class males because of economic and social reasons.

The thesis is not a comprehensive examination of all aspects concerning the history of adventure sports and adventure tourism.

in Queenstown. One could never hope to achieve this. For this reason I have chosen four activities which I see as the main adventure pursuits for visitors to the Queenstown area. There has also been a personal bias in the selection. Each activity has developed an impressive reputation and was often introduced to Queenstown by pioneers in their sport. These four activities form the basis of the next four chapters: skiing, jet boating, white-water rafting and bungy jumping. Each traces the development of the activity and identifies the main players who were instrumental in making it available to the public. On its own each activity constitutes a unique attraction. When considered together one can comprehend the appeal that Queenstown presents for the adventure seeker.

More recently attention has been focussed on Wanaka as a secondary area for adventure tourists and this will be examined in chapter 7. Rather than being viewed as a competitor, Wanaka complements what Queenstown has to offer. It caters for a different sort of adventurer and has a different feel to it. The main distinction is Wanaka's relative lack of commercial development and competitive edge.

The nature of adventuring means that risks are involved. For some people it would not be an adventure if there were no risks. The important factor here, however, is the level of actual danger against the equivalent image of perceived danger. People want to be able to experience 'safe thrills'. So how safe are these activities? It seems that there have been more accidents in adventure tourism than people have been led to believe. Chapter 8 explores the issue of safety in adventure tourism with particular emphasis on the rafting industry in Queenstown which suffered a 'crisis' following five deaths in an 18-month period on the Shotover River. The level of safety in other activities is also investigated, as are recent efforts to improve the overall image of adventure tourism through the adoption of industry-wide safety regulations.

Adventure is a subjective concept. There are no guidelines or limits at either end of the spectrum. In the hustle and bustle of the modern world, adventuring, for many, is a form of escapism. Rob Hall and Gary Ball, mountaineering pioneers and Kiwi adventurers who both perished while climbing in the Himalayas, summed up the attraction of adventure sports.
The joy of adventure can be found in exploring your own limits and setting challenges for yourself as an individual. Everyone has their own 'Everest' and there is plenty of scope to search it out within New Zealand.6

Another expressed the attraction of this country in different terms when she exclaimed that New Zealand, and more especially Queenstown, 'has more adrenalin on tap than a James Bond movie'.7 Maybe even James Bond does not possess as many strings to his bow as Queenstown does.

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6 Rob Hall and Gary Ball, Classic New Zealand Adventures, foreword.
1. The Rush For Adventure

The Foundations of Queenstown and its Tourist Industry

*Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.*
-Helen Keller

Hilary Bower has suggested that 'Queenstown probably owes its success as a resort to an ability to be all things to all people'. It has taken on a chameleonic nature over the past 150 years, changing with the prevailing winds. Once a centre for mining and farming, one feature has remained constant throughout, namely Queenstown's attraction as a tourist destination. The early explorers recognised Queenstown's beauty and tourists and holiday-makers were attracted to the Southern Lakes from the goldrush days. Queenstown was essentially built on gold and the infrastructure put in place as a result was important in not only providing means of transport into the area but also in accommodating the influx in tourists. As the miners moved out the tourists moved in and Queenstown's second gold rush, tourism, has proved more lucrative than the first. Adventure and exploration have been synonymous with the Queenstown area, but today these are of a very different kind to those of the mid to late nineteenth century. This was a period rich in romantic interest where predominantly men explored the unknown and challenged nature head on. Rees, Hector, McKerrow, Arthur, Haast and Caples, for instance, have left their name to various features of the landscape, but very few people, local or visitor, actually know of their exploits. Unfortunately even less is known of early Maori exploration and settlement.

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The first dwellers in the Queenstown area were thought to have been moa hunters. A Maori village was located at Te Kirikiri (Frankton), and there is also evidence of habitations at Tahuna (Queenstown). Just as Queenstown is seen as the premier destination for tourists today, Maori, according to Beattie, seemed to regard Wakatipu as 'the crowning glory of lakeland':

...his regard being based on its splendour of appearance, its length, the legends accounting for its origin, and the traditions accruing to the human activities in its vicinity.

Legends have played an important role in Maori oral culture and there are a number that account for Whakatipu [sic] - the hollow of the great giant. One is retold by Herries Beattie in *Maori Lore of the Lake, Alp and Fiord*.

A fine young Maori warrior, Matakouri, loved a chieftain's daughter, Manata. The chief thought, however, his daughter too good for Matakouri. One day a giant, Matau, kidnapped Manata and took her into the mountains. The chief, distraught on hearing this, offered his daughter to anyone who rescued her from the clutches of the giant and brought her back.

Matakouri, knowing that Matau always slept when 'the wind blew from the northwest, was determined to rescue Manata. But Manata was tied to the giant by a cord and could not escape. Furthermore, the cord could not be cut as it was made from the hide of the two-headed dog. Manata wept and her tears fell on the cord severing it. The two fled to the river where Matakouri had made a raft and escaped. Matakouri then returned Manata to her father.

Matakouri, though, was determined to slay the giant. He climbed to the hill where Matau was sleeping and set fire to a great pile of bracken that burned around him. The fire burnt a deep hole in the ground over 1000 feet deep in the shape of the sleeping giant. The snow-melt from the mountains then poured into this

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5 Ibid., p.27.
6 In the Polynesian culture mutations were a common theme and were often a sign of divine favour consequently possessing a great deal of mana.
hole creating the lake. The water still rises and falls to the beat of Matau’s heart.  

Around 500 years after Maori habitation in the area most Maori lived on the east coast. Trips were made inland for specific needs such as fishing, and valleys such as the Routeburn and Greenstone were used to travel to the West Coast. This knowledge of inland routes was useful for European exploration, but was also surprising to the new arrivals. As Beattie reported:

When the whalers came round the coasts of Otago they found to their surprise that most of the Maoris could tell all about the interior of the country and name the lakes, mountains and rivers.

Although no European had seen the lake, these accounts were valued by Europeans and maps as far back as 1843 showed Lake Wakatipu as an oval sheet of water named Waipounamu, the Greenstone Water. One who possessed an extensive knowledge of the central South Island was the Maori guide Reko and his knowledge was often sought by explorers to provide directions. One adventurer was Nathaniel Chalmers.

Nathaniel Chalmers has generally been regarded as the first white person to see Lake Wakatipu. He was a farmer in the Clutha District following his arrival from England in 1848 and while driving a flock of sheep overland he met Reko. Reko told him tales of adventure, especially of northern Southland’s interior which no white man had ever seen. A spark in Chalmers’s adventurous

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7 Beattie, pp.33-34. The lake rises and falls 12 centimetres every 51 minutes. Maori attribute this to Matau’s heart which was not destroyed by the fire and continues to beat. Scientists cannot fully account for this phenomenon but believe it is a seiche which is found in some lakes in Europe and acts in a way similar to that of a tide. Jenny Hayworth, Destination Queenstown and Wanaka, Hong Kong, 1995, p.9.


9 Beattie, p.19.


spirit had been ignited and as Chalmers explained, 'we bargained that he should show me the country and that in payment I should give him a "kohoa" (that is a three-legged pot)'\textsuperscript{13} In September 1853 Chalmers, Reko and another Maori named Kaikoura, called so because he had run away from the Kaikoura Ranges, travelled up the Mataura River with the intention of going in the direction of the Waitaki 'as far as we could go'.\textsuperscript{14}

Reko avoided Wakatipu, knowing the difficulty of travelling around the shore. Jagged bluffs posed one obstacle, as did the northwest wind that made travelling by raft an impossibility. Instead the party traversed the Nokomai and down the Nevis Valley behind the Remarkables.\textsuperscript{15} After five days Chalmers climbed:

...a very high jagged range alone, and saw a lot of water and snowy mountains a very long way off in the distance about Northwest. On my getting back to the camp I asked Reko, and he said, 'that water that you saw was the Wakatipu water!'\textsuperscript{16}

They continued along the valley behind the Remarkables until they came to the Kawarau River. The trio crossed the natural 'bridge' over the Kawarau and then followed the Clutha River up to Lakes Wanaka and Hawea. Despite assurances from Reko that only two more hard days walking would bring them to the Waitaki, Chalmers succumbed to sickness and exhaustion. Not only was he the first white man to see Lakes Wakatipu, Wanaka and Hawea, but Chalmers was also the first European to raft in the area.\textsuperscript{17} The trio rafted down the Clutha River, this being the fastest and easiest way to return to the Clutha District.\textsuperscript{18}

The first Europeans to stand on the shore of Lake Wakatipu were thought to have been John Chubbin, John Morrison and Malcolm MacFarlane in September 1856.\textsuperscript{19} Like Chalmers they

\textsuperscript{13} Pascoe, p.118.
\textsuperscript{14} Beattie, p.35.
\textsuperscript{16} Pascoe, p.118.
\textsuperscript{17} See chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{18} Beattie, p.36. Chalmers did not have his adventures published until 57 years later so very little seems to have been known about him until this time.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp.46-47.
followed the directions of Reko who had drawn the group a map of
the area in the sand. They also approached from the south, the
easiest route, burning speargrass and matagouri as they went.
After travelling for three days the group reached the shore, but
Morrison inadvertently dropped a match after lighting his pipe
causing a fire to rage out of control. In order to avoid the all
consuming flames the trio, and their horses, were forced to scurry
into the lake up to their necks and wait for the blaze to subside.²⁰

David McKellar was thought to be the next in the area. It was
reported that he first visited the area in January 1857 and that he
made frequent trips thereafter. One such expedition occurred in
December 1857. McKellar travelled to Lake Wakatipu with the
intention of constructing a raft and 'seeing what was around the
corner',²¹ Persistent northwest winds, however, forced him to
abandon his plans.²² The next year he decided to climb over the
mountains on the left side of the southern arm of the lake with
similar intentions. From there he was probably the first white man
to see the head of the lake. McKellar commented on the nature of
the land and deemed sheep farming an impossibility because of
low-lying snow.²³

Despite McKellar's doubts about the practicality of sheep
farming in the area, runholders began pushing further into Central
Otago in a search for land. Soon greater knowledge of inland areas
was gained and word spread that there was indeed good sheep
country.²⁴ Anticipating a rush for land, surveyors hastened to map
these areas before the runholders arrived. Probably the best-
known surveyor of this time was J. T. Thomson. On his first
expedition in 1857 Thomson travelled mostly on foot, covering
1500 miles and surveying two and a half million acres in the space
of four months.²⁵ This must have been a difficult journey, yet an
adventure, travelling over the relatively unknown and untracked
mountains, valleys and plains of the Waitaki River and the Mount

²⁰ Ibid., p.47.
²¹ Ibid., p.48.
²² Donald Hay did utilise McKellar's raft in his circumnavigation of the lake
two years later.
²³ Beattie, pp.48-49.
²⁴ Temple, p.58.
²⁵ Beattie, pp.75-76.
Cook and Southern Lakes areas. Pascoe has tried to convey some of the thoughts that must have surrounded forays into the unknown. Cast your mind to the time when there were no maps or knowledge of the interior. Consider that the rivers were unbridged and their sources uncertain. Imagine that no-one knew what lay over the other side of the hills on your horizon. Only then can you feel some of the doubts that must have assailed travellers on some of the first major journeys. What was needed to overcome such doubts? Curiosity; evangelism; the search for gold or grazing; adventure; restlessness; energy; any combination of these could be ingredients for enterprise and hazard.26

Thomson and his fellow surveyors possessed some of this adventurous spirit and did much to alleviate the uncertainty of inland Otago. Thomson's accounts, for example, were reported in the newspapers which caused great interest among the farming community. Still more land was demanded and pressure was exerted by runholders to find a pass through the mountains to the unknown valleys of Westland. Surveyors and scientists such as James McKerrow, Dr James Hector and Vincent Pyke explored remote areas in search of traversable passes and a number of the valleys, lakes, rivers, tracks, mountain ranges and passes were named by or after them.

There was great competition over the discovery of the best-known pass through to the West Coast in the lower South Island, Haast Pass. As Philip Temple has observed 'the search for the West Coast pass was stimulated as much by provincial rivalry as ambitions to be the first to claim new land holdings'.27 In 1863 the Makarora area was within the boundaries of Canterbury. Julius von Haast, geologist to the Canterbury Provincial Government, found success exploring this area. Otago's hopes of finding a pass through to the West Coast were placed in Dr James Hector who explored the Matukituki Valley. It was reported that two days after leaving Makarora, Haast ascended the pass which now bears his name and then continued on for a further three weeks through

26 Pascoe, p.9.
27 Temple, p.59.
continuous rain before standing on the beaches of the West Coast. Haast quickly publicised his achievement, writing:

Thus a most remarkable pass was discovered, which in a chain of such magnitude as the Southern Alps has no equal.28

Despite Haast's obvious delight, however, there was 'no grazing land, no gold in the rivers, no easy line for a road and no justification for one'.29 It was more than a century before the road and bridges through to the West Coast were completed and parts of it were not entirely sealed until the 1990s.

Although Haast's journey was a significant achievement, he was not in fact the first to cover such territory. In 1836 a band of Maori warriors traversed what is now known as Haast Pass in a journey down the West Coast from Nelson in an attempt to conquer Otago. Led by Te Puoho, they were trying to outflank Maori settled in the area but were themselves surprised by a bloody attack from Tuhawaiki (Bloody Jack) of the Ruapuke. Instead of conquering Otago as they had planned only one of Te Puoho's men returned to the Golden Bay alive.30

Moreover, like Amunsden and Scott in the race to the South Pole in 1912, Haast was beaten to the Pass by two to three days by another Pakeha. Charles Cameron crossed the Haast Pass in January 1863 and according to Pascoe it was likely that he reached the Landsborough Confluence.31 Cameron actually met Haast on his return journey but did not inform the latter of his discoveries.32 Subsequently, Haast denied any credit to Cameron. Today, though, a bronze plaque erected by the Historic Places Trust gives due credit to the Maori, Cameron and Haast.33

One man who has been credited for his efforts in the establishment of Queenstown was William Gilbert Rees. Rees had arrived in New Zealand in 1859 and in January 1860 was a member of a party that left Oamaru and decided to explore up the Cardrona Valley. Rees and Nicholas von Tunzelmann were the only ones to successfully scale the Crown Range, which they duly named. The

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28 Cited in Beattie, p.75.
29 Temple, p.60.
30 Pascoe, p.127.
31 Ibid., p.131.
32 Beattie, p.73.
33 Pascoe, p.132.
others decided to return, disheartened at the lack of suitable grazing land for sheep. Their view of Lake Wakatipu would have been similar to that of Edward Jollie and W. S. Young who surveyed the ranges between Lake Wanaka and the Shotover River in 1859. Jollie and Young were the first Pakehas to see Wakatipu from the east. Rees commented on this view, but also the hardship of travelling.

This we at once concluded was the western branch of the Wakatip, of which something was known in the Lands Office, but nothing placed on the maps. In this we were correct. No fires had cleared the country before us, and consequently our further progress was not only fatiguing, but really painful. Speargrass, often more than three feet high, and masses of matagouri constantly impeded us, especially in the gullies. Our trousers from the thighs downwards were filled with blood and it was with the greatest difficulty that our poor pack mules could be urged to move forward.

Rees and von Tunzelmann pushed on, camping at Arrowtown before passing Lake Hayes, the Kawarau Falls, climbing Ben Lomond or a peak of similar height and discovering a tarn known as Moke Lake. The two then travelled up Lake Wakatipu for five or six days on a raft, gaining a view of the head of the lake. On returning Rees and von Tunzelmann reportedly flipped a coin for the land on the east and west side of the lake. Rees, on winning, took up the area which is now the site of Queenstown. The peaceful farming life, however, was shortlived. The lure of gold changed the nature of inland Otago with lasting consequences.

Gold fever gripped Central Otago following the discovery of the mineral at Gabriel's Gully in May 1861. Miners progressively

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34 Miller, p.10.
35 Beattie, p.49.
37 Paul Nicolai Balthasar Tunzelmann Von Alderflug was a naturalised British citizen commonly known as Nicholas von Tunzelmann and familiarly known as Von. According to many commentators, including Miller, he was not much of a farmer and died in virtual poverty in 1900. F. W. G. Miller, The Wakatipu Centennial Story or The Bearded Men, Queenstown, 1965, p.42.
38 Pascoe, pp.125-126. Beattie, p.70. Miller, however, does not believe that there is any foundation in the story that the two selected lots. Miller, Golden Days of Lake County, p.12.
made their way inland in search of fortune. The attraction was so great that by 1864 15,000 people occupied Central Otago, 10,000 of whom were engaged in mining. The Dunstan Range and the Kawarau and Arrow Rivers were lucrative areas, but one river could rightfully be called the 'River of Gold': the Shotover River. Thomas Arthur, Alfred Duncan and Harry Redfern were some of the first to realise the Shotover's wealth when they found 200 ounces of gold in eight days near Arthur's Point. £4000 worth was recovered by the group in only two months. The Shotover has now been regarded as one of the richest gold-bearing rivers in the world.

In the early months of the gold rush the Rees Station was the only place to buy food. Hungry miners eagerly awaited the arrival of Rees' whaling ship that regularly transported supplies of flour, tea and sugar from Kingston. The supplies often proved inadequate for the crowd of 200-400 men and required Rees to stand with a pistol to prevent a rush. Rees' woolshed was quickly transformed into 'The Queen's Hotel', today known as Eichardts, but other elements and changes also surfaced. In 1861 a storehouse and a three-roomed narrow hut occupied land at the corner of Queenstown Bay, but by 1863 the barren landscape had been replaced by public bars on every corner, banks and concert rooms, doctors and lawyers offices, a post office, churches, a newspaper office and a gaol. This does suggest that a town had been planned but the authorities were probably not expecting such a large population to gather in such a short space of time for by the mid 1860s the population was estimated at between 4000 and 8000, and was also serviced by 26 hotels. Alfred Duncan commented on the fast pace of the bustling town brought about by

40 Temple, p.64.
42 Hotel Eichardt was named after a Prussian officer who later owned it and rebuilt the hotel in brick and stone. Miller, *The Wakatipu Centennial Story*, p.8.
the arrival of the goldminer, or, who Duncan termed, the 'desecrator of pastoral quietness', with some sadness.

Three years afterwards...a few of my old friends still remained, but alas! they were few indeed and even these had lost the homely friendly style which characterised the old Wakatipians, and had developed a taste for the bustle of the crowded haunts, and for the pleasures which wealth alone can produce.44

It could be said that in many ways Queenstown is still the same, now fossicking out the gold of the tourist dollar.45

Some confusion exists concerning the source and adoption of the name Queenstown'. The area under the pastoral lease of Rees was known as the 'Home Station', and then 'The Camp' following the construction of a shanty town of canvas on the shores of the lake during the goldrushes. In January 1863 it was reported that the name reverted to Queenstown. One account cited folklore which suggested that the name came from some of the gold prospectors who pronounced the town as 'Fit for a Queen' and formally christened it Queenstown.46 Another, however, suggests that Queenstown was adopted because Queen Victoria had given the name to a small place known as The Cove in County Cork, Ireland. Consequently, the Irish miners were so interested in the accounts of the ceremony in County Cork that they performed their own during which they named the area Queenstown.47 Whatever the reason, Rees' existence was considerably interrupted by the goldrush. In 1863 his lease was cancelled and a goldfield was proclaimed over the entire run. He did receive £10,000 as compensation but was forced to relocate to the Frankton area.48

Although the majority of gold miners were not rewarded with large fortunes their explorations were rich in other ways. As John Elder has explained in his commentary on goldminers in this country, while the miners explored every tributary around Lake Wakatipu they rendered valuable service in thus exploring the

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44 Duncan, pp. 48-49.
45 As it is done today, business was conducted seven days a week. Miller, p.8.
46 Cossens, p.5.
47 Miller, Golden Days of Lake County, p.47.
48 Gilkison, p.29. Frankton was named after Rees' wife Frances.
backcountry between the great lakes and the West Coast'.\textsuperscript{49} Pascoe has reiterated this, suggesting that 'they made journeys of unparalleled difficulty, and even winter would not damp them down'.\textsuperscript{50} Unfortunately very few miners recorded their travels. Miller has tried to explain the nature of the miner.

They lived for the day, and were not greatly concerned with the fact that they were the makers of history. Indeed, it is highly improbable that they were aware of it.\textsuperscript{51}

Some, however, did pass on valuable information concerning the nature of the land explored.

Queenstown was essentially built on gold, but it did not die after gold. A downturn in gold output was noticed in 1864 which prompted, according to Ryan, considerable local concern regarding the question of Queenstown's existence.\textsuperscript{52} The settlers, realising Queenstown's tenuous position examined alternative means to ensure its survival.\textsuperscript{53} Farming and minerals were cited as obvious answers, but increasingly potential was expressed in Queenstown becoming a health and tourist resort. Bendix Hallenstein, a local entrepreneur and owner of the Brunswick Flour Mill, was a leading figure who supported a tree-planting programme and the improvement of tracks, drainage, lighting, tennis, bowls and croquet facilities in an effort to beautify the area scenically and make it more attractive for visitors. Assistance from the government was sought, although little was forthcoming which raised the ire of many locals.\textsuperscript{54} This was even after Governor Bowen had visited the area in March 1868. The \textit{Mackays Otago, Southland and Goldfields Almanac} had reported Bowen's reaction.

His Excellency expressed himself highly delighted with the scenery, and said that Queenstown was destined to become a great watering place, and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{49} Elder, p.90.
\bibitem{50} Pascoe, p.128.
\bibitem{51} Miller, p.113.
\bibitem{53} The population of Queenstown had reduced dramatically so that by 1871 only 562 residents were recorded. This had increased to 712 in 1874. Cossens, p.5. Ryan, p.35.
\bibitem{54} Ryan, pp.17-24, 56-58, 66.
\end{thebibliography}
would receive visitors from all parts of New Zealand and the neighbouring colonies, as it was specially adapted, both in climate and situation, for a resort during the summer months.\footnote{55 Mackays Otago, Southland and Goldfields Almanac, 1868, p.193, cited in Ibid., p.25.}

One resident in 1863 had visualised the extent of tourism for Queenstown in the future. This person saw people coming 'not in tens or hundreds, but in tens of thousands to lay bare the uncounted wealth of the land, to populate the wilderness and make it flourish as living man never hoped to behold'.\footnote{56 Cited in Temple, p.67.} The prospect of tens of thousands of visitors may have seemed absurd at the time, but small numbers of tourists and holiday-makers were attracted to the Southern Lakes area and as far back as 1870 newspapers reported an influx of tourists.\footnote{57 Harry Wigley, The Mount Cook Way: The First Fifty Years of the Mount Cook Company, Auckland, 1979, p.86.}

Hotels built to service the needs of the miner were improved to cater for the needs of the tourist. The goldrush days had done much to provide the necessary services and communications to cope with and encourage this traffic of visitors.

Sail boats and paddlewheel steamers such as the Ben Lomond and Mountaineer had been important in transporting miners and providing provisions. They continued to play a crucial role in servicing the runholds right up until the 1960s when adequate roading had been cut, but they also diversified to carry a different kind of cargo. Steamer excursions to areas such as the head of the lake became a popular tourist attraction. By 1914 it was suggested that there were as many as 30 steamers on the lake.\footnote{58 Hayworth, p.10.} The pride of the fleet at this time was the Lady of the Lake, the Earnslaw.

The Earnslaw, built in Dunedin at a cost of £20, 850, was considerably more advanced, larger and more comfortable than the other steamers. As well as carrying 1035 passengers it could also transport 100 tons of cargo and livestock. The Earnslaw remains the only steamer operating today and constitutes a major tourist attraction.

The goldrushes were important in facilitating improvements in other areas of communication as well. The development of the goldfields had demanded better roads to and around Queenstown
Figure 1: Queenstown, 1873. Hocken Library, Dunedin.
Figure 2: Queenstown, c1890. An effort had been made since the 1870s to beautify the area and make it more attractive to encourage tourists. Note also the paddlewheel steamer berthed at the wharf. Hocken Library, Dunedin.
and although these required a hardy breed of traveller and were often dangerous to traverse in the winter, they did much to open this isolated area to the outside world. Initially the majority of goods were transported to Invercargill, but Dunedin merchants pressured local authorities to ensure that they were party to this trade. As a consequence the Dunstan Route over the Rock and Pillar Range was constructed along with the Kawarau Gorge Road in 1863.59 These had been improved to a sufficient standard that by October 1877 Cobb and Company ran a service from Dunedin to Queenstown three times a week.60 Similarly, the Crown Range Road ensured easier access to Wanaka. The completion of the Kingston Railway in 1878 meant that people could travel from Dunedin to Queenstown in 13 hours.61

These improvements prompted a number of excursions to be introduced to complement the paddlewheel steamers on the lake around the turn of the century. As well as the popular trek to the top of Ben Lomond which the New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey Tourist Guide to the Lakes, Mountains, and Fiords of Otago and Southland, and to Stewart Island, 1898 said presented 'no difficulties even to ladies',62 buggy rides were offered into the once thriving Skippers township along with horse treks into the Routeburn and alpine adventures into Mount Earnslaw's glaciers.63 The increase in tourist numbers around the turn of the century placed a strain on such things as the accommodation services. Overcrowding was one symptom, but so was second class accommodation. The fact that Queenstown was largely a summer resort accentuated this. In 1916, for example, 216 tourists were reported to have visited Queenstown between May and October. The corresponding figures for January to May were 1692 visitors.64

One attribute that much of this popularity was based on was Queenstown's scenery. Even the earliest explorers and residents

59 Ryan, p.28.
60 Ibid., p.31.
61 Ibid., p.41.
64 Ryan, pp.83-88.
were struck by this. Alfred Duncan gave an account of his first view of Lake Wakatipu from the Crown Range.

I have since seen some of the finest views in the world, scenes the beauty of which have been extolled by many writers, and have been immortalised by poet and painter, but none of these, in my opinion, can compare with the magnificent blending of water, trees, and mountains on which we gazed that morning, and watched the sun as it lit up each gully, crag and glacier.65

Similarly, Mr Anthony Trollope, a seasoned Australian tourist wrote of Wakatipu:

I do not know that lake scenery can be finer. The whole district is, or rather will be in the days to come, a country known for its magnificent scenery.66

An editorial had appeared in the Otago Witness in 1860 predicting the advent of the Wakatipu area as a tourist destination. This had been based solely on Rees' account of the area demonstrating the effect that Queenstown's scenery had, and still has, on visitors. The importance and potential of tourism was also recognised by the Government with the establishment of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1901. Its first Superintendent, T. E. Donne, predicted that Queenstown would become the recognised tourist centre of the South Island.67

One family did much to realise this prediction. 'Indeed it was the pioneering spirit and vision of Rudolph Wigley and his son Harry (later Sir Henry) which laid the foundations for much of the tourist activity in the resort today.'68 Not only did they initiate the skiing industry in the area in the 1930s and 1940s, but they also established the Mount Cook Airways and Mount Cook Motor Company. Rudolph Wigley had driven the first motor car from Timaru to the Hermitage at Mount Cook in 1906 and established a mail and coach service soon after. In 1911 he decided to extend

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65 Duncan, p.25.
66 Cited in New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey, p.33.
68 Mountain Scene, A Special Profile of the Mount Cook Line, September 7, 1989, p.16.
his motor service between Timaru and Mount Cook to include Wanaka and Queenstown.

Initially, however, automotive transport was not welcomed in Queenstown and in 1907 the council passed a by-law prohibiting the use of motor vehicles on county roads. The Lake Wakatip Mail reported that it was feared that motor vehicles would endanger livestock on account that they were only used to the rattle of the coach and cart wheels. There seemed, however, to be other reasons. When Wigley attempted to enter the township a local blacksmith took to the first vehicle with an axe. The introduction of motor vehicles was obviously seen as a threat to more traditional forms of transport and the industries that serviced them. A law was soon enforced forbidding any vehicle from passing over the county boundary if powered by gasoline. Shrewdly, Rudolph Wigley challenged the letter of the law by hiring a team of horses to tow the vehicles over the county line. Historians are unsure how this affront was greeted, but Wigley's perseverance paid off. The events culminated in the establishment of a regular service by 1912 and the repealing of the council ban on motor vehicles in 1915. It was realised that the vehicles were not as dangerous as they had been thought, and by this time most people had been flouting this law anyway. The motor car opened an array of new possibilities which the Mount Cook Company were quick to seize upon. The Grand Motor Tour', as it was advertised, from Fairlie to Mount Cook, Wanaka and Queenstown gained support from the Tourist Department and from Thomas Cook and other international agencies. The Mount Cook Company also introduced one of the earliest, if not the first, packaged coach tour holidays in the 1930s.

Although Queenstown was gaining the reputation as one of the premier tourist centres in the country there was very little to offer during the winter months. Harry Wigley has suggested that

69 Miller, p.229. This followed a similar by-law which compelled a cyclist to stop when meeting a horse or vehicle and to keep off the Macetown and Skippers roads. Lakes County Council Minute Book, 1896, Meeting February 3, 1896, cited in Ryan, pp.96-97.
70 Lake Wakatip Mail, January 11, 1912, p.9.
71 Miller, p.229.
72 Mountain Scene, A Special Profile of the Mount Cook Line, September 7, 1989, 16.
Figure 3: The Mount Cook Motor Company ran a regular service that linked Queenstown from 1912. Outside Eichardts Hotel, 1912. Lakes District Museum, Arrowtown.
the local population dropped to fewer than 150 residents right up until World War Two. Furthermore, tradesmen fell idle and usually left town, as did many others, while tourism went into its annual hibernation. The introduction of skiing on Coronet Peak helped alleviate some of the downturn in tourist activity, but it was not until a regular air service was introduced that skiing numbers increased significantly.

As they did in skiing and coach services, Rudolph and Harry Wigley pioneered aviation services in the Queenstown area. Rudolph was reportedly fascinated with aviation and he managed to obtain five aeroplanes in 1920 following a government initiative to allocate imperial gifts of planes to companies willing to promote aviation. Wigley's approach was successful despite having no pilots, no mechanics, no facilities and no detailed plans. That he secured the planes was perhaps a reflection of his standing in the tourist and transport industries, or of the small number of applicants. The New Zealand Aero Transport Company was established in November 1920 and began offering a weekly air link between Invercargill and Wellington.

Rudolph Wigley was ahead of his time in understanding the importance of publicity. In October 1921 he set a New Zealand record for the longest single flight of 8 hours and 53 minutes from Invercargill to Auckland. This generated a significant amount of interest and was well documented in the newspapers. As Harry Wigley observed, however, he needed 'to promote longer term enthusiasm and confidence by letting people watch flying at close quarters and even experience the novelty themselves'. With this in mind Rudolph began offering joyrides in Auckland, Christchurch and Timaru, and in district areas brought the travelling airshow to the locals. This proved a costly exercise, however, and the New Zealand Aero Transport Company went into liquidation within three years.

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73 Wigley, p.87.
74 Ross Ewing and Ross MacPherson, The History of New Zealand Aviation, Auckland, 1986, p.64. The British Government decided to allocate a number of military utilities used during World War One to Commonwealth nations as imperial gifts.
75 Wigley, pp.170-171.
76 Ibid., p.174.
77 Ibid.
years of its formation.\textsuperscript{78} Ryan has suggested that people were not really ready for aero travel and those that did recognise the benefits and could afford this means of transport were the elite.\textsuperscript{79}

Flying took off again in the late 1920s. The vast improvement in aviation technology with safer and more efficient crafts made flying more accessible and more attractive to would-be pilots and tourists. Rudolph Wigley was again at the forefront in establishing the Queenstown-Mount Cook Airways Limited in 1937. Wigley offered joyrides, scenic flights and charters from both Queenstown and Mount Cook in his BA Swallow and Waco Bi-Planes.

The scenic flights from Queenstown to Milford Sound, and from the Hermitage round Mount Cook and the glaciers proved popular, allowing the Company to expand and purchase more planes. Eventually Wigley foresaw a regular scheduled service from Timaru and Christchurch to Queenstown but the onset of World War Two forced him to suspend operations in 1940.\textsuperscript{80}

Rudolph Wigley died in 1946 but his visionary and pioneering spirit lived on in his son Harry Wigley. Harry was also a keen aviator and in 1954 the Mount Cook Company obtained a licence to run flights from Christchurch to Queenstown via Mount Cook.

Ultimately Harry Wigley planned to operate DC-3s but three years were necessary to develop suitable airfields. The airstrip at Queenstown was too small, so a field at Lowburn was utilised until Queenstown's was big enough. On November 6, 1961 the maiden flight of the DC-3s journeyed from Christchurch to Mount Cook, Cromwell (the closest landing strip to Queenstown) and Te Anau. This did much to open the Southern Lakes area to tourism as visitors were able to fly quickly, efficiently and comfortably. Great increases were seen in skiing numbers, for example, as a result of this. Further expansion of the Mount Cook Airways occurred when the Company took over New Zealand Tourist Travel Limited which had already absorbed West Coast Airways and Southern Scenic Services.\textsuperscript{81} Flightseeing is now one of the most popular ways

among tourists to view the scenery and a number of companies have been established to service this field. There are, however, other ways in which one can gaze upon Queenstown and the surrounding landscape.

One of Queenstown's most recognisable features today is the Skyline Gondola. In 1989 over 250,000 journeyed to the lookout on Bob's Peak, but in the early 1930s ridicule was expressed regarding an idea of an aerial cableway. The council had been investigating ways to spend a £3500 surplus and Frank Gavin, acting on the recommendations of a visiting European expert, suggested a two stage cableway to the top of Ben Lomond. This proposal was seemingly too progressive for the time and the council purchased the camping ground instead. During 1961 and 1962 a road was constructed to the top of Bob's Peak. This proved a popular bus tour, especially after the Skyline Chalet was opened in January 1964. The road, however, was very steep and the cost of maintaining it was reported to be 'horrendous'. The demand for such a trip was evident, but again, as Cliff Broad secretary of Skyline Enterprise Limited identified, many Queenstown people thought a gondola cableway was 'too way out!' Skyline Enterprise Limited took over from Skyline Tours in 1966 and quickly proceeded to install a cableway and extend the Skyline Chalet. The first gondola travelled up to Bob's Peak on November 3, 1967 and its immediate popularity exceeded all expectations. Skyline Enterprises had projected that between 40,000 and 60,000 people would seek out the gondola experience, but they were pleased to report over 100,000 passengers in its first year. Constant increases in numbers over the years necessitated the replacement of the old gondolas with a new system in July 1987.82

It was within this context that adventure activities and adventure tourism surfaced and expanded. Many of these built on attractions and services that were already provided, but many of them were new innovations, not only for New Zealand, but also the world. The fact that Queenstown was already a recognised tourist centre with a healthy level of visitors for most of the year provided a steady base for these activities to tap into. It is unclear whether many would have been able to survive for as long as they have in

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other areas of the country. For this reason Queenstown has gained a reputation not only based on its scenic attractions, but also on its ability to offer a unique adventure experience. Some of these activities will be examined in more depth in the following chapters, but it will also be important to understand the aspects of adventure that compel people in large numbers to pursue thrills and excitement, and this will be discussed in the next chapter.
2. Death Wish or Thrill Seeking?

What Compels People to Adventure?

We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss - we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably we remain.
-Edgar Allen Poe, The Importance of the Perverse.¹

9000 feet high in the security of an aeroplane. 102 metres above the Shotover River on a secure platform. Incredibly we leave the safety of the known and launch ourselves headlong into the unknown. There is no turning back. No second thoughts. Maybe it is just as well for reality might catch up and hit one square in the face. 'Why? What am I doing?' You reply, 'I'm living on the edge and I love it'.

Many people have viewed adventure sports as irrational and its participants as potential suicides. They are, however, on the whole, completely sane and rational. There are just high stakes. It is a channel for one to express oneself in a way that one often wanted to. There are many compelling reasons why one participates in adventure activities and equally as many why one should not. In modern society individuals have expressed a real desire to escape the routine world and replace it with elements of challenge, risk, novelty, thrill and adventure. Although each person's conception of danger and adventure is different, there is a real need, especially among younger people, to 'push the limits', 'challenge nature on nature's terms', and 'live on the edge'. Psychologists have tried to explain this phenomenon and Zuckerman's theory of 'Sensation Seeking' has been commonly cited.

It seems that every 'normal' person needs excitement some of the time.2

This chapter explores these issues. It traces the explosion of adventure activities as well as trying to understand what compels people to take these challenges head on. It also identifies the importance of the leisure revolution and the effect that modern society has had on this. First, however, it will be important to examine the changing nature of the use of the outdoors and associated conception and value of the natural environment. The concept of nature is central to this. Early settlers to this country competed directly with nature and tried to subdue it, whereas today individuals try to 'beat' nature on nature's terms.

...it was 'a grief' to see the waste land, desolate and uninhabited, barren and sterile in the absence of man's hand. This dissatisfaction was not based on the appearance of the land so much as the knowledge of its unproductive state. But it was more than a negative response; the wilderness in this view was immoral.3

This attitude towards undeveloped areas of New Zealand's landscape was a common one among British settlers to this country in the nineteenth century. Much of this was based on their experiences in Britain of an ordered and productive countryside, but religious thinking was also an influential factor. The Bible clearly expressed its views on the wilderness calling for Christians to subdue these areas.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.4

According to Shepard, 'wilderness and paganism were part of the same context for the evangelist'.5 Wild nature was not only

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2 Ibid., p.7.
5 Shepard, p.4.
deplored as an uncultivated waste but also immoral and a 'world blasted by sin'. Its intrinsic worth was not valued but more often associated with uncivilised life or even 'the haunt of dangerous, wild beasts'. The overwhelming impression, according to Leslie Molloy, 'is that the colonist feared the wild, or, at best, found it dreary and boring'. Instead they yearned for:

...the man centred biotic community of the English country life with its cottages, domestic animals, domestic plants, and field patterns resembling rural village patterns of home.

For most 'new' New Zealanders this ideal was a dream, for life was simply a matter of survival. Forests represented an impediment to agriculture, rivers to travel and mountains an obstacle to both. In the same way that the missionaries attempted to convert the 'heathen' Maori to Christianity, the settlers cleared forests and fenced the land to create some semblance of order and familiar surroundings. This was intensified under the public works schemes introduced by Julius Vogel in the 1870s and the landscape in many areas was transformed. Although Devlin, like most other commentators, suggested that 'there was little about the natural resources to excite the recreational imagination of people in those times', there was a small yet increasing number of people who viewed the wilderness in terms of Romantic ideals. Even Julius Vogel, architect of the ordered society, had second thoughts.

New Zealand entirely unsettled - New Zealand in its old state - might be very much more valuable, clothed with forest, than New Zealand denuded of forest and covered with public works constructed at enormous cost and enormous labour.

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6 Ibid.
8 Molloy, p.5.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Cited in Molloy, p.6.
Among the Romantics, the wilderness was strongly associated with freedom. Much of this had been fostered as a result of industrialisation which created problems of overcrowding, disease and crime. Wild nature provided a source of inspiration and relief from the urban environment. As Lochhead has observed:

"...for them the wilderness was a place of purity, innocence and harmony, not a grim scene of struggle and bloodshed for so many Victorians. It was a place where man could feel in touch with the life pulse of the universe, a source of spiritual, mental and physical rejuvenation."\(^\text{13}\)

Again, the wilderness was viewed in terms of a Christian context. Instead of a pagan and uncivilised force, the wilderness was seen as complementary to the development of the soul and it was 'widely accepted that to come close to God, He had to be sought in His own creation, wild nature'.\(^\text{14}\) Lochhead has suggested that this encouraged individuals to protect the environment and represented an important influence on the nature conservation movement in this country.\(^\text{15}\) Implicit within this was a growing interest in the use of the outdoors which encouraged scenic tourism as well as activities such as picnicking, camping, backpacking and mountaineering.

The mountains, as well as presenting an image of danger and the unknown, also represented grandeur and mystery, challenge and conquest. It was not just a spiritual or romantic motivation to be close to God, but a desire for action and excitement that inspired mountaineering feats.

Overcoming difficulty became a means of proving to oneself and to others one's fitness to live and the conquest of ever more difficult peaks was yet another manifestation of the march of man's progress against nature.\(^\text{16}\)

Dr R. Ledenfeld also outlined the appeal of mountaineering.

The grandeur of the scenery aroused in us an idea of the sublime; we felt ourselves nearer the Absolute, and felt proud and happy with the thought that all the grand glaciers and rocks around were conquered by our energy and skill.

\(^{13}\) Lochhead, p.57.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., p.59.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.56.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p.60.
This is the secret of mountaineering, and therein lies the otherwise unattainable happiness to be felt on the summit of a mountain.\textsuperscript{17} This often translated itself into competition between individuals and nations to climb a peak first. There was an overwhelming desire in this country for a New Zealander to be the first to ascend Mount Cook, but there was also an intense rivalry among mountaineers in this country to be the one to achieve this. Thus, the overwhelming desire was not just challenging nature, but challenging other individuals. Much of the first chapter of this thesis outlined the achievements of nineteenth and twentieth century adventurers: the first to explore an area, the first to discover a pass, the first to climb a mountain.

Although activities such as tramping and climbing were popular leisure pursuits, their importance as part of New Zealand's late nineteenth and early twentieth century culture cannot be overstated. As Devlin has observed, these activities were subsumed by the 'overwhelming popularity and social identification with team sports such as rugby and cricket'.\textsuperscript{18} New Zealanders tended to be very social creatures from an early stage and expressing these social tendencies through sports affiliations was an important outlet. On more than one occasion New Zealand's actual religion has been defined in terms of 'rugby, racing and beer'. It is not, however, within the realms of this thesis to explore this further. Instead another description of New Zealanders has emerged, characterised in the title of John Mulgan's commentary on New Zealand society, \textit{Man Alone}.

One of the attractions of outdoor pursuits is to challenge nature on nature's terms. The New Zealand Alpine Club was established in 1891, and a number of Federated Mountain Clubs, tramping clubs, youth groups and acclimatisation societies were formed that highlight this. As Devlin has observed, although it was generally a small elite who pursued outdoor recreational activities - and these were 'probably viewed by the masses as unnecessary, strange and an inappropriate use of time' - 100 years later 90% of New Zealanders, whether passive strollers or active mountain climbers, are involved in some way with the outdoors for

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Devlin, p.86.
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What, though, brought about this change in New Zealand culture? And how has this translated itself in the adventure industry?

There have been a number of factors cited which have accounted for the phenomenal expansion of the adventure industry and the leisure industry as a whole over the last 50 years. For many people, leisure is a way of life, and in many cases takes precedence over work. According to Pigram:

Man's historical preoccupation with work as a means of livelihood appears to have been replaced by a new set of priorities geared towards the acquisition of more leisure. Special facilities are now provided which are geared towards free-time pursuits and self expression. One of the main determinants behind this change was the 'Leisure Revolution'.

Leisure represents a primary part of people's lives. Until the 1950s, however, there was a prevailing mentality which severely criticised everything that had to do with leisure idleness, or 'a life without work'. As mechanisation and automation increased, however, work became less physically demanding and on one's time. The advent of the 40 hour, five-day working week as opposed to an estimated 70 hour, six-day-a-week lifestyle in the mid nineteenth century crystallised this. A shortened week, coupled with longer periods of annual leave, not only had a profound impact on one's spare time, but also on how one utilised this. People sought other ways to use their time and energy and created new and varied social times and lifestyles as a result. Although the Protestant work ethic which places a high premium on time was not relinquished in this country, the position of the church and the workplace were. Time which had previously been spent in these institutions was now spent exploring people's surroundings. Technology played an important part in this transformation.

19 Ibid., p.96.
Technological advancements such as, initially, the bicycle and then motor cars and jet aircraft decreased the amount of travelling time while increasing the territorial boundaries within which one could travel. This provided a much larger number of people the opportunity to break away from mass recreation and for younger people in particular to 'do their own thing'. The independent traveller developed as the package tourists declined. Similarly, television and the mass media opened up a whole new range of opportunities. This raised the profile of leisure activities, such as adventure sports, as people could see what others were doing in their spare time. Furthermore, according to Crompton and van Doren prosperity from the late 1940s and the relative affluence of modern Western society has given:

...large segments of the population the power to choose what they prefer to do...No longer are people confined to doing those things for which facilities, often of mediocre quality, are nearby; rather they are able to create new opportunities with their affluence.

Technological advancements have not only made certain activities safer, but also have broadened the range of activities available. The origin of these were often ancient but new technology enabled them to become more widespread. At one time Puritans had condemned adventure as trivial, unproductive and a waste of time. Increased technology and affluence, however, contributed to the erosion of the Puritan ethic and its replacement by a 'theology of pleasure'.

Although Geoffrey Godbey has argued that present society actually works longer hours than previously, he has suggested that we utilise our spare time more effectively. Crompton and van Doren agree. They have suggested that people do not necessarily have more leisure time, but rather it is 'just that in their leisure

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25 Devlin, p.89.
26 Crompton and van Doren, p.22.
lives that individuals feel they are expressing their real personalities'.

There is a common desire to experience many things in a short space of time. New Zealanders show a high degree of interest in developing past hobbies or cultivating new and diverse ones.

This is characterised by the philosophy of 'the more people do, the more they want to do'. But it seems to encompass more than this. The physical and mental demands of work in today's technological society emphasise the need for challenging and satisfying leisure pursuits. In this age of mods that mean you can do a good days work without lifting too many fingers, people are finding physical challenges a "huge buzz".

Hugh Barr has tried to define this further.

It is a deep seated need many of us feel to escape from the depersonalising and dehumanising technological society we live in, and from the cloying security and materialistic values of the society. The trend towards greater participation in this type of sport points to an increased need for it, as our society becomes more technological and less in contact with our natural environment.

Individuals, in seeking adventure, express a desire to escape the boredom of routines and the crowds of daily life. In saying this, however, it could also be said that adventurous activities makes one aware of the boredom experienced in everyday life.

Psychologists have also tried to rationalise adventure activity. Zuckerman has been at the forefront of this discussion and has labelled adventurers as 'sensation seekers'.

A sensation seeker is an individual characterised by a need for intense stimulations of new, complex and varied experiences who, in the

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28 Crompton and van Doren, p.22.
30 Godbey, pp.16-18.
31 Pigram, p.8.
33 Hugh Barr, 'Wild Rivers Preservation', in Molloy, p.81.
34 Heinz-Gunter Vester, 'Adventure as a Form of Leisure', in Leisure Studies, 6(3), September, 1987, p.245.
attempt to seek these kinds of experiences, is prone to assume physical and social risks.\textsuperscript{35} The danger or risk is a strong driving force behind one's motivation to participate. Although the act itself may not be particularly dangerous, since everyone's conception of risk differs, the amount of risk one perceives there to be is an important factor. More often than not an adventurous activity contains an element of fear, but as Michael Apter has observed most of the time there is a very thin line between fear and exhilaration and one very rapidly gives way to the other.\textsuperscript{36} Individuals voluntarily expose themselves to this fear or danger, but are confident of a harmless and happy outcome. Meeting this fear head on can be an incredible boost to one's self-esteem and confidence and a great deal of fun can be had on the way. People tend to avoid, however, a situation in which their anxiety level is higher than their sensation seeking state.\textsuperscript{37}

At the other end of the scale, an adventurer gains status the greater the amount of risk. Furthermore, the less information about the activity or level of risk, the greater the adventure.\textsuperscript{38} Although many may view these activities as irrational behaviour or even a 'manifestation of some kind of death wish' the participants remain confident in their own ability to cope with the perceived danger and rely on technique, experience and safety precautions.\textsuperscript{39} Many have cast aspersions on the sanity of extreme adventurers like BASE jumpers\textsuperscript{40}, but the jumpers themselves are confident in their own technical ability and are able to convert this fear and danger into excitement. Chris Bonnington, a famous British mountaineer elaborated on this.

I wouldn't say mountaineering is so much of a game as a calculated risk. It's not the roulette kind of gamble. The excitement of climbing is


\textsuperscript{36} Apter, p.39.

\textsuperscript{37} Vester, p.243.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p.244.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p.242.

\textsuperscript{40} BASE is an acronym for Building, Antennae, Span, Earth. These represent the fixed objects from which BASE jumps are made. It is an extreme variation of skydiving in which an individual jumps off a fixed object often only a few hundred metres high.
going into a danger situation and then using your skill to obviate danger.\textsuperscript{41}

Another expressed the appeal of 'free soloing', climbing without the support of technological equipment such as safety ropes. Death is so close. You could let go and make the decision to die. It feels so good.\textsuperscript{42}

Although Queenstown's adventure tourism industry would not allow a person to get into this sort of extreme situation, it does rely on the image of perceived threat. Individuals have a need to take risks, seek excitement and achieve certain goals. An activity like bungy jumping seems to contradict one's natural instincts but it is often about proving oneself to others and themselves. One can set a goal and achieve it in a fairly short space of time while having a good time. A common sentiment that has been expressed prior to a bungy jump was 'I don't know why I'm doing this, but I have to do it'.\textsuperscript{43} Once something is labelled dangerous it seems to exert a magnetic attraction.\textsuperscript{44} The propensity of tandem activities such as tandem skydiving and tandem parapenting has made these pursuits more accessible. Where once an individual was required to undergo a course prior to a skydive, clients can approach the activity with no training at all. The technical elements of the activity are taken care of by a qualified jumpmaster which allows one to 'sit back and relax', if that is at all possible.

Research has suggested that outdoor risk takers are generally young, middle class and male.\textsuperscript{45} For colonial women, leisure was more passive than active and revolved around the home and needs of the family. Public power has traditionally been in the hands of men and the leisure industry is no exception. Perceptions of what is appropriate for both men and women has been at the heart of this. Women in the early 1900s, for example, who went on overnight tramps were said to be behaving improperly.\textsuperscript{46} Consequently tramping was generally a male pursuit prior to 1950.

\textsuperscript{41} Cited in Apter, p.34.
\textsuperscript{42} Cited in Ibid., p.35.
\textsuperscript{43} A. J. Hackett Bungy Video.
\textsuperscript{44} Apter, p.3.
\textsuperscript{46} Devlin, p.92.
Figure 4: The advent of tandem activities has opened up a whole new range of opportunities. Skydive Tandem, Queenstown.
Figure 5: Max Air Parapente, Queenstown.
This represents only one way in which women have been disadvantaged in New Zealand society.

Jan Nisbet has asked why there are not more women involved in adventure activities. She has cited both social and cultural factors. Women have been thoroughly conditioned by societal messages that girls should be feminine, timid and home-orientated, while boys are encouraged to explore, act out adventures and generally be more independent. Consequently, women often lack confidence in their physical ability and their ability to succeed when physiological differences are not sufficient to prevent participation at a satisfying level. Women are allowed to be afraid and are allowed to use fear as a reason for non-participation. Men, on the other hand, do not have this option and, according to Nisbet, are often just as trapped in roles as women. Perhaps proving one's masculinity is a subconscious influence in adventurous activity.

It seems that conscious efforts have been made recently to change the prevailing conception of women's physical abilities, or perceived inabilities, for instance female presenters on the television adventure show Mountain Dew on the Edge. Positive role models have been utilised, but television programmes such as this still battle historical, social and cultural prejudices that reinforce the patriarchal society.

As well as an over-representation of males, those who participate in adventure sports tend to be young. There is a certain attitude of indestructibility that has been exhibited owing to higher levels of self-confidence, positive emotion and a need to experience greater freedom. Because adventure activities are mainly done in association with others of like mind, younger people have the time available to pursue these. There is, however, another trend that is emerging. Strongman has suggested that participants in adventure sports are dominated by two groups: adolescents and those in retirement. The simple reason for this is that both these groups are free from the dependency of children.

47 Jan Nisbet, 'Is it the Men, the Mud or the Media?', in New Zealand Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation', 21(2), June 1988, pp.13-14.
and the need to earn a living. Consequently they have time available. Although there are exceptions to every situation there is a predictable pattern associated with age: a decline in adventurous tendencies as age increases. Activities that evoke adventure and excitement give way to those which allow peace and security. This is evidenced by the numbers of older people engaged in activities such as tramping compared to more 'extreme' sports such as rafting and skydiving. Leisure, in this way, is seen as more of an interaction for older people rather than an end in itself.

New Zealand's education system has fostered an increase in adventure activity, particularly among the young. From the 1960s there was a growing belief that outdoor education and experience should be part of the school curriculum. By the 1970s schools had overtaken mountain clubs as backcountry training centres and they received government assistance to develop this. This type of policy change has given rise to a greater emphasis on individual development as opposed to the team building emphasis of such sports as rugby and cricket. This has also been reinforced by the gym culture that has emerged in the last twenty years in which physical recreation is now more frequently justified by reference to individual health and self-image than the building of character and team spirit.

Outdoor recreation has frequently been accused of being elitist in that it has been dominated by those with higher incomes and more education. In comparison with team sports which cross cultural and socio-economic boundaries, and are also more easily accessible, adventure sports seem to be largely attracting what one can call the European middle classes. Indeed adventure sports seem to be opening up a gap in New Zealand society. Devlin has addressed this situation, suggesting that those with higher education are more likely to have better paid jobs and longer holidays which ensure the opportunity and accessibility to adventure activity. Furthermore, higher education offers an

49 Ibid., p.147.
51 Watson, p.25.
increased opportunity to try new activities through agencies such as school trips and clubs. The opportunity to meet influential people engaged in outdoor activities is greatly increased. This seems to be a perpetuation of the nineteenth century situation in which adventure activities were the privilege of the elite and upper classes. Similarly, Maori participation has been low. This has generally been a symptom of lower socio-economic positions, but also cultural differences.

Each person's motivation for participating in adventure activities differs. Essentially, however, many people still hold onto Romantic ideals in which nature needs to be challenged on nature's terms. This could be a way of proving oneself, proving one's masculinity or proving that one is not as demur as one is perceived to be. Modern society has placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of self-esteem and personal development, and challenging one's limitations through the use of adventure sports has been a popular tool. It would seem that this will remain so in the future, but what the environment will look like in the years to come is less certain. It was just as well that there were a few Romantics out there in the last century or there may not have been any 'wild' environment to enjoy today.

It is this natural environment that adventure activities are so reliant on. In the following chapters the development of skiing, jet boating, rafting and bungy jumping in the Queenstown area will be examined.

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52 Devlin, p.93.
3. **Snow Business**

The Many Faces of the Skiing Industry

*If at first you don't succeed, try, try again, then quit. No use being a damn fool about it.*
-W. C. Field.

New Zealand, and more particularly the Southern Lakes area, is a skiing paradise. Four large commercial skifields service the Queenstown and Wanaka areas along with multiple heliski operations and an area for cross-country skiers. 'White Gold' has been a valuable export earner for this country, providing a real attraction for tourists during the winter months and a multi-million dollar industry for the local communities.

Skiing is the anti-freeze in the motor of a machine which in the past tended to seize up with the first frost. It's the hot toddy which bolsters many sections of the tourist industry against chills of low winter occupancy and loading rates.

Skiing's rise in this country has been steady and one company has been at the forefront of its development throughout. Initially the Mount Cook Company could not persuade the government to keep the Hermitage open during the winter so the development of skiing in the area could not proceed until the Company secured the lease of the Hermitage in 1922. Skiing was a favourite pastime for the adventurer and enthusiast, but it was not until its focus shifted to Queenstown and Coronet Peak that its popularity snowballed.

This chapter traces the development of skiing in the Queenstown area, from the first ski-tow to be installed on Coronet Peak in 1947 to the huge commitment to snow-making in the 1990s to ensure its future viability. It examines the pressures for quality

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2 *Mountain Scene*, June 8, 1984, p.4.
facilities and further expansion resulting in the development of the Remarkables Ski Area. It also explores the changing nature of the ski industry and the evolution of heliskiing, cross-country skiing and snowboarding. First, however, it will be important to identify the origins of skiing in the South Island and how the Mount Cook Company came to establish Coronet Peak as the jewel in New Zealand skiing's crown.

Scandinavia is regarded as the home of skiing. The earliest evidence of skiing, the Hoting Ski was discovered in the Swedish marshes and dates back 4500 years. So it is little surprise that Norwegians were reported to be the first to use skis in New Zealand. In 1874 Norwegian goldminers on the Serpentine Range in Otago were responsible for the introduction of this 'novel' form of transport. They used skis because of the difficulties experienced in moving from camp to camp in winter with the goldfields under snow for three to four months of the year. All the diggers and their families on the Serpentine eventually used skis and Warburton, a youngster at the time, recorded that they were a source of great fun and amusement as well as being useful. The skis were six to eight feet long and four inches wide, and a single pole with a spike and basket on the end was principally used as a rudder for turning in certain conditions.

In 1893 Marmaduke Dixon employed a pair of skis during an attempt on the then unclimbed Mount Cook. Dixon constructed a crude pair of skis made from reaper blades from his farm which were shaped very much like skis, complete with rounded ends. The skis proved invaluable while traversing the soft snow of the Grand Plateau and saved hours of sounding for crevasses. Being unaccustomed to the feeling of six-feet-long sticks on the end of their feet, their skiing was often eventful. It was just a matter of standing upright and falling or running when they wanted to stop.

George Mannering, another member of the party expanded on their experiences:

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5 Naish, p.28.
On hard snow we found them [the skis] to travel a little too fast for us downhill, and we succeeded in landing on our heads a few times before we attained that confidence which is the first step to perfection. On soft snow they just went grandly, and one can travel straight on over the small crevasses without fear of going through. Mannering's skis were reportedly made out of old packing-cases the night before the final attempt on the summit. Although this expedition to the top of Mount Cook proved unsuccessful it marked a method of alpine climbing that became more popular.

Two members of the Alpine Club of Britain, Captain Bernard Head and Lawrence Earle, were thought to have introduced the first specially made skis to this country in 1909 and 1910 respectively. Captain Head had visited Australia and became familiar with skiing at Mount Kosciusko. He returned from Australia with a dozen pairs of locally made skis, Kiandra Snowshoes, and tested them out on the Tasman Glacier late in 1909. There was very little knowledge of skiing in this country but it did not dissuade the New Zealand Government from buying the skis Head had imported with the intention of making them available for the use of tourists at Mount Cook. A textbook outlining the fundamentals of skiing was also acquired for the use of the guides at the Hermitage. The following year Lawrence Earle imported a small number of skis from Norway. The guides had become more proficient, even to the extent that they could stay upright for a while. Tourists were apparently pulled up small slopes by the guides before skiing down as best they could. In the absence of ski poles and any semblance of technique, falling down was the only way they could stop.

Although there were many areas that were suitable for skiing at Mount Cook little more was done to popularise skiing as a sport. It was not until 1915 that a serious effort was made to attract people to Mount Cook to ski. In August of that year an advertisement appeared in the Timaru Herald alerting readers to a skiing 'revolution' that was going to take place.

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8 Naish, p.29.
10 Naish, pp.30-31.
Skiing bids fair to become as popular a form of recreation, so we are informed, in the South Island, as it is in some parts of the Northern Hemisphere...The Mount Cook District is specially adapted for skiing, and affords a splendid playground. The Tourist Department and the Mount Cook Motor Company are sparing no effort to make this world renowned sport popular, and consider that it will be one of the great pleasure attractions of New Zealand and a big drawcard for both local and overseas tourists.¹¹

This prediction has eventuated, but this rise in popularity neither happened overnight nor, despite the best intentions of the Mount Cook Company, in the Mount Cook region. A lack of co-operation between the Company and the Government-directed Tourist Department was an obstacle to the development of the sport. The Hermitage, owned by the Tourist Department at the time, was closed during the winter months and not reopened until October 1 of each year. Rudolph Wigley, founder of the Mount Cook Motor Company, believed that it would be more economic for the bus service if the Hermitage was kept open for the winter. Wigley, however, could not persuade the Government. The Company advertised skiing from October, but this was quite late in the season. It was not until the Company took over the lease of the Hermitage in 1922 that inroads could be made in popularising the sport in the area.¹²

Following the Mount Cook Company's takeover of the Hermitage, areas were quickly developed that were thought to be suitable for winter activities. A natural ice-skating rink was built behind the Hermitage, but the main emphasis was placed on the development of skiing. There was an expectation, according to Harry Wigley (later Sir Henry), son of Rudolph Wigley, that snow would be lying around the Hermitage for much of the winter.¹³ With this in mind trails were cut through matagouri scrub, large rocks were removed from these slopes and some grooming was carried out. The ski slopes were quite gentle by today's standards, but for the 1920s beginner these proved more than adequate. An

¹¹ Cited in Harry Wigley, Mount Cook Way: The First Fifty Years of the Mount Cook Company, Auckland, 1979, p.74.
¹² Ibid., pp.74-77.
¹³ Ibid., p.77.
Figure 6: The Mount Cook Company obtained the lease of the Hermitage in 1922 and immediately moved to encourage skiers to the area. Hocken Library, Dunedin.
abundance of equipment was imported from Switzerland including skis, sticks, and the essential brightly coloured caps, scarves, sweaters and other items of clothing which could be hired by the would-be skier. Furthermore, the Company looked for 'experts' to offer tuition to skiers. A number of Norwegians who had arrived in the country on whaling ships were hired, but according to Harry Wigley, whether they had any real knowledge of skiing was doubtful.\footnote{14} Although visitors arrived from Auckland and Wellington to test the slopes, the operation's success was stifled on another front: the weather.

Against predictions and Rudolph Wigley's expectations, snow did not lie around the Hermitage all winter. This forced the Company to look to higher ground. The Mueller Glacier was targeted first but this proved unsuccessful because of the short and unsatisfactory nature of the runs. Attention was increasingly focussed around Ball Hut on the Ball Glacier. The first Ball Hut was built in 1890 largely as a shelter for tourists who were taken up to the Tasman Glacier to see the Hochstetter Icefall.\footnote{15} This area provided terrain to cater for all levels of skier.

Skiing was a real adventure. As Harry Wigley has suggested it was 'really an excuse for alpine excursions and was not an end in itself as it is today'.\footnote{16} The adventure started as skiers trekked or rode on horseback the 23 kilometres from the Hermitage to Ball Hut. This did not seem to deter people as more and more interest was expressed in skiing. It was also an adventure when considering the standard of equipment. The bindings had an iron plate running through the skis and were bent up at the sides to hold the skiers foot in place, but, as Frank Alock observed, after the iron had been bent a couple of dozen times it was difficult to achieve a secure fit and one's 'technique' suffered as a consequence.\footnote{17} Anyone who could run for some distance without a fall was considered good and, if you could turn at will, you were really the finished article...In spite of all these drawbacks it was really fun in those days and it was mainly a case of spills and

\footnote{14}{Ibid., p.78.}
\footnote{15}{The New Zealand Ski Year Book 1978, p.38.}
\footnote{16}{Wigley, p.77.}
\footnote{17}{Frank Alock, The New Zealand Ski Year Book 1953, p.25.}
hearty laughter, for skiing had not become the earnest sport it is today.\textsuperscript{18}

The industry suffered a temporary setback when the Ball Hut was swept away by an avalanche in 1927. The hut was rebuilt and relocated 120 metres away out of the avalanche path but this proved inadequate, especially when the Government finally completed the access road in 1928. Buses were able to transport passengers more quickly and efficiently than in the past, putting a greater strain on accommodation services. At weekends skiers travelled from the Hermitage up to Ball Hut in such numbers that during the months of July, August and September demand for beds far exceeded supply. In the 1930s it was decided to enlarge the Ball Hut, increasing its capacity to 99 skiers on top of staff. The road was also important in opening up the vast Tasman Valley, the distance to which could be now covered in one and a half hours instead of the full day needed on horse or the three to four days on foot. Like other areas of New Zealand life, however, the Depression years had a profound impact on the skiing industry.\textsuperscript{19}

A number of developments occurred in skiing in the 1930s. During the middle of the Depression, Harry Wigley reported that:...

...bankers and other financial institutions had no faith at all in the tourist industry, let alone commercial activities based on the whims of a handful of lunatics who strapped barrel-staves onto their feet to slide down slopes of snow.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite aspersions cast on the validity of something like skiing, it continued to increase in popular appeal. One of the significant attractions of this period was the introduction of turning on skis. In 1928 it was reported that Oscar Coberger introduced Alpine Skiing to the Mount Cook area.\textsuperscript{21} This differed markedly from the techniques of cross-country skiing in that a person's heel was connected to the surface of the ski in conjunction with that of the toe. Harry Elworthy and Tom Mitchell, who had both spent several years in Switzerland becoming proficient in this form of skiing, taught a number of interested skiers at Mount Cook. Barry

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Wigley, pp. 46, 47, 52.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.53.
\textsuperscript{21} Tourist Hotel Corporation, \textit{A Brief Look at the Past 100 years 1884-1984: Hermitage, Mt Cook Centennial}, 1884-1984, Timaru, 1984, p.20.
Figure 7: Ball Hut, 1936. Hocken Library, Dunedin.
Figure 8: Barry Caulfield was brought in to oversee the ski school in 1934 and taught skiers the 'new' art of downhill skiing. Australia and New Zealand Ski Year Book, 1935.
Caulfield, an Englishman and professional ski instructor who had also learnt his trade in Switzerland, was brought in to oversee the ski school in 1934. The new style of skiing was somewhat of a revolution and its popularity avalanched. The future, as Rudolph Wigley saw it, lay in downhill skiing.22

Although a Bill Hamilton designed rope-tow was installed at Ball Hut in 1948 the transfer of the lease of the Hermitage back into the hands of the Tourist Department effectively put an end to the development of Ball Glacier as a leading ski area. As it did at the start of the century, the Tourist Department showed little interest in continuing skiing operations. The Hermitage once again fell idle for the winter. The final nail in the coffin was hammered in when the rope-tow at Ball Glacier was destroyed by an avalanche sometime in the early 1950s.23 The road to the Ball Hut that the Mount Cook Company had pushed for so vigorously in the 1920s also became impassable due to erosion. Despite the reluctance of the Government to lend support to skiing the Mount Cook Company saw a future in the sport and moved quickly to replace Ball Hut with the now world-renowned Coronet Peak.24 Coronet offered a much vaster area of skiable terrain, around 10,000 metres compared to approximately 200 metres of downhill skiing at Ball Hut, as well as easier access and eventually technological advancements such as ski-tows.

Today thoughts of skiing around Queenstown are instantly focussed on either Coronet Peak or The Remarkables, but in the 1930s this was not the case. Sandy Wigley, another son of Rudolph Wigley, took up the position of Queenstown branch manager of the Company. He attempted to encourage locals to try skiing and the Crown Range seemed the obvious place to start.25 The road over the Crown Range provided access to skiable slopes and a hut was transported to a suitable site for the storage of ski equipment and shelter for skiers during the winter. The Crown Range also received the approval of Mr Santner, Austrian and ski instructor to the Ski Club of India. Santner felt that the Crown Range provided

22 Wigley, pp.80-81.
23 Peter Hutchinson, New Zealand Adventure, September/October 1994, p.53.
25 Wigley, p.87.
suitable slopes for all levels of skiers and was impressed with the potential of skiing in the South Island.

In Europe the winter sports are a definite attraction to tourists, and...it is only a matter of time before the possibilities of the South Island in this connection are realised. [So impressed was he] with the prospects of Queenstown becoming known as a winter sports resort that he planned to return the following winter after the season in India.26

Skiers also made excursions to the Skippers Saddle and it was soon realised that this held more potential as a ski area. It received snow earlier than the Crown Range and retained it for a longer period as well. Old timers, explained Harry Wigley, had said that heavy snow lay on the Skippers Saddle from June of each year.27 This promise of much more snow for a longer period prompted the Mount Cook Company to approach the Queenstown Borough Council in 1940 for permission to relocate the ski hut from the Crown Range to a site just above the Skippet Saddle. Arrangements were also made for the Lakes County Council to keep the Skippers Road clear for access. Additional ski equipment was purchased for hire, and efforts were made to publicise the ski area. This report appeared in the Lake Wakatip Mail.

Skiing enthusiasts have discovered a glorious playground only nine miles from Queenstown. They are enjoying the thrill of the sport without the toil and exertion of plodding up difficult slopes to get to the top of the run again. It is something entirely new in New Zealand skiing...This is skiing in luxury...With the saving of time and effort the ski runners are able to make at least three times the number of runs in a morning's skiing.28

What the Lake Wakatip Mail was referring to was the use of the motor car to get to the ski slopes. Reminiscent of the Company's initial attempt at the Hermitage, however, the weather once again put paid to predictions of a long and consistent season. The slopes on the Skippers Saddle remained relatively bare during the winter.

26 Lake Wakatip Mail, 22 August, 1939, p.2.
27 Wigley, p.90.
28 Lake Wakatip Mail, 22 August, 1939, p.2.
forcing skiers to hike to suitable areas. One such area was Coronet Peak.

The first mechanical transport of skiers on Coronet Peak took place in 1938. It could be said that this was a heliski venture of yesteryear. The County Council had cleared the Skippers Saddle Road following a heavy snowfall to provide access to farmers and miners living in the Shotover Valley.29 The opportunity was not lost on the Wigley family. After fitting chains to their car Rudolph drove them up to the Skippers Saddle. The party then traversed across towards Coronet Peak and the site of the present chairlift before starting down 600 metres to the valley below. The 'heliski' venture was complemented with a second run. A number of other skiers also skied down an old, disused track known as the Dan O'Connell Road for three miles to the bottom of the mountain, where their vehicle would be waiting to take them up again.30 It was not long before a more permanent method of transportation was provided on Coronet Peak.

Queenstown, which was usually dormant during the winter months, was beginning to see a small amount of business because of skiing. Many from outside Queenstown heard about Coronet Peak, including some from the North Island, but more needed to be done to attract skiers in greater numbers. The Mount Cook Company recognised two variables that were essential to the viability of skiing in Queenstown: a ski-tow and vehicle access. As Harry Wigley identified, ski-tows were common overseas, but very little expertise or technical know-how existed in New Zealand.31 The Company sought advice and approached William Hamilton, who later 'invented' the jet boat, to devise a system. What Hamilton constructed was efficient, practical and resourceful.

Bill Hamilton produced an impressive rope-tow unit, with the drive unit and engine installed on a steel sledge so that it could be moved to the most suitable positions.32

32 Mountain Scene, July 16 1987, p.21.
The rope-tow, 100 yards in length and ascending a vertical height of 350 feet, was powered by a Bedford truck and could lift 450-500 skiers an hour. At a cost of £1000 to construct and install, a daily charge of five shillings was imposed on each skier. A belt was worn by each skier that could be attached to the tow. *The New Zealand Ski Annual 1948* detailed how the tow operated. The skier uses his hands as a clutch on the tow-rope, and as soon as he is moving he clicks over the quick release clip and leans back on the belt, being carried smoothly to the top with very little bodily strain or exertion. The clip is so designed that it will ride over the pulley without endangering the skier or the skier's hands, and in the event of a fall it instantaneously and automatically detaches itself from the rope.33

The ability to relocate the tow was also a factor in the success of Coronet Peak as it took a few years of trialing to discover where the best position for it was. Eventually it was located where the main quad lift presently stands.

The battle was half won in terms of access because of Coronet Peak's proximity to the existing Skippers Road. The Company could not afford to extend the motor road from the Skippers Road turnoff and applied to the Queenstown Borough Council, the Lakes County Council and the Public Works Department for assistance.34 What resulted from this was unclear, but they did construct a walking track the remaining distance which the present road replaced, to the bottom of the facilities. This must have been quite a trek, however, as Harry Wigley has identified:

...walking on a prepared track was infinitely easier than clambering over snow-covered tussock, and we figured that the skiers would be prepared to put up with the knowledge that the tow was waiting for them at the top end to transport them to the mountain as many times as they liked to go.35

33 *The New Zealand Ski Annual 1948*, p.20. Rope tows of this variety were also nicknamed 'nutcrackers' because of the tendency for skiers to get their hands caught under the pulleys. It was also not uncommon for women with long hair to get this caught in the rope tow. Similarly, people with baggy clothing often suffered the same fate.

34 *Lake Wakatip Mail*, 6 February, 1940, p.2. Cited in Ryan, p.112.

35 Wigley, p.92.
Figure 9: Opening day, June 1947. Lakes District Museum, Arrowtown.
Figure 10: A second rope-tow was installed in the 1950s which ran parallel to the first.
The Company realised that the entire project was a gamble that was reliant on public support. Queenstown could see, as they hoped, an influx of skiers into the town, or, alternatively a huge financial loss for the Company because of little or no additional traffic to the Mount Cook Motor Company. Their fears were soon allayed after the mountain became operational in June 1947.

The rope-tow literally pulled in the crowds. It was the first ski-tow to operate successfully in New Zealand and through the help of the local newspaper attracted more and more people to the area to ski. The 'Pie Palace' which sold soup, pies, coffee, tea and chocolate was another attraction, but so was Olaf Rodegard, an expatriate Kiwi who had worked in the Sun Valley in the United States, and who was employed as a ski instructor for the first two seasons. In 1949 it was reported that 45% of the visitors to Queenstown during the ski season were from the North Island. Australians were also targeted as a large potential market. Although Australian fields were comparable with Coronet Peak, none of them had anything to approach the facilities. Furthermore, the introduction of a regular air service between Melbourne and Christchurch from 1951 meant that it 'was possible for Australian skiers to be on the snow at Coronet Peak in less time than they could be skiing on their own grounds'. This feature has continued to remain an attraction for many Australian skiers.

Each year the lift queues became longer, representing a greater demand for additional tows. After several years of trial and error, the second tow ran parallel to the first using the same poles. The two transported skiers from near the bottom to a halfway point where more proficient skiers could then board another tow which ran to within 20 to 30 metres of the top of Coronet Peak. Coronet Peak was expanding at a speed comparable with some of the skiers on the mountain. Further base

36 Ibid.
37 In 1951 it was reported that 17,650 skiers had visited the field during the year. New Zealand Holiday, June, 1971, p.29.
facilities were added including ski rooms, ticket offices and common rooms. With assistance from the Tourist and Publicity Department (formally the Tourist Department) the access road was also widened and improved to allow vehicles. But one of the most important factors in Coronet Peak's expansion actually occurred off the mountain.

In 1962 the Mount Cook Airways introduced a daily service from Christchurch to Queenstown. This made it possible for people from North Island centres such as Auckland and Wellington to ski on the same day that they left home. Previously only Otago and Southland skiers, together with a few from the North Island, had frequented the skifield. Now the sky was the limit as overseas visitors were also attracted to the region. This had a manifold impact on ski facilities, especially the ski-tows. In June 1964 the first and longest double chairlift in New Zealand replaced the Hamilton designed ski-tow. The particular design was chosen for its robustness and its ability to be able to stand up to the wind and the ice. The cost, however, was beyond the normal resources of the Mount Cook Company so a public issue of shares raised the necessary finance. As Boyd identified:

> There were some initial grumbles at the £1 a day charge on the lift, but although the rope-tows remained for a time, any resistance soon faded away.

Further demand saw the introduction of a poma lift in the Rocky Gully in 1967, followed by a further poma in the Happy Valley in 1970, the triple chairlift in 1974, the Blue Gum Poma in 1977 and a T-Bar to replace the Rocky Gully Poma in 1981. Long gone were the days in which skiers had to trek to the top of skiable slopes and 'only those bugged with real ski mania skied two runs in a day'.

Coronet Peak gained such a reputation as a quality skifield that in 1975 an overseas publication, Newsweek, rated Coronet as one of the best 25 ski areas in the world. Furthermore, a northern hemisphere organisation conducted a survey of New Zealand fields and with a score of 27 points out of a possible 30 Coronet Peak

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43 Mountain Scene, August 1, 1974, p.1.
44 New Zealand Skier, Early Season 1997, p.59.
45 Boyd, p.29.
46 Mountain Scene, July 16, 1987, p.20.
Figure 11: Coronet Peak in the 1950s. Lakes District Museum, Arrowtown.
Figure 12: The installation of New Zealand's first chairlift placed Coronet Peak in a league of its own.
Figure 13: The Mount Cook Company advertised the fact that skiers from the North Island could be on Coronet Peak the day they left home. New Zealand Ski Year Book, 1966.
emerged as the best ski area in the country. It must be emphasised, however, that there were not nearly the number of commercial skifields that exist today. Skiing up to the 1970s was essentially an activity for enthusiasts mainly on club fields. Coronet Peak was an exception at that time. As well as additional ski-tows, improvements were made to the base facilities. These represented the most sophisticated in Australasia. The Mount Cook Company suffered a setback when the newly refurbished base buildings were ravaged by fire in July 1986. These had won various architectural awards and were rebuilt to their original design for the 1987 season.

With skiing being of particular importance in the Queenstown area, this added considerable impetus to the ongoing need to secure its viability. Queenstown’s economic infrastructure relied heavily on the multi-million dollar skiing industry but questions were increasingly being asked about the future of Coronet Peak, especially after a run of poor snow falls over a number of seasons. One headline appeared in the local paper, the Mountain Scene, in August 1990 asking, ‘Has Coronet Peaked?’ In 1989 the field was only open for 39 days because of the lack of snow. 1990 was equally poor. Many were suggesting that the Mount Cook Group should make a commitment to snow-making to ensure the future of Coronet Peak. One such advocate was Gary Chapman, Mount Cook

Company Ski Industries Representative.

They’ve got so much capital tied up in the lifts and other equipment now that they’re just not viable without snow. They might have to spend another $1 to $2 million to make all the other millions work.

Reports of a snow-making machine at Coronet Peak appeared in The New Zealand Ski Year Book 1962. At this time it was expected that snow-making facilities would extend the season and

47 Mount Cook Ski Areas Information Kit, February 1996.
48 Jason Cushen, Pylons and Tussock, BA(Hons) unpublished long essay, University of Otago, 1994, p.17.
49 Mount Cook Ski Areas Information Kit, February 1996.
50 Ibid.
51 Cushen, p.18.
52 Mountain Scene, August 2, 1990, p.1.
53 Ibid.
54 Mountain Scene, July 13, 1989, p.9.
provide a fresh covering of snow on the lower levels when required.\textsuperscript{55} What decisions were made was unclear but it appears further tests were not carried out on Coronet Peak until 1983 and a commitment to snow-making facilities was not made until 1990. It was expected that snow-making would increase the length of the season to around 112 days securing its future as a quality international skifield. By 1994 40 snow-making machines were pumping out the equivalent of one foot of snow over five rugby fields a day. In all ten kilometres of ski trails were covered by artificial snow.\textsuperscript{56} The snow-making facilities were further complemented by a high speed Doppelmayer quad lift that replaced the old double chairlift in 1994. This increased the lift capacity of the mountain by 40%.\textsuperscript{57} These improvements were recognised at the 1994 New Zealand Tourism Awards where Coronet Peak was awarded the 'Best Tourism Activity' winner, the Mount Cook Line Ski Areas were honoured with the 'Best Service Award', and the Mount Cook Group was rewarded with the ‘Supreme Award’.\textsuperscript{58}

Before the introduction of snow-making and the improvements to Coronet Peak's chairlift and base facilities, however, pressure was being exerted by skiers for a second field in the Queenstown area. It had been identified that with the continuing growth of skiing in this country a greater strain would be placed on Coronet Peak's facilities, to saturation point. The extent to which the field could be developed further was limited and there were grave fears that Coronet Peak's reputation could suffer as a result of leaner snow conditions that seemed to be occurring more frequently.\textsuperscript{59} The field was hampered by poor snow conditions in both 1956 and 1957. The search for a new field within a similar travelling distance of Dunedin became more urgent. In July 1957 Otago skiing personalities Royce Sise, Geoff Dunn and Arnold Divers accompanied Harry Wigley on an aerial search of the mountains of the Southern Lakes. They travelled up the Waitaki

\textsuperscript{55} The New Zealand Ski Year Book 1962, p.3.
\textsuperscript{56} Mountain Scene, Celebration Special: Coronet's Crowning Glory, May 26-June 1, 1994, p.6.
\textsuperscript{57} Mount Cook Ski Areas Information Kit, February 1996.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} This seemed to be part of a worldwide trend highlighted in the 1980s by global warming.
Valley to Lake Ohau, St Bathans and down the Maniototo, and, according to Boyd:

The consensus opinion was that development of the Ohau field by the Mount Cook Company would provide a longer season and any additional venture in this area would prove uneconomic.60

A field was developed on the Ohau Range above Lake Ohau, but this has remained a small-scale operation to this day. It did not really alleviate pressures on Coronet Peak.

Harry Wigley recognised the limitations of Coronet Peak and in the 1960s held the belief that a second skifield in the Queenstown area needed to be developed. It was not until the 1970s, however, that Wigley was able to persuade the Mount Cook Company Board to give serious thought and support to the research and planning of the project.61 Several localities near Coronet Peak were investigated, including Ben Lomond, but only one option was considered worthy of development: the Remarkables.62 As senior executive of the Mount Cook Company, Bob Forward, explained:

We had looked at Treble Cone and Cardrona, but quite apart from existing development in those areas, they were felt to be too far away. The maximum distance we felt we could go was 30 kilometres. And, of course, we wanted to do our own thing.63

The Mount Cook Company got to 'do our own thing' and the Remarkables Skifield opened in August 1985. This was not, however, before a lengthy and bitter environmental and legal battle. The Mount Cook Company had applied for a lease to develop a skifield in the Rastus Burn on the Remarkables Range as early as October 1973, but it was not until 1980 that this was finally approved. At a higher altitude than Coronet Peak it was predicted that the Remarkables would provide more snow for a longer period and would be more conducive to snow-making.64

Many environmental groups including the Remarkables Protection

60 Boyd, p.22.
61 Mount Cook Ski Areas Information Kit, February 1996.
63 The Skier, August, 1984, p.23.
64 Ibid., p.24.
Committee, the Wakatipu Environmental Society and the Southland Tramping Club were opposed to development of any kind on the Remarkables Range. They challenged assertions of snow consistency but more vociferously objected to the 'destruction' of an area of national and international renown. The main issue of contention centred on the access road and the scarring of the Remarkables Range as a result. The issue was finally resolved in the courts after a number of appeals and counter-appeals. Although still a source of discontent among many people, the Remarkables is a major New Zealand skifield and is serviced by two quad chairlifts, a double chairlift, a learners tow and a large, two-storeyed base complex.65

Skiing expanded into other areas. Heliskiing has often been regarded as the glitz and glamour of the skiing industry. Hundreds of previously inaccessible ski slopes have been opened up through the use of a helicopter as a ski-tow. 'Powder hounds' have been attracted by the freedom of uncluttered mountains and perfect, untracked powder snow conditions. But one has to be prepared to pay for this experience now costing around $800 for one day's heliskiing. Alpine Helicopters was the first to offer heliskiing in New Zealand in 1970 on the slopes of Mount Vanguard behind Coronet Peak. They soon expanded into the Remarkables in 1973.66 This heliski venture was a small operation and it was soon superseded by the Helicopter Line. The Helicopter Line opened up a much vaster area and as a consequence have been considered as the virtual founders of the heliski industry in New Zealand.67

Another innovation that originated from the Wigley family was a prelude to modern day heliskiing. Harry Wigley investigated ways in which to transport tourists and adventure seekers into remote snow-covered areas and fitting skis onto a plane seemed the

65 It is a matter of irony that the Remarkables experienced a dismal first season. The ski area did not open until August 1985 because of the lack of snow. Furthermore, it was only open for 53 days and attracted 16,000 skiers. This compared with Cardrona, Coronet Peak and Treble Cone that reported 73, 500, 69, 400 and around 45, 000 skier days respectively. The second season proved much more successful, however, being open for 114 days representing the longest period a Queenstown field had been open. The Remarkables was consequently able to shed the name 'the Regrettables' it had developed the previous year. *Mountain Scene*, October 24, 1985, p.8. *Mountain Scene*, November 6, 1986, p.24.


67 *Mountain Scene*, Ski South Supplement, August 28, 1986, p.VIII.
obvious answer. This had been done in various parts of Canada and Scandinavia, but in the Mount Cook region as the return landing at the Hermitage would not be on snow a new system needed to be devised. Harry Wigley designed a system of retractable skis which were auxiliary to the normal wheeled undercarriage. This would allow the pilot to land the skiplane on either grass or snow as required. As well as opening up new possibilities for climbers, sightseers, alpine rescues and the transportation of materials, it also attracted skiers who did not want to trek to untracked snow but also did not want to share with hundreds of others. The skiplane was first trialed on September 22, 1955 and proved a complete success, however, it required a long, flat and smooth surface to land on. Thus, it was not surprising that the helicopter held more potential as a 'chairlift' for skiers.68

Heliskiing became an established and viable activity in the northern hemisphere in the 1960s. Don Spary, managing director of the Helicopter Line, recognised the potential of heliskiing in the Southern Lakes while flying in Treble Cone's first hut on the skifield in 1968. Spary 'looked around' for a couple of years before offering skiers the opportunity of three runs for $25 in 1971. At the time, as Spary has identified, this was 'considered to be tremendously expensive', more expensive even than today. Maybe due to the cost and the fact that heliskiing was a relatively unheard of activity in this country at the time, heliskiing did not take off in its first year. In 1971 a total of six people went heliskiing with the Helicopter Line.69 Today thousands of skiers and snowboarders take to the mountains of the Southern Lakes in a search for the powder experience.

In 1979 a Wanaka resident, Paul Scaife, established a business that by 1990 had become the largest heliski operation in the world outside Canada.70 'What began in an unknown range of mountains on a remote South Pacific Island gradually caught the imagination of thousands of skiers worldwide.'71 Six mountain ranges have been utilised from the Remarkables in the south to the

69 Mountain Scene, Ski South Supplement, August 28, 1986, p.VIII.
70 New Zealand Adventure, Summer 1992/93, p.43.
Figure 14: Sir Edmund Hillary and Harry Wigley on the Tasman Glacier. New Zealand Ski Year Book, 1956.

Figure 15: The undercarriage that Wigley designed. The skiplane opened up a range of opportunities for skiers and other mountain users and was a prelude to modern day heliskiing.
Mount Aspiring National Park in the north. 120 separate peaks have offered variety suitable for any level of skier and also have the advantage of being in easy reach of both Wanaka and Queenstown. The Harris Mountains have also been the site of the New Zealand and World Powder Eights Championships. Other companies have also been established. More recently, however, companies have attempted to establish heliskiing as more accessible in terms of cost to the 'average' skier. A dual skifield and heliski operation was established on the Invincible Skifield in the Rees Valley near Glenorchy from 1995. Furthermore, a snow cat operation was jointly established by Harris Mountains Heliski and the Mount Cook Line which transported skiers to virgin powder snow in a modified snow-groomer on the Remarkables Ranges late in the 1996 ski season.

Cross-country, or Nordic skiing, re-emerged as a commercial activity in the 1980s. This had been the main form of skiing in this country in the late nineteenth century and the Mount Cook Company had offered this around the Hermitage and on Ball Glacier up to the 1930s. The advent of downhill skiing, however, effectively eliminated cross-country skiing as a commercial activity. It was reintroduced in the Southern Lakes area on the Pisa Range near Wanaka in the 1970s and 1980s. Many recreational cross-country skiing enthusiasts had utilised this area previously prompting the pioneers of white-water rafting in this country, Danes Back Country Experiences, to add cross-country skiing to its range of outdoor excursions. Danes either flew in or took clients by four-wheel-drive for up to three days on the Pisa Range. A Cromwell venture, Moonlight Recreations, also ran one-day trips to

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72 These first started in 1981 and are a competition in which a team of two skiers is judged on the synchronicity and style of their skiing as well as the shape of turns left in the powder snow that should resemble the number 8.


74 There are two different techniques employed in cross-country skiing. The classical form uses skis without edges and has fish scales or grip wax in the centre of the base to stop it sliding backwards. The skis are placed in two tracks set by a groomer and the kick and glide technique is used. Skating is a newer and faster technique. Lighter skis are used with a smooth sole on a level area created by a groomer. John Lee, *Nordic Skiing*, Lee Collection, p.1.

the area. Plans were, however, already being laid for cross-country to become a more permanent feature on Mount Pisa. 'It'll be like skiing in a moonscape or in Antarctica.' This description of cross-country skiing on the Pisa range was made by local farmer and developer of both the Cardrona and Waiorau Nordic Ski Areas, John Lee. As Lee explained, 'opening a cross-country skifield was a dream I had long before Cardrona got started'. The Lee family had owned or leased land within the Cardrona Valley since 1923 and John Lee had often spoken of the need to turn his father's and grandfather's greatest threat, snow, into an asset. 'Farming snow' through the development of a skifield was what Lee focused his attention on. In many respects skiers have been 'herded' onto the skifields as sheep are on the farm. The development of Cardrona will be discussed at length in chapter 7.

John Lee has cited three reasons why he chose to develop the Waiorau Nordic Ski Area:

(1) it was non-machinery inclined so personally I liked it...It was the one I was more in sympathy with in my makeup if you like; (2) it was environmentally more in tune with the mood the age was moving into; and (3) it wasn't available to New Zealanders, at least it made another sport on the New Zealand market.

Lee was confident of success. As he explained:

Our research proved that there was a big market demand for this recreation activity, particularly from people from the Northern Hemisphere where Nordic skiers outnumber downhill skiers, and we were confident that by using the overseas people as our initial base many New Zealanders would enjoy Nordic skiing when it became available.

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76 Mountain Scene, June 12, 1980, p.4.
77 Mountain Scene, May 18, 1989, p.4.
80 Interview with John Lee, Cardrona Valley, December, 1996.
Although Lee's family did not share his enthusiasm for the proposed development on the Pisa Range, Lee was thwarted on another front.

Talking to existing operators and business people made me aware of the greater financial risks on Crown Land due to the language problem - the Crown talking non-financial, while the operator talked financial language.82

Anticipating planning problems Lee instead focussed on the Cardrona Ski Area project and did not apply to the Land Settlement Board for a recreation permit for the Pisa Range until 1984. Like the development of the Remarkables Ski Area, the progress of the cross-country area was blocked. The controversy this time, as foreseen, centred around access and ownership.

The original application was approved in May 1986 but certain conditions were imposed which made the project economically unviable. Lee was ordered to surrender 80% of his property in the Mount Pisa area as well as grant free and unrestricted entry to any public wishing to walk up the private access road.83 The land, according to the Central Otago Land Settlement Committee, was seen to have grazing potential and a recreation permit would reduce stock numbers, thereby threatening the economic viability of the pastoral lease. The Committee, obviously questioning the merits of Lee's proposal, queried why Lee would forgo 'the economic viability of an existing business for the economic uncertainty and risk of a new venture'.84 This standoff existed because Lee only leased the land from the government, he did not own it. He was, however, prepared to take the government on. It seemed, on the one hand, that the government was trying to promote tourism and economic growth, but on the other, restrict business ventures that were in theory trying to encourage this. Lee applied for a rehearing which was held in Dunedin in 1986, but he was again disappointed as he received confirmation of the commissioner's original conditions.85

In May 1988 some progress was made. The acting director of the Land Settlement Board, Ian Campbell, acknowledged the

82 Cushen, pp.82-83.
84 Lee, Adventure Tourism Seminar, p.2.
85 Ibid., p.1.
illegality of the conditions imposed on Lee and deleted them from the permit. Furthermore, after negotiations and consultation with Landcorp and the Department of Conservation (DOC), an accord was reached. DOC strictly oversaw the development of, among other things, the trails, snow grooming and base facilities. Further delays were encountered when some groups feared that access to Crown land could not be assured. These were expressed by such groups as the Federated Mountain Clubs, Public Access New Zealand, the Public Lands Coalition and the Central Otago Tramping Club. Controversy centred around the proposal to rationalise ownership in which the lower reaches of the Pisa Range would be transferred to freehold, that is to John Lee, and the rest to the Crown. These groups wanted to ensure continuing public access to Crown land through private land, as well as the protection of the natural environment. Submissions to Landcorp in 1991 and 1993 on this proposal were generally in favour of commercial development on the Pisa Range; 41 of the 46 submissions received in 1991 were supportive. A similar ratio of support was received in 1993. There was widespread support among the local population and there is evidence to suggest that there was a campaign among many local businesses to highlight the economic benefits to the area in an effort to ensure its progress. This dispute has been settled with a provision in the operating permit for public access to be ensured.

When skiing did eventually begin on the Waiorau Nordic Ski Area in 1989 the Lees emphasised a relaxed setting in comparison with downhill skiing areas. As Lee explained:...it was an atmosphere thing, whereas downhill ski areas tend to be suburbia transplanted. [With downhill ski areas] you've got a great big cafeteria, you've got great big crowds, you've got lift queues, you've got machinery carting you up. I's not much different to being in Princes Street in Dunedin at times except that you've got snow there. The Nordic skiing is much more relaxed.

86 Roxburgh, pp.149-150.  
87 Cushen, p.86.  
88 Ibid.  
89 Ibid.  
90 Interview with John Lee.
Lee envisaged that it would be older people, trampers, athletes searching for an intense aerobic cross-training alternative and non-skiers looking for an introduction to snow that would be the biggest supporters of the Waiorau Nordic Ski Area. He did not see it drawing skiers away from the downhill skifields, but rather complementing Wanaka’s attractions by providing, like heliskiing, another option. As a much safer and cheaper alternative to downhill skiing, the Waiorau Nordic Ski Area has increased in popularity and renown, although not to the extent that the Lees had hoped. It must be remembered that cross-country skiing is a way of life, is part of their culture, for people in Scandinavia and parts of Europe. It is also a means of transport for these people, but not in New Zealand because of our generally temperate climate. The fact that the Nordic ski area became operational was due, in no small part, to the commitment of the Lees to establish the field, even against many financial, legal, planning, environmental and historical obstacles. John Lee remains committed to this project and even hopes that the Pisa Range may one day host the Winter Olympic cross-country events.

In 1988 Time magazine touted the latest craze to hit the slopes, snowboarding, as the ‘worst new sport’. It was assumed that snowboarding, like monoboarding and big feet would be just another short-lived fad, but in 1993 it was recognised that newcomers to the sport in this country had been trebling each year while the numbers of recreational skiers had remained constant.

Snowboarding surfaced in the mid 1970s in Vermont, in the United States. Surfers turned their eyes to the snow and the mountains during the winter and saw frozen waves. ‘Snurfboarding’, as it was originally known, revolutionised the

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91 Mountain Scene, May 18, 1989, p.4.
92 Interview with John Lee.
93 Ibid. John Lee also hopes to stage a Loppet race. This is a race of international prestige and glamour among the cross-country fraternity.
95 Snowboarding is a form of winter activity in which the participant rides the board very much in the same way as a surfer does a surfboard. The rider's feet are bound to the board.
96 A monoboard is like one large ski. There are two bindings side-by-side for the skier's boots to fit into.
97 Big Feet are small skis about 50 centimetres long.
98 Shaan Millar, New Zealand Adventure, July/August 1993, p.39.
Figure 16: Snowboarding has taken the ski world by storm. Special areas such as half pipes have been created to cater for the individual needs of snowboarders.
skiing industry. One of the more attractive aspects of snowboarding is that it can be picked up in a matter of days or hours. There are no cumbersome poles as in skiing, the boots are more comfortable and forgiving, and there is only one edge to contend with. For many skiers it can take years to master powder skiing or moguls, but this can be done in a much shorter time on a snowboard. The craze took off in Europe in the early 1980s before hitting this country around five years later. Guy Alty, of New Zealand Adventure magazine has tried to describe its appeal:

...like compact discs and mobile phones, it has pushed technology into new realms. But unlike technology, snowboarding has soul - the exhilarating feeling of an on the edge adventure in the mountains.

As well as changing the face of winter activities on skifields in New Zealand, however, it has raised the ire of more traditional users, skiers.

There is a real culture associated with snowboarding. This has often been viewed in a negative light, however. A stereotypical image of a 'radical, dreadlocked "surf-Nazi" that has alienated other ski area users' has predominated. Snowboarders, generally a product of the youth culture, are often more aggressive than skiers and, therefore, seen as less conscientious of other ski area users. Some skiers even went so far as demanding that some fields like Coronet Peak should ban snowboarders and become skier-only areas. One Queenstown skier expressed his frustrations in a column in the Mountain Scene entitled 'My Word'. Neil Harrop suggested that:

...skiers were here first, remember? And there are a lot more of 'em. Insisting that skiers share their mountain with another sport is like trying to play rugby or soccer on the same playing field at the same time. It seems to me that a separate

99 Moguls are ski slopes which are covered in bumps or mounds of snow. Competitions are also held in which the skiers are judged on speed, style and the execution and difficulty of two compulsory jumps.

100 Millar, New Zealand Adventure, p.39-42.


102 Ibid., p.39.

area for the new sport, snowboarding, is the answer.104

Cliff Taylor, of the *Mountain Scene*, used the analogy of the rivalry between rugby league and rugby union that existed in the early 1990s.

The natural antagonism between the two codes has turned into a cold war this winter as the burgeoning ranks of snowboarders have proved, beyond doubt, they are here to stay.105

Much of the antagonism was due to the fact that there was a cultural gap between the two sports. Skiing has been viewed as a respectable pastime; snowboarding has had a more hard-core image attached to it. Snowboarders have slowly gained greater respect, but this has been a difficult process. As Anthony Jones, co-owner of snowboard shop *Board of Authority* has identified, 'people fail to realise it's not just hard-core people who board - it's starting to appeal to everyone'.106 Snowboarding is increasingly being viewed as a more mainstream activity. The sheer weight of numbers would support this fact. Ski areas are also taking an inclusive approach. They have realised that snowboarding has not just been a fad or gimmick. Special areas, such as half-pipes and terrain gardens, have been constructed to cater for snowboarders' needs. As well as giving greater recognition to boarders, the Mount Cook Company developed an educational programme. Duncan Smith, Mount Cook Company Ski Areas Manager, explained that:

We are initiating a major campaign aimed at educating snowboarders on mountain etiquette and educating skiers on how boarders use the slopes. Both groups can enjoy the ski area together.107

Attitudes to this minority sport have improved over the last couple of years easing the 'Cold War'. It would seem that this acrimony would have to diminish, for if snowboarding's increase in popularity results as suggested skiing could one day be relegated to minority status itself.

There have been some, including John Lee, who have predicted a decline in the popularity of skiing in this country. Lee

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104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Cited in Ibid.
has suggested that the high financial cost of skiing together with the high rate of injuries will translate into fewer participants.\textsuperscript{108}

More and more with accidents costing so much alpine [skiing] is going to get the thumbs down... I don't know if the country can afford those high injury rates.\textsuperscript{109}

The advent and popularity of snowboarding and the eruption of Mount Ruapehu in 1996 which forced North Island skiers to the South Island in search of snow has probably clouded statistics of skier numbers. There were fears that global warming would irrevocably damage the skiing industry, but these have been allayed through the development of snow-making. It seems probable that skiing will remain an important and popular recreational pastime as well as a major source of revenue, but how much so is uncertain. The fact that it is rumoured that Treble Cone and Porter Heights Ski Areas are on the market, and that the Mount Cook Company has also indicated that it is considering its future with Coronet Peak, the Remarkables and Mount Hutt would seem to compound the uncertainty surrounding the New Zealand skiing industry.\textsuperscript{110}

Throughout its history the skiing industry has reflected technological advancements. Long gone are the days in which skiers trek to suitable areas and even utilise home-made equipment. Skiers and snowboarders today are transported quickly and efficiently through the use of high-speed chairlifts and helicopters. Marmaduke Dixon and skiers at Ball Glacier in the early twentieth century probably viewed themselves as living 'on the edge'. One wonders what they would think of the speed, colour and commercialism of the skiing industry today which is continually being taken to new levels.

\textsuperscript{108} At present, 7.3 per 1000 skiers are treated for injury. Interview with John Lee.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
4. Jet Speed

Jet Boating and Shotover Jet

*Adventure is measured by the distance between where you're going and where you've come from.*
- Rob Hall and Gary Ball¹

'Young man I've never had so much fun with my clothes on before!'² This reaction from an elderly American tourist to the driver after a ride on the Shotover Jet is a typical one. Over one million passengers have been seduced over the last 30 years by the experience of 'the world's most exciting jet boat ride'. Its beginnings, however, were a far cry from what is offered today. Tourist jet boating had its origins in the Queenstown area under the guidance of two Invercargill brothers, Alan and Harold Melhop, who were trying to raise money for a Christian Youth Camp. What they offered was, in comparison with today, a relatively sedate exploration trip down the centre of the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers. Trevor Gamble took the business literally to the edge in the 1970s and 1980s, allowing his passengers a close-up view of the Shotover Gorge Canyons in his specially designed 'Big Red' jet boats. Other companies have tried to replicate and even out-do the Shotover Jet experience. Shotover Jet's operating monopoly in the Shotover Gorge, however, puts it at a distinct advantage. Some companies have challenged this monopoly with limited success.

This country has been regarded as the home of the jet boat for good reason. Its 'inventor', William Hamilton, was a New Zealander. Originating in the MacKenzie Country in the South Island as a way of travelling into the heart of New Zealand's backcountry, jet boating has now been transformed into a favourite

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¹ Rob Hall and Gary Ball, *Classic New Zealand Adventures*, foreword.
adventure pursuit of the Queenstown area. Bill Hamilton, backcountry sheep farmer and popularly-acclaimed 'inventor of the jet boat', however, had no idea of its commercial potential. He thought he might sell 'one or two' and had no idea, like the rest of his design team, of the real commercial potential of the innovation he was nurturing. Hamilton was only aware of the thrill and fun that such a river-going craft could provide, and the attraction of travelling quickly and efficiently into remote areas. As Bill Hamilton explained:

New Zealanders prefer the adventure of trail-blazing and the satisfaction of individual endeavour to the material reward of production on a grand scale.

Bill Hamilton, and his design team of Alf Dick and George Davison, further developed the Archimedes principle of utilising a screw for raising water in the search for designing a jet unit. Potentially this posed a practical solution to the shortcomings of a conventional power boat in shallow water. Unlike a conventional system, a jet unit has neither a propeller nor a rudder. Instead water is drawn through an intake in the bottom of the hull of the boat and forced out at high pressure in a jet stream through a nozzle at the rear. This was a system that many others had tried to develop through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and one that took Hamilton many years and several prototypes to perfect. The first commercial units were marketed in 1957, sparking interest from around the world. It was also to spark interest of a different kind under the guidance of two Invercargill brothers.

Alan and Harold Melhop pioneered tourist jet boating in the Queenstown area. In a way they were two unlikely individuals, considering their intentions in the area, who stumbled across the idea of running tourists on the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers. The brothers were owners of an engineering company in Invercargill, H. E. Meliop Ltd, in the late 1950s, but also heavily involved as leaders of church youth groups in Invercargill. Harold recalled that

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3 Ibid., p.20.
5 Ibid., p.30.
6 Bloxham and Stark, p.1.
around 1955, after three or four of them had taken a drive-yourself boat from Queenstown Bay to Kelvin Heights, that the area would be a perfect site for a youth camp to be established. Having obtained the land in 1957 the Melhops then directed their efforts into 'looking for ways and means to raise funds to start building a youth camp'. One such initiative involved the purchase of an old truck and the utilisation of a young man on parole from borstal prison to collect scrap metal from around the farms of Southland. The metal was then sold and the proceeds generated put into the youth camp fund.\(^7\) Another venture, this one based on the sale of a combination of water, speed, exploration and scenery, proved more successful.

As well as their involvement in the engineering business and the nurturing of a portion of Southland's youth, the Melhops were also the Invercargill agent for the now famous Hamilton Jet Boats. 'We were very very successfully selling boats all around in the late 50s in the days when farmers had heaps of money.'\(^8\) During the summer of 1960 the two brought a demonstration jet boat up to Queenstown to test the boat's capabilities on the lake. Attention was soon focused on the Kawarau River and to the knowledge of the Melhops they completed the first powered navigation of the river. The first obstacle was negotiating the dam at the tricky Kawarau Falls. Harold vividly recalled this part of the adventure:

We took the plunge and went down through one of the open gates of the dam and just as we got underneath there was a drop of about three feet over the sill. The water was quite low. I thought that was the end of things because the boat went under the water and came up again and we got an awful fright...When we got up on top again we found very little water in the boat.\(^9\)

Despite being soaked as a result of their encounter with what must have felt more like a rapid usually tackled by a raft on the Shotover River, the pair continued along the Kawarau River and past the Arrow River junction, unaware of a major waterfall in their path. The Melhops averted possible disaster as 'we just managed to spin

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7 Interview with Harold Melhop, Kelvin Heights, Queenstown, December, 1996.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
the boat around and avoid going over that waterfall'.

Returning unscathed and full of enthusiasm, that pathfinding journey, as Harold Melhop explained, 'was the beginning of an exciting forecast in our minds of what we could do with a jet boat on the Kawarau River for tourism'. Although it seemed logical that a tourist venture would be established, the motivations for doing so were not purely commercially driven.

The Queenstown Christian Camp Trust had been formed by six businessmen, including the Melhops, with a view to develop a camp for the 'spiritual, moral and physical wellbeing of young people in Otago and Southland'. Suitable land had been obtained at Kelvin Heights, but funds were needed for the construction of the camp, and all the scrap metal in Southland could not hope to provide the necessary revenue. Alan and Harold, fresh from their lively excursion up the Kawarau River, were quick to point out to the Camp Trust the potential of a tourist jet boat venture. The Trust decided to invest £1200 to purchase a jet boat, some of which was raised from the scrap metal sales, in an endorsement of the proposed tourist operation. It was intended that all profits would go directly back into the camp.

After having obtained permission from all the relevant authorities which took nearly two years, the Kawarau Jet service was launched in January 1962. The Camp Trust's commitment was well founded as the jet boat venture became an immediate success. The round journey travelled from a jetty at the Frankton Camping Ground to the Arrow River and back and, as Harold Melhop observed, at 10 shillings a head 'that was a pretty cheap trip in those days'. Holiday-makers in the Frankton Camp as well as others in Queenstown 'flocked out there to get a ride'. Initially the service was only offered during the holidays and weekends because of the Melhop's commitment to their business interests in Invercargill, and as Harold explained the trip proved so popular that:

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
13 Interview with Harold Melhop.
14 Ibid.
...my brother and I took turns at driving the boat down the river with passengers...from about 7am in the morning to about 10:30 at night; as long as there was daylight.15

After two successful years the Melhops recognised that they could not cope by themselves. This prompted them to employ a full-time boat driver, Mac Wallace, thereby expanding the service into a week-round, year-round venture, weather permitting.16

Emphasis was placed on the journey as an 'adventure trip'. Because it was a first, and certainly a first for the Queenstown area, 'it was an attraction, the mere fact of going down a river'.17 As well as the shooting under the dam both ways as part of the adventure, which they were able to negotiate more safely and successfully than their first encounter, there was the attraction of the bird life. As Harold explained:

[In] those early days seagulls used to nest down on the river banks...I would nose the boat onto the river bank and take my passengers onshore and show them all around the seagull nests and that was an incredible experience for people from overseas who had never been in a seagull rookery.18

Although the 'birds got weary of us and slowly floated off and stopped nesting there', the trip also featured spectacular scenery past the Remarkables, dashing around corners and in and out of willow trees, as well as the exciting novelty of a Hamilton Turn.19

The jet boat venture was turning others into a spin. It not only caught the imagination of the Queenstown Christian Camp Trust and holiday-makers, but also the local district council. Initially the popular trip ran from a jetty at Frankton. At the request of the Council, however, the departure point was moved to Queenstown Bay in order to increase its exposure amongst the growing tourist population. As the Melhops had seen 'that's where the people really were'.20 This was a shrewd move that had the

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Named after Bill Hamilton, a Hamilton Turn occurs when the jet boat completes a 270-360 degree spin.
20 Interview with Harold Melhop.
potential to benefit a number of parties, not least of all the Melhop brothers and the Camp Trust. It also added another dimension with an exciting run across the lake before tackling the Kawarau River. Alan and Harold constructed an addition to the pier at the bottom of the Queenstown Mall and on completion offered the extended trip for £1 a head. The summer holidays, however, proved the only profitable period and despite best intentions most of the little profit that was generated was spent directly on improving the jet boat service and the maintenance of the boats, not the youth camp as intended. A special trip, though, marked the turning point for the fledgling company and one that would eventually result in the birth of the modern Shotover Jet.

A party of American tourists insisted on a trip up the Shotover River and were prepared to pay five times the normal price. '25 quid for a boat trip,' recalled Alan, 'was gold in those days.' He remembered grounding once or twice 'but eventually we got through and all the way up to the Oxenbridge Tunnel'. Both Alan and Harold agreed that it was a 'terribly exciting trip', more so than the Kawarau. This led to the establishment of the Shotover Jet Service in 1964. Because of the nature of the journey through the Shotover Gorge Canyons the trip proved an immediate success. Again, the service initially operated from Frankton, but the Melhops soon found 'that the river changed so much that we had to have second thoughts'. Eventually a base was established at the Edith Cavell Bridge near Arthur's Point, complete with a floating jetty and operations hut.

Although the route was the same as used today, from the Edith Cavell Bridge down to Tucker's Beach and back, the experience itself was quite different. 'We didn't quite do it as spectacular as they do it today,' explained Harold, but 'we certainly shot from side to side.'

The mere fact of going on a fairly fast flowing river, through the gorge and going as far as the tunnel, that in itself in the early days was quite

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21 Bloxham and Stark, p.43.
22 Cited in Shaan Miller, Mountain Scene, January 13-19, 1994, p.11.
23 Ibid.
24 Interview with Harold Melhop.
25 Ibid
26 Ibid.
exciting enough... I discovered early in the piece that elderly people didn't enjoy that at all, they didn't enjoy Hamilton Turns or things that were spectacular for young people. So I was careful that I gave them a nice, quiet, sedate river trip up the centre of the river and back again and that was quite sufficient.  

The Melhops also tried to cater for the 'younger' and 'more adventurous' passengers.

For young people that wanted a bit of adventure we'd do a Hamilton Turn or two and we'd go in and out of the willow trees and add some excitement to it from their point of view.  

Excitement of a different kind emerged with other jet boat companies wanting to operate on the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers. The Shotover Jet was proving to be a profitable enterprise and others wanted a share. The Marine Department approached the Melhops concerning the viability of other operators on the Shotover River and as Harold explained:

... we strongly recommended that no other jet boat service be allowed on the river because it was too dangerous. There was no way you could be passing jet boats in the gorge for instance.

The lack of an efficient communications system, such as the one used today that allows a three-boat programme, was also a significant factor. Alan expressed a similar sentiment.

The Lower Shotover Gorge was simply too narrow to sustain multiple operations. It was my last job to apply to the harbourmaster for exclusivity... The powers agreed and we were granted sole rights to that section of the river.

The fact that Herm Palmer, who was taken on as the first driver, was also the deputy harbourmaster of the Lake County Council must surely have improved their case! The precedent of exclusivity on the Shotover Gorge section of the river still exists today, although some have challenged this operating monopoly. Harold Melhop is still adamant that this is the correct procedure,

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27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
declaring that 'it [the Shotover Gorge] is a dangerous place to be where a second jet boat service could create havoc'.

Despite the success and profitability of the Shotover Jet the Melhops still had the construction of the Christian Camp at Kelvin Heights in the forefront of their minds. They had already sold the Kawarau Jet Service, and in true Melhop spirit the proceeds were used to build the first dormitory at the camp appropriately named the Kawarau Dormitory. A second wing was added following the sale of the Shotover Jet to Herm Palmer for around £3000. As Harold explained:

We felt at the time it was getting beyond us and we were either going to have to set up a much more substantial company to run the thing or else sell for someone else to run...We already had our business in Invercargill.

When reflecting on the development of the Shotover Jet to the current day Alan Melhop had no regrets that he may have sold a multi-million dollar business prematurely. Alan, like Bill Hamilton before him, had other priorities in life.

Looking at the current state of Shotover Jet, if money was the only objective we'd feel sick, but our main interest was the camp...People matter more than things. We've seen over 200,000 young people benefit from the place over 30 years...There's no use crying over spilt milk; we had the fun of the initial development, and more recent owners have taken it further, top marks to them, they're doing a terrific job.

Harold agreed.

It's probably one of the best money spinners in the Queenstown area. We were glad to be pioneers and we were glad to raise funds to get the camp going...I got a tremendous amount of pleasure seeing them [the camp youth] being helped in their lifetime.

Not only does Harold have fond memories of the camp but also his involvement in the jet boating industry. 'The experiences that my brother and I had in running people down that river were

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31 Interview with Harold Melhop.
32 Ibid.
33 Cited in Shaan Miller, Mountain Scene, January 13-19, 1994, p.11.
34 Interview with Harold Melhop.
absolutely incredible' he said. Harold also recalled the excitement of not only rescuing sheep and cattle endangered by the river, but also saving the life of a pilot and passenger involved in a plane crash on Lake Wakatipu (despite the best efforts of the matron on duty at the Frankton Hospital to deny the victims treatment because they were wet and bloody). As well as this brush with death Harold also had a brush with stardom, appearing on a documentary hosted by none other than Selwyn Toogood!35 The Shotover Jet, though, was about to enter a new phase of notability and prominence under the guidance of another seemingly unlikely individual.

Herm Palmer consolidated the appeal of the Shotover Jet over the next four years. During this time he averaged 3250 passengers a year. But he sold out in 1970 to a person who has been described as 'one of the great innovators of commercial jet boating', Trevor Gamble.36 Gamble and his wife Heather were able to transform the 3250 passenger a year mid-river trip for the 'aged and infirm to 'the world's most exciting jet boat ride' carrying over 58,000 paying passengers when he sold the business in 1986. Shotover Jet has become a well-known icon of Queenstown's adventure tourist industry and one of New Zealand's major tourist attractions. Much of this can be attributed to the vision and hard work of one man. Like the Melhops, this seemed an unlikely achievement for a bricklayer and plasterer from Invercargill, made more remarkable by the fact that he had never driven any sort of boat before.

'The main thing is I wanted to give up being a bricklayer and plasterer.'37 In a decision that changed his life Trevor Gamble decided to buy a business during an enforced layoff from work. He had decided that if he had not found something else to do before he turned 35 he would remain in the bricklaying business for the rest of his life, a proposition that obviously did not excite him. During the time of his layoff, forced on him because he had cut the tendons in his big toe with a skill saw while laying the foundations of a house, the Shotover Jet came up for tender. Following his acquisition, Gamble reviewed the way the jet boat trip was offered.

35 Ibid.
36 Shotover Jet Company Profile, p.4.
37 Interview with Trevor Gamble, Fernhill, Queenstown, December, 1996.
'What we bought', Gamble explained, 'was a very placid-type jet boat trip...designed for the aged and infirm.' During the first year the Gambles decided to do everything as Herm Palmer had done it, for as Trevor reasoned 'at the very least I couldn't do any worse'. In fact, what resulted in the first year was a 103% increase with over 6500 passengers. Trevor had designed a graph of potential growth and where he wanted to be with the business at various stages. In the second year they ran off the graph. Gamble was quick to point out, however, that it was important to remember that 'tourism had just started'.

Australians used to come over here by the bus loads. We used to treat them disastrously but they didn't know any better and neither did we. In comparison to the way we treat tourists now, we were very amateurish.

Despite significant growth, though, it was not all 'plain boating'. In the first couple of years everything seemed to go wrong: the van fell apart, the gorge slipped in requiring a section to be blasted, the boat suffered regular mechanical problems, caught fire and in one instance sank. The latter problem was significantly compounded by a declaration by the insurance company that the Gambles could not claim reimbursement due to the fact that they had not alerted the company to structural changes to the boat.

We had more than our share of problems in those first three or four years...We were never tempted to chuck it in. We always believed in it. It had to come right.

Perseverance was certainly to pay dividends.

Gamble was intent on developing a thrill-seeker's style of trip on the Shotover River. From day one he began experimenting. 'I started to work out how this thing [the boat] worked', he recalled, 'so I started, depending on who we had, nicking around the rocks and spinning.' But one trip has been cited as the real turning

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38 Ibid.
40 Interview with Trevor Gamble.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid. That is, going as close to the rocks as possible and completing Hamilton Turns.
Following a trip early in the third year of business one group of 19-22 year olds and two couples in their fifties muttered words of discontent to the van driver that made their way back to Gamble. This led him to believe that he was perhaps doing a bit too much in the pursuit of adventure and thrills. Two days later, however, a different scenario arose and one that Gamble recalled with great pleasure.

Now I got this old girl. Now I'm not joking. She was about 73 with a hearing aid and she was last into the boat. I actually had to get out, go across and help her into the boat...We whizzed down through the gorge and missed everything by at least three feet. But before I started, she did. Last year she'd been down and it was a much more thrilling trip. This year she'd brought her husband. She reckoned she wasn't getting her money's worth so I had to upgrade the trip to stop her moaning. That night we decided: 'Right, from now on we'll advertise it as a thrill trip. From now on we'll go as close to the rocks as we can.'

The 'old girl' may have put him right in one area, but Gamble soon recognised the limitations of the existing jet boats. He had always thought that a specialised craft was needed on that particular stretch of water on the Shotover River and had tried a bigger and more practical boat that had carried seven passengers. (The previous boat had carried four.) But the 'Big Reds', as they have been affectionately named, were something quite different.

What Trevor Gamble designed was unique. It seemed rather big and bulky, and the Hamilton Jet manufacturers were somewhat reluctant to produce such a craft. 'They weren't going to be held responsible', explained Gamble, 'for a boat that didn't work...and made me sign a disclaimer before they would fit it out.' A normal jet boat is, in calculating its width, one-third of its length. Accordingly if it was fifteen feet long it was five feet wide. The 'Big Reds', however, were sixteen feet long and over eight feet wide. Opinions from within, and even outside the industry, questioned this ultimate 'gamble'. 'A fair percentage of people thought it was the ugliest thing they'd seen', recalled Heather Gamble. 'They

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
thought we were mad. The designer himself even had reservations.

I was faced with a bill for $31,900 and I didn't have that much money, just a whopping bank overdraft. I didn't know if it would work until it was in the water.

What was produced, perhaps surprisingly for some people, was a large, yet very efficient unit that was capable of carrying eleven passengers.

There were other changes. After six years of driving the jet boat entirely by himself, and working seven days a week for over 13,000 trips, Trevor Gamble employed three young men to take over the mantle of providing thrills for the increasing number of passengers. Gamble had been so indoctrinated by his own system that 'at the very end I could actually give a commentary and think about something else at the same time'. But like Gamble, none of the three recruits had driven a boat before. In fact this was part of the criteria. If you had jet boating experience you were not employed.

We never take on a driver with previous experience, they bring bad habits. What we look for are people with personality and a bit of showmanship. Anyone with a few clues can be taught to drive, but entertainment is what it's all about.

An intense rivalry developed among the three, resulting in a very high standard in driving ability and professionalism. They managed to do things not believed possible with a boat in taking the business literally to the edge. This has now become Shotover Jet's trademark, earning them the reputation of 'the world's most exciting jet boat ride'. While tourists were allured by the thrill and appeal of the Shotover Jet, however, Trevor Gamble was hounded, in true soap opera fashion, by a jealous rival.

Shotover Jet was in a lucrative position as sole operator in the Shotover Gorge Canyons, and other companies wanted a share of the rewards. In February 1983 Dick Rout of Marine Enterprises applied to the Marine Division of the Ministry of Transport to share

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46 Ibid.
48 Interview with Trevor Gamble.
Figure 17: The 'Big Red' jetboats are one of the more recognisable features of the Queenstown landscape. Shotover Jet, Queenstown.
the Shotover Canyons with Gamble's Shotover Jet. Later, in December of that year, Rout began operating in competition during a trial period. Both companies were subject to strict timetables and remained in constant radio contact to avoid collision and possible disaster. Despite government intervention deeming that only one operator be allowed due to safety reasons, Dick Rout continued. Rout steadfastly claimed that the government directive was unlawful and that no proof existed that it was unsafe for a second company to operate in the Canyons. Furthermore, Rout also affirmed that 'as a citizen of New Zealand I have a right to use that river'. The High Court did not accept this argument and ordered Rout to discontinue.

This was not the end of the dispute and both sides became embroiled in a lengthy and financially costly legal battle. Gamble paid out $35,000 a year for the last two years of proceedings in solicitor's bills and Dick Rout must have been in a similar position. At one stage the river was actually closed. At another time the authorities stipulated that each would operate on the river alternately every hour. This was wholly unsatisfactory as far as Trevor Gamble and Shotover Jet was concerned, eventually prompting the company, which by this time was owned by James Boult, to purchase Marine Enterprises from Dick Rout in a hope that the whole episode would disappear. Like the Melhops before him, Gamble was convinced that it was unsafe for two companies to be operating in the Shotover Gorge Canyons. Additionally, perhaps reflecting the financial consequences of a two-company system, Gamble explained that 'you couldn't carry nearly as many people if you had two operators'.

Shotover Jet's exclusivity was again challenged in 1995, this time by Neville and Shaun Kelly of Kawarau Jet. In 1989 the Lakes District Waterways Authority had given Shotover Jet sole operating rights until March 2004. As jurisdiction of the river had changed to the Queenstown-Lakes District Council under the Resource Management Act 1991, the Kelly's believed that this operating

53 Interview with Trevor Gamble.
monopoly was, therefore, invalid.54 This was, however, subsequently dismissed by the High Court.55

The legal wrangle with Dick Rout may have been one reason why in November 1986 Trevor and Heather Gamble decided to sell Shotover Jet to James Boul. 'It was a good time I thought to sell out,' explained Gamble. He had 'been there, done that' and had a feeling that 'everything was just regurgitating. It was going well but it needed new input.'56 It could be said that the Gambles had helped put Queenstown on the international map. In terms of the Shotover Jet the business had been so well established that by 1986 30% of tourists had prebooked their encounter with the 'Big Reds' before their arrival in Queenstown.57

Trevor Gamble's aim had been: 'When in Queenstown, go jet boating.'58 In order to achieve this he would take, in the early days of business, other jet boat company drivers down the river. 'The best thing you can have,' according to Gamble, 'is good competition.' He estimated that if his competitors operated a 'lousy trip' it would reflect unfavourably on Shotover Jet and jet boating in Queenstown as a whole.59 There have been a number of other companies offering a jet boat experience: Wilderness Jet, Dart River Safaris, Alpine Jet, Goldstream Jet and Marine Enterprises to name a few. The original, Kawarau Jet, is still in operation. Following in the footsteps of the Melhop brothers the 'Big Yellow Jetboats' operate every hour of every day during daylight from the pier at the bottom of the Queenstown Mall. There have been a number of variations to the jet boating experience proposed by a number of different individuals and organisations such as white-water jet boating, and a plethora of combination packages offered in conjunction with other adventure activities, but one with a difference was again chanced upon.

Ross Marrett of Goldstream Jet and Colin Robinson of Kawarau Jet decided to join forces in 1978 in an endeavour to find a way to enliven the Kawarau River jet boating experience. Marrett and

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55 Ibid.
56 Interview with Trevor Gamble.
58 Interview with Trevor Gamble.
59 Ibid.
Robinson had identified that the initial part of the trip across the lake was often uninteresting or too choppy due to high winds. One alternative was to transport passengers to the Kawarau River by coach, but later in that year trips were suspended due to heavy flooding. The Marine Department had closed the river, suggesting that continued jet boating activity would increase the damage to the river banks because of the wash from the boats. This concerned both Marrett and Robinson who feared the loss of the traditionally heavy Labour Weekend business. In the hope that this could be averted the pair hired a helicopter in a search to find a channel that the boats could traverse. Just as Archimedes exclaimed 'Eureka' after discovering the theory of water displacement, so too would utterings of joy have been voiced by Marrett and Robinson. The two immediately saw the potential that the helicopter offered. After a six day trial period which confirmed their belief the Kawarau Heli-Jet became a permanent feature carrying over 15,000 passengers in its first year.\(^{60}\)

Today the Shotover Jet carries close to 100,000 passengers yearly and commands 75% of the market\(^{61}\). It has been readily rewarded for its contribution to the tourist industry and the professional nature of its approach. In 1993 it received the highly acclaimed New Zealand Tourism Industry 'Supreme Award' and 'Best Visitor Attraction'. It has also been accredited with the New Zealand Way Brand, awarded the highest marks to any applicant company for the care of its operating environment\(^{62}\) and in 1994 it received the Tradenz Award for excellence as an exporter of services. Alan and Harold Melhop and Trevor Gamble can feel a sense of pride for the part they played in the success of Shotover Jet. James Boult has taken the company further into more of a global operation. Shotover Jet expanded operations into Taupo (Huka Jet) in 1990, Fiji (Shotover Jet Fiji) in 1993 and more recently added a site at Acapulco in Mexico. Three further offshore sites have been targeted for development before the year 2000.\(^{63}\)

\(^{60}\) Bloxham and Stark, pp.46-47.
\(^{61}\) Interview with Sarah Hannan, Queenstown, June 1996.
\(^{62}\) Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) engines were installed in 1986 eliminating pollution from petroleum spillages. In conjunction with this noise reduction kits were added as well as on-site facilities that reflected the surrounding area.
\(^{63}\) Interview with Sarah Hannan.
It is unlikely that either Alan or Harold Melhop envisaged that the small jet boat company they established to offer joyrides for holiday-makers would have developed to the extent that it is now one of the most recognisable features of the Queenstown landscape. Essentially the idea of a tourist venture using a jet boat has remained the same, but a little Kiwi ingenuity has taken it to a whole new level. The rocks in the Shotover Gorge Canyons could testify to the fact that the Shotover Jet operates 'close to the edge'.
5. Running Rapidly

Rafting: Float Trip to White-Water

*If adventure is missing, then life loses its meaning.*

-Sergio Ferrero¹

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If the scenery were not so captivating and the commentary so interesting, a weary passenger might also be lulled to sleep, such is the peaceful effect of it all.²

This description of a raft trip down the Shotover River with the first rafting company in Australasia, Kon Tiki Rafts, has given way to a brand of excitement that has as much thrash and splash as a crocodile at feeding time. Sedate 'Babes and Grannies' trips were quickly surpassed by wild-water spectulars more suitable for what Denis Cole, executive director of Raging Thunder Rafts, has described as 'the 18-25 year old gung ho, guts and glory breed'.³

Like other adventure activities, Queenstown witnessed the birth of commercial rafting in this country, and once again was an ideal site for the development of the sport with some of the best white-water rivers in the world. Rafting first began on the Shotover River but quickly expanded to include, among others, the less technical Kawarau River. At one stage Queenstown was serviced by five different rafting companies, but in 1996 this was reduced to only two main companies in a move that proved logical considering the state of the industry in the area.

This chapter traces the development of the rafting industry in the Queenstown area from the 'Babes and Grannies' trip that was offered in the 1970s, to the 'total experience' white-water raft trips of the late 1970s, to the fast-paced white-water adventures that

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are offered today. It examines the changes that have taken place, the increase in the number of companies and the development of winter rafting. First, however, it will be important to identify the feats of the early explorers and miners who rode the first rapids in and around Queenstown. Rivers were the roads of explorers, surveyors and prospectors.

The modern era of rafting began in the early 1970s, but more than a century before early adventurers took to the waters principally as a means of transport. Unfortunately little is known about the extent to which Maori used rafts in their travels, although their knowledge of rafting and raft-making is clearly evident in European accounts of the nineteenth century. One such account is given by Nathaniel Chalmers. In 1853, travelling with Reko, well-known guide and chief of the Tuturau, and another Maori who had joined them after running away from the Kaikoura Ranges, Chalmers was the first white man to see Lake Wakatipu, as well as the first white man to raft in the area. After Chalmers gave in to a chronic illness and could go no further, and despite Reko's assurances that it would take only two more days to reach the Waitaki, the three decided that rafting down the Clutha River would be the quickest way to return to the Clutha District. Before Lake Dunstan was created by the Clyde Dam in the 1980s, the Clutha River through the Cromwell Gorge was a treacherous stretch of water that housed a number of difficult rapids. Chalmers vividly recalled this part of the journey when his exploits were published 57 years later.

When we came to the gorge a little below Cromwell, and below the junction of the Kawarau, my heart was literally in my mouth, but those two old men seemed to care nothing for the current. Eventually we reached where the town of Clyde now stands, and then our troubles were over. 

This was a remarkable journey by Chalmers and his companions on a flax raft with paddles of driftwood, and was a prelude to other rafting adventures.

5 Ibid.
Donald Hay, an Australian who travelled around Lake Wakatipu in 1859, used a raft to row around the lake. Hay recorded in his journal.

It was reported that a gentleman from the North Island had constructed a moki (raft) but the prevailing winds were so strong that he had to abandon the attempt to navigate the lake...I searched the south end of the lake, and to my joy and surprise found the moki hidden in the bushes.6

Hay strengthened and improved the raft before venturing to Beach Bay at Walter Peak. It was believed that he was the first Pakeha to discover that the lake had a northern arm before paddling back to the site where Queenstown presently stands.7

In January 1860, W.G. Rees and Nicholas von Tunzelmann completed a similar journey to that of Donald Hay. The two successfully crossed the Crown Range and discovered Moke Lake before traversing to the head of Lake Wakatipu. On the return voyage Rees and von Tunzelmann took to the lake. Their exploits appeared in an editorial in the *Otago Witness*:

> It is not every man who could care to navigate an unknown water for six days by means of a moggie (moki)...Such was the method of navigation by the first white man who has visited the Wakatip Lake - a fact which it will not be uninteresting to look back upon when the same water is navigated by steamers, by no means an unlikely event in this page of progress.8

Although the *Otago Witness* wrongly attributed the first navigation to Rees, they were correct in predicting that steam boats would become a common site on Lake Wakatipu. Rees and von Tunzelmann both took up land in the area, Rees on the site of present day Queenstown. But their peaceful life was quickly shattered by the rush of men eager to find fortune.

Like the explorations of the Maori, few of the gold miners recorded their travels. John Pascoe, author of *Exploration New Zealand*, has suggested that 'they made journeys of unparalleled

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6 Cited in Ibid., p.124.
7 Ibid.
8 Cited in Ibid., p.126.
difficulty, and even winter would not damp them down. Bower retells some daredevil rafting expeditions. One recalls the deeds of a group of miners who had made enough money from their gold discoveries and could not be bothered trekking out through the river gorges and over the mountains. Instead they decided to tackle the tricky Shotover River. As the tale goes, they built a boat framework and covered it with bullock hides before embarking down the river. Instead of oars or paddles, these wild-water adventurers attempted to steer clear of rocks and shallow water using twelve-feet-long poles. A hot bath awaited these rafters of yesteryear as they emerged past Arthur's Point near Queenstown. If this story is indeed true this would have been quite a remarkable ride, considering the comparative caution with which the Shotover is approached today. The technology and handling of rafts and the skill of river guides in reading the water is far superior today, yet there have been a number of fatal accidents on the Shotover River. It sums up the way in which many of the goldminers approached life: full of risks and adventure.

Equally risky rafting adventures were undertaken by a collection of timber workers in the 1860s and 1870s. The gold rushes and the subsequent construction of towns such as Cromwell demanded the availability of timber. The absence of roads and other forms of communications necessitated the use of lakes and rivers as transport links. George Magnus Hassing, a Danish seaman, was employed to supply sawn timber. Hassing recognised that:

Timber for building and mining purposes was the principal thing needed; but the nearest forests were at the head of Lake Wanaka and Lake Hawea, some 80 miles distant.

Hassing was reported to have turned his hand to a number of vocations: storekeeper, schoolmaster, sailor, ferryman, explorer and miner, but he was probably best remembered for his exploits as a raftsman. He was one of a small group of raftsmen who were engaged in what Hassing described as the 'dangerous but highly

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9 Ibid., p.128.
remunerative business' of transporting logs from the Makarora area to Cromwell. Raftsmen accompanied their cargo of logs down the rivers and lakes. He also described the credentials needed to tackle this occupation and, in particular, the attributes needed to successfully navigate the Clutha River.

The journey (some 50 miles by the river from its source to Cromwell) was a risky and perilous one. It needed men of strong nerve and capable of swimming in rough turbulent water, and also possessed of a thorough knowledge of the river. I could name several brave but daring men who lost their lives at this work, through not having these qualifications.

The logs, sometimes up to 20,000 feet of timber, were bound together and at various times navigated with manuka poles, fitted with rowlocks or sweeps, or large square tarpaulin sails. A number of methods and techniques were trialed to ascertain the safest passage for not only the raftsman, but also the logs. Angus has suggested that the early attempts to negotiate the Clutha River failed as the rafts either sank or were smashed against the rocks. As the rafters discovered the best techniques of rafting and steering the craft, however, safe delivery occurred more frequently. There were three main obstacles on the Clutha River between Albert Town and Cromwell, appropriately named Snake Point, Devil's Nook and the Boiling Pot. Each presented difficulties, but at the same time, thrill and excitement. George Hassing has described the Boiling Pot, a rapid caused by a huge rock just below the surface of the water.

The force of the current raises the water into a great wave like a breaker on an ocean beach...This sudden plunge [of three to four feet] used to add zest to the voyage and was eagerly looked forward to as the final bit of exciting sport on the trip.

Mr Deans, curator of the Otago Acclimatisation Society, managed to secure a ride with Hassing on one of his voyages. But he was not so

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13 Hassing, p.40.
14 Ibid., p.39.
16 Hassing, pp.39-40.
predisposed to this sort of activity. On completion of the journey he remarked to Hassing:

Good-bye; this trip has been the most exciting of my life, and I can only say, that thank God it is safely over.\textsuperscript{17}

As roads increasingly opened up the interior many of the sawmillers preferred to cut and dress their timber at Wanaka and send it down by wagon.\textsuperscript{18} This signalled the end of the line for the raftsmen, but it also proved a much safer method for both the timber and the timber worker. Nearly 100 years later though people would take to the same stretches of water for very different reasons.

In 1972 the modern era of rafting in Queenstown was born. A group of locals tackled a number of rivers following the arrival of an old, heavy, rubber United States Navy issue life-raft, called a Yampa, in Queenstown.\textsuperscript{19} This prompted Del and Graham Tinker to establish a float trip on the Lower Shotover River. Kon Tiki Rafts was the first commercial raft trip in Australasia and was advertised as an 'adventure' suitable for 'Babes and Grannies'. Although a headline appeared in the local paper, the Mountain Scene, 'Shotover Raft Trip For Excitement', its emphasis was more on mountain scenery and wildlife.\textsuperscript{20} Tinker would pick up his clients and transport them to Tuckers Beach, the starting point of the journey. Passengers were then afforded the luxury of:

...two most enjoyable hours in which to sit back and relax...If the scenery were not so captivating and the commentary so interesting, a weary passenger might almost be lulled to sleep, such is the peaceful effect of it all. The whole trip is very much like being in the middle of a Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale.\textsuperscript{21}

It must be emphasised that this was not the white-water trip that is most commonly seen today. The 'total experience' was accentuated in this sight-seeing adventure. At a cost of $2.50, with billy tea provided, one commentator was very pleased with the

\textsuperscript{17} Cited in Ibid., p.40.
\textsuperscript{18} Angus, p.38.
\textsuperscript{19} Bower, p.22.
\textsuperscript{20} Headline in Mountain Scene, December 27, 1972, p.18.
\textsuperscript{21} Mountain Scene, November 15, 1973, p.8.
scenery: 'considering the trip passed by a nudist colony there was plenty of wildlife to be seen, making it good value for money'.

Owen Gently-Nott and his partner Chris Rawling took over Kon Tiki Rafts in July 1974 and continued to market it as a float trip. In the same year Queenstown was introduced to the thrill and excitement of white-water rafting, but Gently-Nott and Rawling were undeterred. As Gently-Nott explained Kon Tiki Rafts was able to 'supply a need for a safe, leisurely and quiet sightseeing trip in the Queenstown district, as the thrill and speed aspect is well covered by a number of operations'. Kon Tiki Rafts carried 21,000 passengers in the four years under Gently-Nott and Rawling, but after four years of 14-hour days they decided to sell to Value Tours in 1978. In 1989 the picnic style trip still existed and was still marketed as a trip suitable for 'Babes and Grannies'. But this style of trip was quickly surpassed in terms of popularity by a wild-water adventure of Indiana Jones proportions. This was achieved initially through the efforts of a local photographer and his wife.

Dale and Anne Gardiner arrived in Queenstown in 1970. Originally hailing from Auckland, they quickly established a photography shop and then Danes Back Country Experiences in 1972 (the name Danes being a combination of Dale and Anne). As Dale Gardiner has suggested they were 'pretty much the first adventurers' in the area offering safaris and the opportunity to enjoy 'good food, time to fish, goldpan and camp beneath the stars'. In 1974 Danes extended their services with the introduction of the first white-water rafting trip in Australasia on the Upper Shotover River. The idea for such a commercial venture was in fact staring Dale in the face. It was, he explained:

...simply by me running four-wheel-drives in everyday looking at the river and thinking it won't be long before someone starts a raft trip and I thought, I'm here, so it might as well be me.

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23 Mountain Scene, April 15, 1976, p.1.
25 Bower, p.23.
27 Interview with Dale Gardiner, Queenstown, June, 1996.
Gardiner bought a 13-foot raft and gathered a few friends together for a trial run. They must have been wondering what Dale was getting himself into with scenes reminiscent of a demolition derby, hitting every rock and bouncing off walls. Dale readily admitted his inexperience.

We were pioneering literally. We had a few teething problems with the stability of the raft. In an effort to improve the steering and handling of the raft Gardiner adapted an outboard jet unit and fitted it to the back. This proved unsuccessful, however, drowning chances of success when the motor became swamped. A more realistic alternative was at hand.

About the same time an American professional boatman, Mark Pickering, arrived in town and saw what we were doing and rang me up and asked if we needed any training or help.

As no one in New Zealand had ever run a commercial white-water rafting trip and no Kiwis were trained in white-water rafting, this proved a timely offer. Pickering was able to train Gardiner, as well as other New Zealanders to become river guides. For the next five years Dale brought in professional river guides from the United States to oversee the rafting aspect of Danes Back Country Experiences.

Certain privileges were bestowed on Danes Rafts as pioneers in the white-water rafting industry. Aside from the financial rewards, they gained the privilege of naming the various rapids. Larry Jacobson who had spent four years with the largest rafting company in the world, American River Touring Association, and was later recruited by Danes, described the naming of one. 'This water is really wild,' he explained, 'in fact it's a bit like being flushed down a toilet.' Aside from Toilet, others included the Mother, Jaws, Fin and Mother-in-Law Rapids on the Shotover River.

Danes Rafts quickly targeted other potential rivers that were suitable for rafting. Because Danes Back Country had been geared

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28 Ibid.
30 Interview with Dale Gardiner.
31 Cited in Mountain Scene, December 29, 1977, p.22.
32 Gardiner was also involved in the naming of rapids on the Kawarau, Landsborough and Waitoto Rivers.
towards safari tours and transporting clients into various remote areas, expansion of white-water rafting on other rivers seemed a logical move. Along with offering raft trips on the Landsborough, Dart, Hunter and Waitoto Rivers, they also established the second white-water rafting company, Kawarau Rafts, on the Kawarau River. What was emphasised in these early days of rafting was the total experience. The rafting adventure, according to Gardiner, used to be a lot more leisurely than what is offered today. The perfect complement to the adrenalin rush that passengers were 'served up' were dishes of chicken and champagne, steaks and wine. Danes would often stop mid-trip and allow their rafters time to goldpan, pick berries, fish, examine the insect and plant life and generally enjoy and explore the natural surroundings. 'With competition,' explained Gardiner, 'the price warring started so you had to cut costs. The food went out, the wine went out, the stops went out.' The Landsborough River trip, for example, which had been one of the premiere river experiences, was originally a five-day venture incorporating walks and camping. With competition, however, this was reduced to two.

Danes Rafts saw changes in other areas. The original rafts were operated more like dinghies in which the river guide did all the work while 'the passengers just sat there and helped bail'. Individual paddles were introduced, increasing the hands-on fun of rafting. According to Gardiner, 'as the industry changed people wanted to participate in the adventure, they wanted to feel the excitement themselves'. Combination packages also became a feature. In February 1978, Danes and Kawarau Jet, at this time under Colin Robinson, combined the Kawarau experience. This was further complemented with the addition of a helicopter ride. Combination packages have been considerably extended over the years, usually at the initiative of the rafting companies, with one of the better known packages, the 'Awesome Foursome', a combination

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33 Interview with Dale Gardiner.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
Figure 18: Rafting on the Shotover River. Queenstown Rafting Limited, Queenstown.
for the adrenalin junkie trying to cram as much excitement into one
day as possible.\footnote{This incorporated a helicopter ride, a bungy jump, a jet boat ride and a
white-water raft trip.}{Danes Rafts Pamphlet.}

In a reflection of some of the water that the rafters were
tackling, rafting became awash with companies trying to outdo each
other. Robert Eymann, who took over Kawarau Rafts from Danes,
added a new dimension with the introduction of winter rafting in
1984. Rafting had previously been thought to have been feasible
only in the summer months. Eymann, however, has revealed that
there was a market for it. As he explained:

\begin{quote}
...everybody laughed and said we'd not get 100
people. They predicted accidents and people
freezing to death, but we took 2800 and only
missed five days over July, August and
September.\footnote{Mountain Scene, April 12, 1985, p.7.}
\end{quote}

This effectively forced other companies to follow suit. Some,
though, were more willing than others. Value Tours added winter
rafting in 1985 and aimed to entice skiers on days the slopes were
closed. 'After all,' said Rod McMeekan, operator of Value Tours,
'skiers are outdoor people.'\footnote{Ibid.}

Jim Archibald of Challenge Rafting
was not so sure.

\begin{quote}
At this stage we're open about it. Our main
feeling is that basically rafting is a summer sport,
that low rivers in winter take the enjoyment out
of it, and aren't value for money...Rafting was
only feasible last winter because it was so mild.
This year we could have a real Queenstown
\textit{humdinger}.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

As Archibald says, the air temperature and not the water
temperature accounted for the real chill factor of winter rafting.
Eymann, in an effort to compensate, introduced warmer protective
gear and shortened the time on the water. In order to compete
with Kawarau Rafts most companies were forced to follow suit and
introduce winter rafting as well, but the issue of safety involved
with rafting in the winter months remained a moot point and came
to a head with the comprehensive review of the rafting industry in 1995 and 1996, in which safety was a main focus.\textsuperscript{41}

In many respects this review prompted a refinement of the rafting industry. In June 1996 a deal was finalised which confirmed the sale of Kawarau Rafts and Makin Waves to Kiwi Discovery and Fiordland Travel, under the name Queenstown Rafting Limited. For Robert Eymann, former owner of Kawarau Rafts this opportunity presented 'a good price in a bad time'.\textsuperscript{42} It mirrored a similar purchase of Danes Rafts by Australian rafting company Raging Thunder.

Rafting in Queenstown has taken on a new professionalism, especially when one considers the inauspicious beginnings of Dale Gardiner in the mid 1970s and the timberworkers and Nathaniel Chalmers before him. It continues to entice large numbers of people as, it could be argued, rafting is one activity in which the appeal of challenging nature on nature's terms is evident. Too bad about the champagne and chicken though.

\textsuperscript{41} See chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{42} Cath Gilmour, \textit{Mirror}, June 5, 1996, p.3.
6. French Affairs and Rubber Bands

Bungy Jumping: Queenstown Style

Adventure in one form or another is still a way of life for a great number of New Zealanders, whether it involves taking on challenges in the great outdoors or walking down Karangahape Road wearing a leather jacket.¹

It has been described as a suicide attempt except you do not die, death survived and the ultimate leap of faith. Individuals are inclined to leap off a high perch with the only thing between them and a grizzly ending below, a rubber band so big it looks like it should have come out of Gulliver's Travels. For any 'normal' person this is an activity that contradicts everything that their brains, and history, tells them they should be doing. This is bungy jumping and the secret behind its success is making something that is completely safe look utterly lethal.² Self-proclaimed hedonists A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch were pioneers of a pastime that sent many throughout the world literally to the edge. After completing a number of jumps which caught the imagination of people everywhere, including one from the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Hackett and van Asch established Queenstown as the Mecca for all bungy disciples.

For both A. J. Hackett and his partner Henry van Asch, bungy jumping seemed a natural progression in a life dedicated to seeing how fast the human body can go when hurled off high places.³ In his pursuit of speed 'Crash van Asch', as he was popularly known,

² Ibid., p.192.
experienced considerable success in motocross and car racing as well as gaining New Zealand downhill mountain-bike racing and speed skiing championship titles. A. J. Hackett, on the other hand, had completed a building apprenticeship in Auckland before helping prop up the ski industry in the South Island. The two 'ski bums' met one winter in Wanaka and worked together to help organise some speed skiing events in 1984 and 1985. Although Hackett and van Asch have been seen as pioneers of bungy jumping, the 'sport' had its origins in the South Pacific.

Today bungy jumping is an exact science. For the 'land divers' of Pentecost Island of Vanuatu, however, it was an ancient ritual. According to legend, a mistreated indigenous wife climbed a tree to hide from her spouse, who subsequently climbed the tree to bring her down. The woman eluded her husband by jumping off the tree, tied to a vine. The husband followed only to plummet to his death. The men of the village decided that a woman would never get the better of a man again, so they began practising diving from platforms with liani vines tied to their ankles. In the late 1960s it has been reported that the villagers built an 83-feet-high tower by binding logs together. Every spring the villagers would collect liani vines and wind them into long cords. Prior to the jump, the man's wife was led to the foot of the tower and required to listen while the husband gave his 'talk-talk' to vent his complaints against her. A successful leap, seemingly one in which the jumper survived, was considered a demonstration of courage and a harbinger of a plentiful yam harvest. While a National Geographic film crew were in the South Pacific in 1955 they learned of the practice from the Pentecost Islanders who were assisting the United States Army. Another National Geographic article appeared in 1970. This prompted four members of the Oxford University's Dangerous Sports Club, an organisation which

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4 Henry van Asch was the first person in New Zealand to achieve 100 miles per hour on skis on Mount Ruapehu in 1985.
5 Interview with Henry van Asch, Queenstown, December, 1996.
7 Nancy Frase, Bungee Jumping For Fun and Profit, Indiana, 1992, p.7.
9 Venderford and Meyers, p.369.
historically has had somewhat suicidal tendencies, to don tuxedos and top hats, and jump 245 feet from the Clifton Bridge in Bristol, England, on April Fools' Day in 1979. A second jump was completed from the Golden Gate Bridge in a replication of the ritual performed by the natives of Vanuatu. When a friend, Chris Siggelew, suggested that A. J. Hackett develop the bungy idea, Hackett was instantly attracted.

A. J. Hackett completed his first bungy jump, with Chris Siggelew, from the Greenhithe Bridge in Auckland's Upper Harbour in 1986. A formula had been devised by an Auckland University physics student, calculating the effect of various factors such as the length of the elastic strands and the weight of the jumper. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) also assisted in testing. Obviously Hackett was intent on being more precise than the 'land divers' of Pentecost Island. After his first jump Hackett was 'hooked'.

We got such a buzz that we wanted bigger and better things. The next weekend we went to Hamilton and jumped off a bridge on the main road to Cambridge.

Henry van Asch also remembered Hackett's excitement. He was so excited about it that the next week I hopped on a plane and just flew up there and we jumped off Hamilton [Cobham Bridge over the Waikato River at Hamilton] and carried on from there.

The following weekend the centrepiece of Auckland Harbour was cited as the next target.

Early one Sunday morning A. J. Hackett and three others leapt 43 metres from the Auckland Harbour Bridge. The quartet were dressed as maintenance workers to conceal their intentions, but the jump was completed without incident. The four were quickly ferried away by a friend waiting in a jet boat below. Hackett retreated with what he described as 'enough of a buzz to get me addicted to the whole thing'. He could not resist another attempt

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10 Frase, p.7.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Interview with Henry van Asch.
on the Auckland Harbour Bridge mid-week, but this time the police were waiting. Although the four were released without charge, it marked the beginnings of Hackett's relationship with local authorities around the world. The highlight, however, of A. J. Hackett's increasingly public displays of bungy jumping was his world-famous leap from the Eiffel Tower.

Late in 1986 Hackett jumped 90 metres from a cable car in the French Alps resort of Tignes, but it was his plunge in 1987 from the Eiffel Tower in Paris which caught the imagination of the world. There was a significant amount of background work to ensure the success of the jump. Van Asch was heavily involved in the technical systems and the designing of many of Hackett's jumps. Hackett spent a restless night perched high on the Eiffel Tower and to ensure that he was able to skip by the security at the bottom undetected a number of models were employed to distract the attention of security and gendarmes. As Hackett recalled, 'it was just so intense getting past the security at the bottom,' but he knew that 'French men's biggest weaknesses are beautiful women'. The 91 metre leap from one of the world's most famous structures was such a success that Hackett could hardly conceal his delight. 

Asking why he had chosen the Eiffel Tower, Hackett replied: 'It's beautiful, it's unreal, it's Paris'. Adding to the theatrical display Hackett had jumped in a dinner suit, which he felt was appropriate, and had intended to snatch a glass of champagne from a waiter standing on the pavement below. This, however, was not achieved when he slightly misjudged the leap. Again Hackett came in for some attention from local police 'but only in a curious kind of way', the same sort of curiosity, bewilderment and intrigue that surfaced throughout the world. In France, for example, Hackett had attracted so much attention that he starred in an advertisement on French television for Minolta cameras. Bungy jumping had evolved and has continued to feature in a number of movies, television programmes and advertisements worldwide, and was even good enough for James Bond in the movie *Goldeneye*.

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16 Ibid.
17 A. J. Hackett Bungy Limited Promotional Video.
18 Ansley, p.5.
19 Middleton, p.49.
A. J. Hackett returned to New Zealand where he was now a household name. He chose to jump from Auckland's new stock exchange tower which, ironically, was home to a fall more serious than Hackett's when the stockmarket crashed in 1987. When asked what they were trying to achieve with high-profile jumps such as the Eiffel Tower and the Auckland Stock Exchange Tower, van Asch summed up the approach of the cavalier individuals involved: 'Oh, publicity, doing it for the hell of it.'

Hackett and van Asch had always intended to offer the chance to bungy jump to everyone. At first, however, their approach was cautious.

During the winter of 1988 a small bungy jump venture was established using the bridge over the Ohakune Viaduct. As Henry van Asch explained:

We set up Ohakune because we knew that a lot of our mates were into doing it, and we'd thought we'd make a bit of cash and see if it was going to work commercially.

The four weekends of operation proved successful, but the pair quickly recognised the limitations of the existing site.

We then stopped doing that and looked at it and said, 'OK. Where's a site that's going to work permanently', because that site wasn't. We recognised that Queenstown has a good steady flow of visitors through most of the year...We knew about a couple of bridges...Queenstown was an ideal site and it still is the greatest site in the world. The Kawarau is unsurpassed.

The whole criteria for selecting a site and the concept of bungy itself were kept simple.

We recognised that bungy was really good because as long as gravity keeps working it's OK. Skiing and other sports are so reliant on the weather and other factors. Rafting has huge fluctuations in water. But with bungy you just needed a bit of space...There's no involvement from them [the bungy jumper] apart from the decision-making process.

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20 Interview with Henry van Asch.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
Towards the end of 1988 New Action Bungy, as it was originally known, began operating on the Kawarau Suspension Bridge. This has been commonly regarded the world over as the home of bungy jumping. The historic Kawarau Bridge was ideally situated, on the main highway 23 kilometres from Queenstown, and with the potential to tap into Queenstown’s large tourist market. The 43 metre high bridge, which was built in 1880 and restored in 1978, was a good introduction to any fledgling bungy jumper. The immediate success of this operation prompted further expansion. Six months after bungy started on the Kawarau, a more extreme alternative was offered with the 71-metre-high Skippers Canyon Bridge. People were literally jumping at the chance to be able to experience bungy for themselves. But why have millions of people worldwide, and over one million people who have visited Queenstown, decided to jump off a secure structure? What is the attraction?

‘It's amazing,’ described A. J. Hackett, 'the ultimate buzz. All of a sudden you leave the security of solid ground and fly into space.’\(^{24}\) Henry van Asch cited more psychological motives. People do it because of peer pressure a bit, because it's there a bit. But they principally do it because it's a challenge and they want to actually push themselves. They recognise that when people do it they get a big boost to their self-esteem, they feel really good about themselves that they've achieved something. There's a whole series of steps that they take to get there so they actually want to push themselves and want to broaden their own horizons. It's quite a strong emotional thing for people to want to do. It's sort of a metaphysical challenge really.\(^{25}\)

Chris Allum, an operator at the original Ohakune site had a different philosophy. He believed it to be a great stress relief. ‘It's incredibly good for you,’ he explained, 'you feel really good for a long time afterwards.’\(^{26}\) Darren Shand, sales and marketing manager for A. J. Hackett Bungy Queenstown, identified alternative reasons why people bungy jump. ‘For some people like the Asians,' he explained, 'it's for the T-shirt - it's a status thing, while for

\(^{24}\) Middleton, p.48.  
^{25}\) Interview with Henry van Asch.  
^{26}\) Middleton, p.48.
Figure 19: A. J. Hackett began operating from the Kawarau Suspension Bridge in 1988 and it is still considered the home of bungy jumping. A. J. Hackett Bungy Limited, Queenstown.
others it's a dare.' Whatever the reason, the perceived danger adds to the thrill. Individuals are challenged to defy logic and gravity. 'People believe it to be ultra-dangerous and radical and extreme,' said van Asch speaking when bungy jumping was in its infancy, 'but it's not. We came up with a system and eliminated all the risks.' Many were advising, tongue-in-cheek, that it was not the fall that one should be worried about, but hitting the ground. But in some cases people were hitting the ground, often with fatal consequences.

A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch had offered the world a new 'extreme' activity that could be enjoyed by the mainstream population. Like receiving a new toy, however, many seemingly neglected to read the operating instructions. In France, for example, in a rush to try bungy jumping for themselves, three people were killed and a number injured in the first few months. Similarly, in the United States, four people were killed within the space of a month. A. J. Hackett, although initially seen as crazy himself, had undergone extensive testing in producing an 'exact science' which was predictable in terms of what the result was. Admittedly this was a simple concept, one based on the 'sack of spuds' theory where, as Henry van Asch explained, 'basically everything is keyed to biffing a bag of potatoes off the edge of the bridge'. Other bungy jumpers and bungy operators, who tended to rush headlong into the industry, did not have the benefit of Hackett's experience and the intimate knowledge of operating procedures. In New Zealand an Auckland man fell to his death in 1990, while another died after colliding with a tower. Unfortunately a person was not as resilient as a sack of spuds.

Other bungy companies operated not so much on a shoe string, as on a rubber band, in an attempt to take a slice of the huge bungy market in Queenstown. Within a few months of the start of operations on the Kawarau Suspension Bridge in 1988 other groups surfaced on the Queenstown scene. One began operating from a

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27 Interview with Darren Shand, Queenstown, June, 1996.
28 Cited in Ansley, p.5.
29 Ansley, p.5.
30 Interview with Henry van Asch.
31 Ibid.
32 For an examination of safety standards and concerns in the bungy jumping industry see chapter 8.
natural cliff off Bob's Peak, which was serviced by the Skyline Gondolas. This ran into trouble, however, when the Queenstown-Lakes District Council identified that the bungy platform was up to 15 metres longer than that allowed by the Planning Tribunal. Another bungy venture operating from a crane in downtown Queenstown was also short-lived. One company has emerged, however, with an emphasis on a 'zany, off the wall' experience as the biggest competition to A. J. Hackett Bungy. Pipeline Bungy began operating in February 1994 and, currently, has the distinction of being the highest land-based commercial bungy operation in the world. The 102-metre-high Skippers Canyon Pipeline Suspension Bridge was originally built in 1864 to carry water across the canyon feeding into a dam used for ground sluicing. This was removed sometime around the turn of the century, but in 1993 work began on restoring the bridge to its original condition. Because of the height of the Pipeline Bungy, they represented a serious challenge to A. J. Hackett's virtual monopoly of the Queenstown market. Henry van Asch recognised the impact that Pipeline Bungy made, but also the benefits as a result of competition. It had quite a dramatic effect on us. It made us improve our customer service dramatically and that's starting to show through now. There is a healthy level of street competition between us, which I think is good for the industry. The downturn experienced by A. J. Hackett Bungy as a result was compounded somewhat by the suspension of Hackett's commercial helibungy venture. In 1990 A. J. Hackett performed the first helicopter bungy. His leap of 380 metres was part of a demonstration during the opening of a bungy site in Normandy, France. Hackett instantly recognised the commercial potential of this and following lengthy negotiations in New Zealand with the Civil Aviation Authority and several years of display jumps, A. J. Hackett Bungy was finally granted commercial approval to operate in Queenstown in 1994. At 300 metres it was quickly marketed as the world's highest and

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33 Mountain Scene, November 4-10 1993, p.2.
34 Pipeline Bungy Background Information.
35 Interview with Henry van Asch.
Figure 20: Are you game? The sight that awaits bungy jumpers above the Shotover River. Pipeline Bungy, Queenstown.
most extreme bungy jump. A. J. Hackett Bungy and the Helicopter Line were under the impression that their licence was never ending.36 The Civil Aviation Authority, however, believing that helibungy was too dangerous, refused to renew the operating licence when it expired in April 1996. Max Steven, deputy director of the Civil Aviation Authority concluded that:

Although the person's only outside for a couple of minutes, if there's any sort of problem with the helicopter, engine failure, hydraulic failure, the person's very, very vulnerable.37

This has remained a sore point for A. J. Hackett Bungy and the suspension came despite an incident-free record. Henry van Asch echoed this when stating that:

We've been used as a scapegoat in the whole revision of their [the Civil Aviation Authority] regulations...There's a lot of other operators working in the aviation arena that don't have nearly the same level of risk management that we have and they're still operating.38

Furthermore, Darren Shand highlighted the economic implications. We are very much hurting for not having it because in terms of product range we've lost one product which was at the top end, which is where the market is expanding at the moment. Our competitor has a bridge which is higher than either of ours so we don't have any sort of competitor advantage anymore.39

A. J. Hackett Bungy had been able to cater for all types of bungy enthusiasts with both a small and medium bridge, as well as a high helibungy. As a consequence, they have moved vigorously in an effort to obtain a new operating licence. This, however, does not seem likely before the end of 1997.40

The bungy industry has evolved significantly over the years. Research, it is claimed, has shown that many have ventured to Queenstown to jump with A. J. Hackett Bungy because they were the originals.41 Originally seen as a more extreme adventure

36 Interview with Darren Shand.
38 Interview with Henry van Asch.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
activity, it has now been accepted into the mainstream. Consequently it has entered a second phase. As Henry van Asch explained:

I've come through a period of lower growth. Now it's been going for eight years commercially around the world it's probably entering its second phase of evolution where it's become that much more acceptable that we can market it to a broader base of people other than just perceived adrenalin seekers. It's just taken that long to build up credibility to other businesses and within the marketplace. What will happen in the future is uncertain, but if Queenstown continues to draw tourists to the extent that it does today (which seems likely) it appears certain that bungy jumping will evolve further.

Another recent development within A. J. Hackett Bungy was the split between founders and controlling partners A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch in November 1996. Pressures that surfaced as a result of their geographic distance, with Hackett in France and van Asch based in Queenstown, changing priorities in life and differing operating styles and visions of the future were cited as reasons for this split.

We've gone from being a couple of hardcore skiers into being a couple of bungy jumpers and pioneers in that arena, into moving it into the commercial arena of tourism, into bungy being from a fringe activity into almost a mainstream activity. We've actually changed the structure of the company a few times over that eight year period and this is just really the next evolutionary step.

The two now equally own the A. J. Hackett brand and are able to develop internationally within certain agreed guidelines. Under the terms of the agreement Hackett now controls the French, United States and Australian sites while van Asch has controlling interest of the New Zealand sites. They both share the Bali site. Although some may have been saddened by news of their split it was on good terms and Henry van Asch has remained optimistic for the future.

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
'I think,' he explained, 'it's the most positive step for the company yet.'

The face of bungy jumping has changed a number of times since A. J. Hackett's first jump off the Greenhithe Bridge in 1986. The concept of jumping into space only to be retrieved by a rubber band has remained the same but new ways to do this have been introduced. Bridges have got bigger and helicopters have been used to allow individuals to increase their level of thrill and excitement. Now there are plans for a giant swing based on the bungy idea and even, believe it or not, the use of a cannon to propel bungy jumpers. I guess with this method at least there is no chance to back out at the last minute.

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44 Ibid.
7. The Awakening

Wanaka: The New Adventure

Even the mediocre can have adventure and even the fearful can achieve. In a sense fear became a friend - I hated it at the time but it added spice to the challenge and satisfaction to the conquest. I envied those who in success clung to a measure of peace and tranquility - I was always too restless and life was a constant battle against boredom.

-Sir Edmund Hillary.¹

More recently Wanaka has been seen to complement Queenstown's expanding adventure playground. Adventure seekers have been dished up a palatable feast that has contained variety and flavour. But this quasi-Queenstown has also had a history of being tourist-orientated, a history as long as Queenstown's and likewise, it can boast about its proud record of adventuring spirit. The transformation of Wanaka from solely a sleepy family destination to one that has gained international recognition can be attributed to two factors: the completion of the Haast Pass Road through to the West Coast and the development of alpine skiing at Wanaka as a viable industry. The increase in tourist numbers that these facilitated gave the town greater exposure and also encouraged the development of other activities. Debate abounds as to whether Wanaka will become another or a mini-Queenstown, or whether it would want to do so. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to develop its own personality. Much of Wanaka's early history has many similarities with Queenstown, a reflection of its geographical proximity.

Lake Wanaka is situated in the Upper Clutha Basin 70 kilometres northeast of Queenstown. Maori legend tells of how

both Lakes Wanaka and Hawea were dug out by the Maori chief Te Rakaihaitu. Te Rakaihaitu had arrived in Aotearoa in the Uruao canoe and had brought with him a long ko (tu-whakaroria - 'a long spade'). With this he dug out the inland lakes and created the surrounding mountains with the spoil. The name Wanaka, it is believed, is derived from the ancient Maori chief Anake who used to travel to the lake to fish.² It was originally called Lake O-Anake, perhaps meaning Anake's residence. According to an early resident in the area, George Hassing, the early Europeans picked up the rolling sound of 'Oa' as 'W'. Furthermore, the 'e' was similarly transplanted as an 'a', thereby giving the name Wanaka.³ It seems that there were very few, if any, permanent Maori settlers. Gilkison has suggested that there were two small pa sites, one at Makarora and the other at the northern end of Lake Hawea.⁴ John Angus has confirmed this, recording that early explorers reported finding evidence of a pa site at Makarora.⁵ Irvine Roxburgh, in Wanaka Story, has contended that the total inland population was not thought to exceed 200 and that it was believed that Maori lived in small villages in the vicinity of Wanaka and Hawea but that these were essentially camping sites to which Maori returned.⁶ What is certain is that Maori frequented the area in search of moa, fish and West Coast greenstone. Unfortunately little more is known about Maori and their adventures in the area.

One Maori who did possess an extensive knowledge of Central Otago was Reko. He accompanied Nathaniel Chalmers in an exploratory and adventurous expedition through parts of the district in 1853. Just as he was thought to have been the first European to cast his eyes upon Lake Wakatipu, Chalmers was probably the first to view both Lakes Wanaka and Hawea as well. It is probable that Chalmers only saw Lake Wanaka from a distance before crossing the Clutha River a few miles below the outlet and

³ G. M. Hassing, Pages From the Memory Log of G. M. Hassing: Sailor, Pioneer, Schoolmaster, Invercargill, 1929, p.26. In the Maori language the vowel 'e' is pronounced 'ay'.
⁴ Robert Gilkison, Early Days In Central Otago Being Tales of Times Gone By, Dunedin, 1930, p.13.
⁵ John Angus, Aspiring Settlers: European Settlement in the Hawea and Wanaka Region to 1914, Dunedin, 1981, p.11.
⁶ Roxburgh, p.16.
proceeding on to Lake Hawea. The capacity with which Chalmers was able to take in and fully appreciate his surroundings is questionable, for as Angus has reported:

By this time Chalmers was ill with dysentery, his clothes torn to tatters by the matagouri, and his spirit broken. His adventure had become an ordeal which he had no wish to continue.

Chalmers returned home on a raft made by Reko and Kaikoura, but Angus also went on to suggest that Chalmers was too weak to report his adventure as well as being too poor to become a large runholder in the area and exploit his discovery. He did not record the particulars of his discovery until 1911 so other settlers were unable to utilise his knowledge of the interior. Instead this task was left to the surveyors and runholders who followed.

John Turnbull Thomson mapped the Wanaka area in 1857 from the ascended heights appropriately known as Mount Grandview. From here he also named various landmarks including the Matterhorn-like peak of Mount Aspiring. Edmund Jollie and William S. Young followed Thomson in 1858 but carried out a more detailed examination around Lake Wanaka including an inspection of the Matukituki Valley as a possible pass through to the West Coast. This work was further improved when James McKerrow and his assistants John Goldie and James Bryce defined the run boundaries and provided the first detailed map of the area following their deeds in 1861-63. The work of surveyors was of vital importance, for as soon as word of wide expansive tussock covered valleys filtered back to 'civilisation' runholders swooped in like magpies at a golf course. At first glance the land around Wanaka was seen as ideal for sheep farming or, in true colonial interpretation, 'had no other foreseeable use'. Roxburgh has suggested that most of the Wanaka runs were taken up in 1858. John McLean, or 'Big McLean' as he was commonly known, was the first European to visit the Upper Clutha and subsequently take up land in 1858. Just as J. T. Thomson had done when surveying the

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7 Ibid., p.25.
8 Angus, p.12.
9 Ibid. For an examination of rafting in the area see chapter 5.
10 Roxburgh, p.23. For a full examination of British perceptions of New Zealand land and its potential see chapter 2.
11 Roxburgh, p.28.
area, so too did 'Big McLean' stand on Mount Grandview and roughly mark out the boundaries of a massive block of close to 450,000 acres that included the area from present-day Cromwell through to the Lindis Pass. This was known as the Morven Hills Run for which McLean is said to have paid a nominal sum.\textsuperscript{12}

Robert Wilkin and Archibald Thomson were the first to arrive in the Wanaka area, establishing their homestead at what is now known as Albert Town. The Roy, Stevenson, Burke and Maude Stations quickly followed although most were occupied by absentee owners. Angus has suggested that these were generally merchants from either Dunedin or Christchurch, or pastoralists at less isolated runs in Canterbury or North Otago.\textsuperscript{13} Consequently, according to Roxburgh, 'the managers, who carried quite a heavy responsibility in organising work on the run, should be regarded as the chief founders of the Wanaka settlement'.\textsuperscript{14} Like any rural community these pastoralists forged a galvanising spirit. Although the goldminers had a negligible effect on the area in comparison with Queenstown the runholders especially did not welcome the changes in terms of the way of life and the effect on the land and creeks that gold brought about. It has been estimated that in 1862 there were 20-30 people in the entire region. Within a year a township of over 200 had sprung up along with a number of smaller settlements.\textsuperscript{15} During the 1860s Cardrona's population peaked at 3000 and was able to support eight hotels and six stores.\textsuperscript{16} It was the only real mining centre and its fortunes fluctuated very much with the success and failure of mining. According to Roxburgh, however:

Without a doubt, Albert Town was the commercial hub of the Wanaka district in the sixties and this position it retained well on in the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[F. W. G. Miller, \textit{Golden Days of Lake County: The History of Lake County and the Boroughs of Queenstown and Arrowtown}, Christchurch, 1949, p.158.]
\item[Angus, p.19.]
\item[Roxburgh, p.28.]
\item[Angus, pp.26-27.]
\end{footnotes}
seventies when it was conceded gradually and reluctantly to Pembroke.\textsuperscript{17} Albert Town was the first township in the area and began as a ferry crossing over the Clutha River under the operation of local pastoralists. Whereas Cardrona was reliant on mining, Albert Town's importance was reliant on the river crossing. The development of a settlement on the shores of Lake Wanaka, though, was a determining factor in its existence.

Pembroke, as it was known until the name Wanaka was adopted in the 1940s, was first surveyed in 1863. At first it was little more than a landing place with the first sections being taken up by runholders and speculators. In fact its beginnings were so inauspicious that by 1867, the height of the goldrushes, the only building standing was a small boatshed.\textsuperscript{18} The process towards change, however, was stirred by the work of one man.

Theodore Russell bought a four-acre block at Pembroke in 1867, and with the help of his partner, Charles Hedditch, constructed a hotel and store. Russell had been intent on setting up a hotel in the district and considered both Cardrona and Makarora inappropriate as the former was already well serviced and the latter too isolated. The shore of Lake Wanaka presented itself as the obvious place. The fact that Pembroke acted as the junction of the shortest route to Lake Wanaka from Queenstown via the Crown Range and Cardrona, with the dray track from the Matukituki and the road from Albert Town was an important factor.\textsuperscript{19} The hotel overlooked Roy's Bay and according to one contemporary was 'on a scale of magnificence not hitherto attempted on any of the goldfields'.\textsuperscript{20} At a cost of over £2000 the hotel had not only luxurious bedrooms, but was also fitted out with parlours and a billiard room. But complementing the hotel's 'magnificence' was the unspoilt scenery. Russell recognised the potential of this and from an early stage attempted to promote Pembroke as a tourist destination.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} Roxburgh, pp.110-111.
\textsuperscript{18} Angus, p.66.
\textsuperscript{19} Roxburgh, p.113.
\textsuperscript{20} Cited in Angus, p.66.
\textsuperscript{21} Angus, p.66.
Figure 21: Pembroke around the turn of the century was a largely undeveloped township.
Hocken Library, Dunedin.
Figure 22: The Wanaka Hotel, 1919. The first Wanaka Hotel was built by Theodore Russell in 1873.
Russell was not the only individual who felt inspired by Pembroke's scenery. J. T. Thomson commented following one of his surveying expeditions to the area that:

It may yet be that within the scope of some of our lives to see these beautiful lakes frequented as summer retreats for a change of air and recreation from business.22

Furthermore, George Hassing spoke in poetic tones of this beauty. In contrast to the majestic, rugged and sombre beauty of Lake Wakatipu, the Wanaka lake presents a soft, dreamy, poetic attraction, with its low headlands jutting into the pellucid waters of the lake; the blue and the purple mountains, with their snow-white crests and forest-jagged peaks make a picture which cannot be equalled anywhere else in the world.23

Although the scenery and climate were suitably attractive there remained, like most areas in the nineteenth century, the obstacle of travel and communications. Very few people travelled by roads in the 1860s and 1870s, the main reasons being the obvious lack of roads and the slow and uncomfortable means of travel. On the Cromwell Road between 19 Mile and Poison Creek, for example, it was reported that ruts were often two to three feet deep.24 Consequently only the hardiest and more adventurous travellers took the coach to Pembroke.25 The first tourists tended to be individuals on walking or riding tours, but by the late 1870s many arrived following a two-day journey by Kidd's Mail Coach from Cromwell.26

As Queenstown developed its popularity as a tourist centre in the 1870s, Pembroke was able to entice a number of tourists to include Lake Wanaka in their tour. In the mid 1880s the Wanaka Hotel management advertised that it would collect people from the top of the Crown Range by prior arrangement.27 This service,

22 Cited in Angus, p.52.
24 Roxburgh, p.117.
25 Angus, p.55.
26 Roxburgh, p.143. This was taken over by Cobb and Company in 1881. It was also a two-day journey. Today it takes only 40 minutes by motor vehicle.
27 Angus, p.53.
along with the main traffic from Cromwell, ensured that the hotel accommodation was often full during the summer season.28

There were a variety of activities on offer to the tourist once at Pembroke. Many climbed Mount Iron, or the more demanding and visually rewarding Mount Grandview. A number also rode up to the Criffel gold diggings or hired guides and horses and traversed the Matukituki Valley.29 By far the most popular attraction, however, was a sojourn on the lake. Theodore Russell and Charles Hedditch had operated the first regular shipping service on the lake in the 1860s. The Lady of the Lake and the Water Lily were joined by locally built boats, the Eureka and the Nun.30 Although the Theodore was not as comfortable as the Mountaineer or Wakatipu at Queenstown, it was a significant addition to the fleet on Lake Wanaka. Named after the late Theodore Russell who had died in 1877, the steamship Theodore was launched in 1881. On Mondays it would transport passengers and the mail to Makarora, returning the next day.31 Tourists would often disembark at the Neck and walk over to see Lake Hawea. An additional attraction was created when Robert Moffat opened a hotel and accommodation house at Waterfall Creek near Makarora to cater for overnight visitors.32 The Theodore could also be chartered mid-week with a trip to Pigeon Island to view Paradise Lake which existed despite the absence of springs or creeks to fill it proving the most popular.33

Although tourism was of value to the Wanaka district in the nineteenth century, its importance cannot be overstated. The absence of quality roads kept it in isolation. One reporter commented that 'Lake Wanaka is not sufficiently well-known chiefly on account of the slow means of getting to it'.34 Although some did journey from Queenstown to Pembroke, Queenstown has always been more important and well-known as a tourist destination. Pembroke maintained its sleepy demeanour and was able to survive and develop as a tourist centre largely because of its

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28 This consisted of 30 beds.
29 Angus, p.54.
30 The Nun ran aground and sank in 1878 but was refloated and renamed the Saucy Kate.
31 Miller, p.163.
32 Angus, p.54.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p.55.
location as a stopping place for organised tours of the Southern Lakes and Mount Cook. A series of brochures and tourist handbooks published by the Shipping Lines and the government promoted Lakes Wanaka and Hawea in the 1880s and 1890s, but it was sawmilling in the Makarora and Matukituki areas, pastoralism and mining, along with small-scale tourism that ensured Pembroke's survival.

The advent of motorised transport was a boost to Pembroke's tourist development. In 1910 the Mount Cook Motor Company attempted to establish a regular service between Clyde and Pembroke. Although this failed Pembroke did become an important stopping point between Mount Cook and Queenstown. In 1914 Craig and Company established a bus service between Pembroke and Cromwell and shortly after the First World War H. M. MacKay established the White Star Motor Service Company between Hawea Flat and Dunedin. Despite these services, Pembroke's position as a destination was fragile. This was highlighted when Pembroke residents opposed the idea of a bridge at Maori Point, fearful that Mount Cook buses would then bypass the area en route to Queenstown. Its position was not really secured until 1965 with the completion of the Haast Pass Road through to the West Coast.

In the 1960s no single event more than the completion of the through highway from the glaciers did more to change Wanaka's tourist patterns and lifestyle. The new highway opened up round-trip tours from Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin. The Upper Clutha district was no longer a backwater. And those with enterprise saw that Wanaka was strategically placed to exploit its new advantage.

The Haast Pass Road opened up a circular South Island route with Wanaka well positioned for travelling in either direction. A new hotel was established along with other businesses to cater for the expected increase in the number of visitors. The predominantly farming district took on a new appearance as the population more

35 Ibid., p.53.
36 Roxburgh, p.204.
37 Irvine Roxburgh, Wanaka and Surrounding Districts: A Sequel to Wanaka Story, Alexandra, 1990, p.47
than doubled during the 1960s. Tourist companies were also eager to pounce on the opportunities that the new route presented. From August 1965, for example, the Newmans Bus Company advertised the 'Haast Pass Tour' of 11 days duration from Christchurch and down the West Coast and through the Southern Lakes prior to the opening of the road in November. Rental car firms were also quick to establish depots in Wanaka. The Haast Pass Road was vitally important in attracting tourists to the area which, consequently, allowed for and was able to sustain the development of other services and attractions including adventure activities.

The attraction of the Wanaka area as a tramping and mountaineering centre was well founded. Mount Aspiring, or Tititea, the Maori name meaning 'the upright glistening mountain', was the focus for many. In 1908 the first serious attempt to climb Aspiring was made by Dr Teichelmann, Alex Graham and Denis Nolan. Approaching from the west the group failed and were forced to return due to a shortage of time and provisions, perhaps underestimating the difficult nature of the climb. The first ascent was completed in 1910 when Captain Bernard Head, assisted by Alex Graham and Jack Clarke (a member of the party that successfully climbed Mount Cook on Christmas Day, 1894), tackled the mountain from the east. Although it was climbed again in 1912 by J. R. Murrell, J. Robertson and S. Turner, it was not successfully completed again until 1927. A number of other peaks in the area were attempted and guides could be hired. One of the more recent companies established to cater for mountain tours or guided ascents was Mount Aspiring Guides. This was established by Guy Cotter, Nick Caddock and Paul Scaife in 1990 and carried on the tradition of the Alpine Club, Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club, Central Otago Tramping Club, and Mountain Recreation Limited who had helped visitors in the area.

Many of the surveyors, gold prospectors and scientists had explored the valleys and passes around Wanaka, and these soon

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38 Ibid., p.17
39 Ibid., p.46.
41 Roxburgh, *Wanaka and Surrounded Districts*, p.175.
became favourite tramping tracks. The Matukituki Valley became the focus for much of this activity. In the late nineteenth century Duncan McPherson established huts up the East Branch of the Matukituki River to cater for trampers and climbers on guided tours. Although this enjoyed limited success and the service was eventually discontinued it does show that some people saw potential in tramping. Numbers of trampers have significantly increased over the last century with excursions into the Makarora and Matukituki areas proving popular. The formation of the Mount Aspiring National Park on 10 December, 1964, did much to preserve these areas in their natural state as well as improving access for the use and enjoyment of the public, not least of all trampers.

An activity that suffered a comparative decline as a result of the establishment of the Mount Aspiring National Park was game hunting, particularly deer hunting. In 1871 the Otago Acclimatisation Society released seven specially imported red deer yearlings near Lake Hawea. By the 1890s these had multiplied sufficiently to represent a pest to many but a paradise for deer stalkers. Deer shooting was allowed for the first time on a limited basis at Hawea in 1885 and a report in the *Cromwell Argus* showed that 'from the 1890s it became recognised that nowhere else in New Zealand/Aotearoa could one find such sport on the doorstep'. The Timaru Creek and Hunter and Dingle Valleys became so renowned that many overseas hunters had lined their sights in the area by the early twentieth century. Roxburgh has suggested that 'deerstalkers were the unsung mountaineers of society' and that 'their exploits and achievements were large but unchronicled'. Locals like Donald McLennan and Peter Muir acted as guides but deer numbers were so prolific that efforts were made to reduce and even eradicate the pest. The Acclimatisation Society also tried to introduce varieties of birds and fish as well as rabbits. Rabbits have proved to be even more destructive than deer and still constitute a major problem to farmers today.

42 Angus, p.53.
43 Roxburgh, p.22.
45 Ibid., p.5.
Also of concern to locals in the 1940s was Pembroke's image and notoriety as a tourist destination. Locals determined to change the name of the town to Wanaka believing that there was some confusion due to the fact that Pembroke was situated on the shores of Lake Wanaka.\textsuperscript{47} This was duly done on 1 September, 1940, and according to Irvine Roxburgh, represented a significant development.

Inhabitants were saying that more than anything else they wanted Wanaka to be a tourist centre. The tourist image had won out over the small country town image.\textsuperscript{48}

Although Wanaka maintained a sleepy and peaceful demeanour, and actually went into relative hibernation during the winter months, this push by the locals was a first step in developing its reputation in tourist circles. The quiet pace of life was still emphasised, as it is to a certain extent today. Advertisements in the 1940s, for example, continued to depict Wanaka Hotel as being '1000 feet above worry level'.\textsuperscript{49} This may have been the case for many but the development of firstly the Haast Pass Road, and secondly, Wanaka as a ski resort, have combined to arouse the area from its winter slumber.

The development of a skifield was seen by many Wanaka residents as a means of attracting visitors during the deathly quiet of the traditional off-season. Wanaka's future was effectively secured with the completion of the Haast Pass Road and this necessitated development of winter attractions to ensure sufficient tourist numbers throughout the year. This has been achieved with the development of Treble Cone and Cardrona Ski Areas, the Waiorau Nordic Ski Area and the advent of heliskiing. Irvine Roxburgh has even gone so far as to suggest that:

\begin{quote}
Wanaka had dispensed with its hibernation. 
Winter had become, if not busier, then more lucrative than summer.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

This may be so, but it was not an overnight transformation. It took many years to develop the skifields to international standard, and even now they are still evolving.

\textsuperscript{47} Roxburgh, \textit{Wanaka Story}, p.229. 
\textsuperscript{48} Roxburgh, \textit{Wanaka and Surrounding Districts}, p.16. 
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p.151.
The first on-site investigations on Treble Cone were completed in 1967. The following year a hut was erected and an array of meteorological equipment to investigate important factors such as precipitation and wind was installed. The findings proved sufficiently acceptable in terms of skifield development, perhaps prompting a group of entrepreneurs to form a private company, Treble Cone (Wanaka) Ski Field Limited, to further investigate the possibility of opening a skifield near Wanaka. There was considerable enthusiasm and optimism among those involved. Ray Cleland, Mount Aspiring National Park Ranger, was one. He was quick to evaluate the benefits and attractions it would bring to the park and the Wanaka district as a whole. Although Treble Cone was viewed as the most probable location a large air-to-ground search was undertaken to review other possibilities. Tim Wallis, local aviation personality, offered the services of his helicopter in this search, and although Cardrona was considered, Treble Cone was concluded to offer the greatest potential of any mountain in the area.

Initially helicopters were required to transport skiers up to the slopes on Treble Cone. Rope-tows had been installed with the intention of being able to cater for up to 200 skiers daily. By 1972 an access track had been constructed, though this was limited to four-wheel-drive vehicles only. The road was not fully completed until 1975, requiring skiers to either walk or helicopter over the unfinished section. The Treble Cone Ski Field Limited committee decided that further improvements needed to be made, resulting in the installation of the first T-Bar which drastically improved facilities in 1977. There was general agreement that Treble Cone was situated in one of the most beautiful locations in the world overlooking Lake Wanaka, but as Roxburgh has observed:

...since it was a resort for skiers - and for that matter of drivers of four-wheeled traction vehicles - of upper levels of proficiency, the skifield did not attract huge numbers nor divert

51 Mountain Scene, October 2, 1975, p.12.
52 Roxburgh, Wanaka and Surrounding Districts, pp.52-53.
53 Ibid., p.53.
54 The daily lift pass cost skiers $1 each. Mountain Scene, October 2, 1975, p.12.
crowds of customers away from Queenstown's only skifield at Coronet Peak.\textsuperscript{55}

Realistically, however, Treble Cone could not expect to compete with the well-established and extensively developed field at Coronet Peak. In many ways this reflects the relationship between the more commercially orientated Queenstown and the slower paced Wanaka. Instead of competing the townships and the skifields rather complemented each other. The Treble Cone Skifield has developed markedly over the last twenty years, gaining a reputation as one of the premier ski areas in New Zealand. A chairlift was installed in 1983 to replace the T-bar which was relocated further up the mountain. Further extensions were completed in 1986 when the platter lift and learners' slopes were enlarged.

The transfer in the same year to the Helicopter Line of controlling interest precipitated more comprehensive development. In 1987 new base facilities were constructed including administrative, restaurant, lounge, toilet and sewerage facilities.\textsuperscript{56} Reconstruction of various slopes to cater for more learner and intermediate skiers eased its reputation as a mountain only suitable for advanced skiers. The mountain became so popular at various times, especially during weekends and school holidays, that efforts needed to be made to reduce lift queues. This problem was effectively relieved with the installation of a six-seater express chairlift, the only one in the Southern Hemisphere, in 1996 to replace the double chairlift. This chairlift was relocated to the Saddle increasing Treble Cone's skiable terrain by 10\%.\textsuperscript{57} Today Treble Cone is living up to its reputation as 'The Skiers Mountain'.

If the development of Treble Cone facilitated the expansion of Wanaka as a major South Island holiday centre, then the evolution of the Cardrona Ski Area enhanced it. The Mount Cook Company, under the guidance of Harry Wigley, had recognised the potential of Mount Cardrona as a commercial skifield as early as 1954. At this time Mount Cook was looking for possible alternative fields to Coronet Peak, realising that if skiing was to keep pace with the increased demand and popularity, other ski areas needed to be

\textsuperscript{55} Roxburgh, p.54.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., pp 146-147.
\textsuperscript{57} Treble Cone Ski Areas Limited Pamphlet.
Figure 23: Treble Cone provides great skiing as well as great views. The six-seater chairlift was installed for the 1996 ski season.
developed. The Mount Cook Company did not pursue this to any great extent, however, preferring to concentrate its activities in and around the Queenstown area. But it did alert others to the possibility. Just as Harry Wigley has been seen to be the driving force behind Coronet Peak, so too has John Lee been seen to be the founding father of Cardrona.

John Lee's father had been allocated land in the Cardrona Valley as a returned serviceman in 1922. Life as a farmer was difficult and for a time in the 1950s the farm was actually placed on the market. The property market was not the only thing depressed, the Cardrona Valley as a whole was experiencing a downturn. 'During the late sixties-early seventies,' explained John Lee, 'I was looking for a means of breathing life back into the Cardrona Valley.'

Searching for a solution I found myself confronted with a wide range of possibilities, and it was a question of choosing which, not searching for what. With automation bringing more leisure time, recreation seemed the logical way to go. Lee was then able to look upon the greatest liability his father had faced, snow, and turn it into an asset. Skiing, or 'farming snow', as Lee affectionately termed it presented 'greener pastures'.

Lee purchased the land around Mount Cardrona in 1970. According to Lee the 'main reason for buying the property was to encourage a rural tourist type village around the original goldmining township of Cardrona'. The option of a ski area, however, presented itself as a more realistic one at this stage. Although he favoured the development of a Nordic ski area on the Pisa Range ahead of a downhill area on Mount Cardrona, Lee was finally convinced with the help of a number of individuals that this would be a financially costly and time-consuming exercise due to the fact that the Pisa Range was located on Crown Land. Running

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58 Interview with John Lee, Cardrona Valley, December, 1996.
60 Ibid.
62 Jason R. A. Cushen, Tussock and Pylons, BA(Hons) unpublished long essay, University of Otago, 1994, p.64.
with the downhill option, Lee conducted a series of investigations to assess the suitability of Cardrona. As a non-skier he had to rely on the judgement of his wife Mary and a number of local skiers. As well as gaining their seal of approval a Dopplemyer International Ski Engineer's Report confirmed the potential of the area, finding the mountain's terrain, aspect and altitude to be ideal for a commercial skifield.64

Cardrona was cited as a field with great potential for a number of reasons. As well as great snow-holding ability due to it facing in a southeasterly direction and being the highest in terms of altitude in the Southern Lakes, it was also good safe terrain suitable for beginner and intermediate skiers. At this stage this was a group that was not wholly catered for owing to the challenging terrain of both Coronet Peak and Treble Cone. As John Lee identified, 75% of the skiers were more suited to terrain with a slope of between 13 and 17 degrees. With Coronet Peak averaging 19 degrees of slope for the entire mountain placing the field in the advanced skier range, and Treble Cone at 23 degrees deeming it more suitable for expert skiers, Cardrona was able to draw on a big slice of the potential market.65 Accordingly, Cardrona has emphasised a family atmosphere with all levels of skier being provided for.

There were a number of submissions that needed to be approved before development could proceed in earnest. In May 1977 an application was made to the Lakes County Council to change the zoning from Rural A to Recreation. Two neighbouring farmers made submissions to the Council objecting to the proposed development. These, however, were only minor matters and did little to delay the planning process. In complete contrast to the Remarkables, which was being developed at the same time, no environmental objections were received. The two were similar areas in terms of facilities, geographical location and length of road, but the determining factor was land ownership. Cardrona was located on freehold land and the Remarkables on Crown Land. The Remarkables, therefore, required central government permission before the developers could apply to the county council to change

64 Ibid. Roxburgh, p.54.
65 Interview with John Lee
the land zoning. This proved to be a lengthy process while the Cardrona project slipped in the back door, only requiring Lakes County Council approval. The fact that the Remarkables was a mountain range of national importance added to the difficulties. John Lee cited the problems associated with the Remarkables as an advantage for Cardrona as this deflected attention away from the development there.

Work on the access road had begun in 1972. The original line, however, proved too steep and impractical, necessitating the use of leg power or helicopter to transport skiers to the slopes. In 1977 a 200 metre rope-tow which could be moved around to test the suitability of different locations was installed in the main basin. At weekends it was not uncommon for 30-40 skiers to drive up to 'Helicopter Flat' to be transported to the skifield by helicopter. A second rope-tow, 1000 metres long, was added in 1979. But a problem that became a recurring theme in the Cardrona story proved a major obstacle to any further development: money.

The Lees had started off owning the whole of the Cardrona project, but as John Lee explained, 'every time I had a tapping on the shoulder by the bank manager, I had to find another partner'. The way John assessed it they could either be a small partner in a successful operation or remain sole owners of a struggling one. Although the former option was pursued, attracting potential investors often proved difficult. In 1979, for example, H & J Smiths had put forward $20,000, but later pulled out following the Lakes County Council's refusal to keep the Crown Range open during the winter. Fortunately a syndicate of local people was formed to enable the field to open for the 1980 season. Included within the syndicate was Robyn Judkins, now world-famous multisport event organiser, who was recruited as bus driver and owner of the ski school, and a number of volunteers employed to do odd jobs in return for free skiing. Despite these efforts the 1980 season

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67 Cushen, pp.66-67. The costly nature of the Remarkables planning process can be seen in terms of cost per chairlift seat. At Cardrona this amounted to $298 per chair seat, whilst at the Remarkables this was $1108. Lee, *Adventure Tourism Seminar Current Issues and Future Management*, p.1.
68 Interview with John Lee.
proved a disappointing one being plagued by inadequate snow coverage. Consequently, the mountain was only open for three weeks, catering for 1100 skiers in this time. After suffering a $5000 loss in this first year the local syndicate reluctantly disbanded. Just as Flick the Little Fire Engine thought he could in the well-known children's tale, John Lee was convinced he could succeed as well.\(^7\) Fortunately the bank also agreed.

An extension of the bank loan and the investment of family friends Dr Pat and Sally Frengley's life savings enabled Cardrona to open again in 1981. As well as problems with the access road that presented a major obstacle in the early years due to its tendency to turn to mud, the management also struggled to keep the rope-tow operating. Breakdowns were a common occurrence and turned into an attraction in itself as skiers were entertained by the sight of Shaun Gilbertson hang-gliding to the valley below to pick up spare parts. Even without the rope-tow's numerous breakdowns, it was not infrequent for skiers to queue for up to 30 minutes during the height of the short six-week season. Consequently, the access gates would often be closed to cars by 10:30 in the morning because of the lack of parking and pressure on facilities.\(^7\) This was perhaps testament to the easy open terrain that was attractive to families. John Lee was forced to close the skifield prematurely in early September owing to farming commitments. 4000 skier days were recorded which was 1000 above its budget, but more importantly this success encouraged Jim Nelson and Texan, Bill Duease, to join the team as financial partners in the skifield enterprise.\(^7\)

The 1982 season opened with further extensions. The skifield management had realised that if Cardrona was going to rank among the major skifields in New Zealand a chairlift needed to be installed. There were hopes that a double chairlift would be in place ready for 1982. Finances, however, restricted the search and an affordable one could not be found. A 300 metre learners' tow was added, taking some pressure off the existing tow. Over 10,000 skiers visited the Cardrona Ski Area in 1982 and many of these were able to travel from Queenstown over the Crown Range because of the unrelenting efforts of John Lee. As had been done for many

\(^7\) The Skier, May 1984, p.66.
years in the past the Crown Range had closed for the winter in 1981 despite protests from Lee. He had appreciated the importance of this road in attracting Queenstown skiers and the Lakes County Council finally agreed to allow Lee to supervise the opening and closing of the Crown Range for the 1982 season. At one stage the authorities were going to close the Crown Range and open up the road through the Motatapu. This proposal gained the support of both the Mount Cook Company and Treble Cone but, fortunately for Lee, did not come to fruition. Consequently much of John Lee's work in the winter of 1982 was tied up in ensuring the Crown Range remained open.

Cardrona started to take shape as a major commercial field with the installation of a double chairlift for the 1983 season. This increased the lifting capacity from 300 to 1200 skiers an hour. Despite this, queues still remained a problem as over 50,000 skiers tried the slopes, despite the poor snow conditions. It was obvious that Cardrona had the potential and skier support to develop further. What was difficult, however, was securing the necessary capital to seriously consider these proposals.

In 1984 it was decided that a public company, Cardrona Ski Area Limited, would be formed to increase financial resources. Six-and-a-half million one dollar shares were floated, allowing developmental projects to be tackled with more vigour. During the summer of 1985 Cardrona underwent extensive changes. 600,000 cubic metres of earth was moved to form a carpark and the base facilities which included flush toilets, ski hire, a cafeteria and accessory shop were constructed. But perhaps most importantly, from a skier's point of view, the first quad chairlift in this country, the McDougall's Quad, was installed. The following year a second quad chairlift was added, this time in the Captain's Basin. This opened up a vast area of skiable terrain. The lift capacity was increased to 6000 skiers an hour and the total number of skiers on the mountain reflected the new developments. In 1985 72,000 skier days were recorded. These increased to 78,000 in 1986 and over 100,000 in 1987. The Cardrona Ski Area had come of age.

73 Interview with John Lee.
74 Lee, History of Cardrona Ski Area, p.3.
Just as thoughts of success and self-congratulation emerged, however, trouble resurfaced on the financial front.\textsuperscript{75}

The 1987 sharemarket crash forced the sale of 50\% of the company's shares. Kiwicorp, which was owned by Ian Farrant, Chairman of Cardrona Ski Areas Limited, was in a position to rescue the ski area and bought the shares. The following year the company was split in two. Cardrona Resorts, which owned and operated the ski area, was bought by an Australian company, Vealls Investments, while Cardrona Holdings was formed to over-see the farmland beneath the ski area and John Lee's original plan to develop an Alpine Village. This move ultimately secured the future of Cardrona as a ski area of international recognition, but it also signalled the end of John Lee's involvement as general manager. At many times Lee had been a lone voice in planning procedures and had fought many battles with local authorities over such things as the Crown Range, but through his perseverance and the faith of certain investors around him, he was able to achieve all he had intended. 'It's pleasing to say,' explained Lee, 'we have a five-day-a-week rural delivery, we have a school bus and we have a sealed road' in the Cardrona Valley.\textsuperscript{76} It is often said that dreams are free, but this idea cost a significant amount of money and the locals are determined to maintain these services.\textsuperscript{77}

It is interesting to note that many Wanaka residents were against the proposed ski area development on Cardrona. According to John Lee 'Wanaka was very much against it because generally the small businesses had all taken out shareholdings in Treble Cone and they saw it as a threat'.\textsuperscript{78} In reality, however, the co-development of two skifields within close proximity did more to boost Wanaka's tourist industry than anything else. This was reflected in the fact that 'out of every eight dollars spent by the skier, seven dollars are spent off the skifield resulting in millions of dollars for the winter tourist industry in the wider region'.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp.3-4. Roxburgh, p.149.
\textsuperscript{76} Interview with John Lee.
\textsuperscript{77} There are plans for skiing to be extended into the backbowls which would ultimately double the size of the ski area. \textit{Mountain Scene}, June 27-July 3, 1996, p.12.
\textsuperscript{78} Interview with John Lee.
\textsuperscript{79} Lee, 'Cardrona Valley: Environmental Harmony and Commercial Success', p.186.
The town really took off...Really Wanaka was a beautiful lake, with a wonderful atmosphere, all these tranquil things that people talk about. But Wanaka wasn't a tourist town. It was just a summer holiday spot for two to three weeks for New Zealanders. But once the skiing started Wanaka suddenly became a tourist destination.\textsuperscript{80}

The numbers of restaurants and accommodation houses exploded, as did real estate values. Many locals still remain torn, however, between further development and the status quo. Wanaka has often been likened to Queenstown and many people, including John Lee, have seen it as a 'younger sister', or a mini-Queenstown.\textsuperscript{81} Some have said that they will leave Wanaka if it becomes like Queenstown, while others have suggested that they will do likewise if there is no more development.\textsuperscript{82} Much of Wanaka's attraction lies in the fact that, whilst sharing an area of physical beauty similar to that of Queenstown, it has an absence of the 'over-commercial' element that many find unattractive. Wanaka seems to have remained somewhat ambivalent about Queenstown and the attention it has received over the years, but Wanaka has in fact developed its own identity which has probably been more desirable.

There is no doubting the fact that Wanaka's growth over the past 20 years has prompted the development of a number of other adventure activities. These have grown to such an extent that today thrill-seekers of all levels can be catered for. The range is not as extensive nor as well-known as that offered in Queenstown, but it still constitutes a major facet of Wanaka's tourist industry. For those prepared to try, these activities have included such things as parapenting, kayaking, jet boating, tandem skydiving, rafting, windsurfing, paraflying, jet skiing, tramping, mountaineering, heliskiing and sailing. There are, however, a number of activities that are exclusive to the Wanaka region, although variations have appeared at other locations throughout the country. They represent a drawcard for tourists and enthusiasts alike. Two of these are white-water sledging and canyoning.

\textsuperscript{80} Interview with John Lee.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Mountain Scene, September 12, 1985, p.1.
White-water sledging was an activity that originated in France in the 1960s. It was created by divers who wanted a new way of training during winter and spring. Appropriately, Frenchman Theirry Huet began operating New Zealand's first commercial white-water sledging company on the rivers around Wanaka. Sledgers lie stomach-down on a specially designed fibreglass sledge one metre by 70 centimetres and according to Theirry Huet:

The attraction of white-water sledging is that you are in control. You anticipate and position yourself unlike rafting where the guide does all the steering. You are right in the element going solo, the water being at eye level.

Most sledging activity around Wanaka is centred on the Hawea River which is a safe grade two to three river.

Canyoning is a recent addition to the range of adventure activities offered at Wanaka. Dave Vaas has been guiding wetsuit-clad individuals through a series of underground canyons since 1993 when he established New Zealand's only commercial deep canyoning operation, Deep Canyon Experience. Much of the emphasis has been placed on adventure and exploration and as one commentator reported: 'It's as if you've entered a strange, dark underworld - the bowels of the earth.' Operating in canyons gouged out by Emerald Creek in the Matukituki Valley, canyoning involves a combination of abseiling, climbing, swimming, sliding and jumping. A descent down 'The Gurgler', a ten-storey-high deep chasm, presents a major obstacle, whereas a ride down one of the many natural waterslides rivals anything a modern architect has been able to produce. Canyoneers are literally 'kept in the dark', not knowing what lies ahead and essentially being unable to return the way they have come. Consequently, as one suggested, 'compared to some commercial adventure activities, canyoning requires significant input from the participant, which builds confidence and a sense of achievement.'

84 Frogz Have More Fun White Water Sledging Pamphlet.
85 Trips are also taken on the Clutha River which is a gentle grade 1-2 or, alternatively, the Kawarau River which is a grade 2-4. Ibid.
86 David Wall, New Zealand Adventure, February/March, 1997, p.32.
87 Ibid., p.33.
Figure 24: White-water sledging.
Frogz Have More Fun White-Water Sledging.
Wanaka will never surpass Queenstown in terms of commercialism and tourist appeal. It does, however, offer a different adventure experience, one that is possibly more in tune with the personalities of 'real adventurers'. It is laid back, less crowded and moves at a slower pace. It is only now being discovered as an adventure centre. Like an ancient city that has been excavated by archaeologists, the secrets behind Wanaka are being uncovered every day.
8. Dangerous Liaisons

Safety in Adventure Tourism

*If you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space.*

'Woman Injured in Third Bungy Incident', 'Jetboat Accident Report Finds Driver Was At Fault', 'Don't Raft Death Rapid', and 'Man Injured in Parapenting Accident'. These were some of the headlines that graced the pages of newspapers recently and firmly cast the investigative spotlight on safety in adventure tourism. People want to experience 'on the edge thrills' but there is an expectation that these will be 'safe thrills'. New Zealand has traditionally been marketed as a clean, friendly and safe destination and as a country offering a unique adventure tourism experience. Recently, however, this perception has been undermined by a spate of injuries and even fatalities. Most within the industry agree that there will be accidents in adventure sports from time to time, for that is the nature of the thrill seeking industry. But five deaths in an 18-month period, as happened in rafting, plunged the rafting industry in Queenstown into 'crisis' and focussed a considerable amount of attention on safety within adventure sports.

This chapter explores the issue of safety in adventure tourism with particular reference to Queenstown. Much of the chapter focuses on the rafting industry, in particular the series of accidents and fatalities that occurred on the Shotover River between 1993 and 1995 and the ensuing media coverage of these. It explores the Maritime Safety Authority (MSA) inquiry that was launched to iron out the supposed shortcomings within the industry and also

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1 No Fear Promotional Poster.
2 Newspaper reports only indicated that there were four deaths on the Shotover River and one woman who suffered extensive brain damage. It seems that many within the media subsequently added this to the number who died.
identifies the feeling that was generated within the resort because of this 'crisis'. The resulting public perceptions of safety in adventure tourism is also evaluated along with the prevalence of accidents in other activities such as bungy jumping. First, however, it will be important to identify the standards, or lack of, that governed these adventure activities when they first emerged.

It was probably a matter of luck or good fortune that a greater number of more serious accidents did not occur in the adventure industry in the past. The first adventure companies in Queenstown were often pioneers in their own field. In many cases the activities were new and the individuals involved were somewhat naive as to how the activity should be run. In rafting, for example, Dale Gardiner, founder of Danes Rafts, did not even know how to steer the rafts. In Queenstown during this emergent period of adventure tourism, rafting activities were typical of many adventure sports in New Zealand. There was often an absence of laws governing each activity or inadequate safety procedures. The legal requirements governing the rafting industry in the 1970s reveal the absurdities of the situation. At this time rafting was under the control of the marine division of the Ministry of Transport but there was no legislation for vessels under six metres in length. As Gardiner explained:

We were told that we had to carry on the rafts a brass bell, an anchor and a bucket filled with sand painted in red with the word fire in white on the bucket...We told them that these items were totally superfluous and probably dangerous. If we flipped a raft for instance, which can happen quite often, the anchor could kill someone, or the bucket, or the brass bell. They said 'What happens if you get a fire on the raft?' Well you never get a fire and if we did get a fire we would flip the raft over. These were the rules and regulations but these were for marine craft, for the sea. They had no regulations for rafts so we introduced our own.3

Similarly, Harold Melhop, co-founder of the Shotover Jet, indicated that they were not governed by safety standards either, that there was no inspection of the boat, and there was no requirement for the licensing of the driver. They were not even required to supply

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3 Interview with Dale Gardiner, Queenstown, June, 1996.
lifejackets for their passengers. Perhaps the most alarming situation, however, occurred in the bungy jumping industry.

A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch, co-founders of A. J. Hackett Bungy, realising that other individuals would want to establish their own companies to ride the crest of bungy fever, were the first to attempt to establish a safety code of standards and regulations. These attempts, however, were met with bureaucratic red tape. Henry van Asch explained the predicament they were placed in.

> It was quite interesting because we went to the ACC [Accident Compensation Corporation] and the Labour Department. We know what we're doing. There's a lot of people that don't, that are trying to copy us, and they're constituting a huge risk to the industry, to the tourism industry, and we wanted to do something about it. They [ACC and the Department of Labour] said 'When someone injures themselves or somebody gets killed we might shut the industry down and then to get it open again you might be able to convince us that it's safe'.

A. J. Hackett expressed the anguish of the situation.

> Right from the outset it freaked me out to see idiots with no history getting into bungy. It's like giving a kid who's just got a licence a Porsche and letting him drive from Queenstown to Christchurch. You know that eventually he's going to lose it.

Eventually somebody did lose it, their life. This motivated Hackett and van Asch to take further steps to ensure not only the lives of bungy jumpers, but the bungy industry.

A code of practice was written by a group which included the Department of Labour, Standards New Zealand, the Accident Compensation Corporation and other bungy operators together with A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch, and was adopted by the New Zealand Standards Association in 1990. A. J. Hackett Bungy became the first tourism company in the world to be quality assured by a safety standards association. Essentially the code of practice was a

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4 Interview with Harold Melhop, Kelvin Heights, Queenstown, December, 1996.
5 Interview with Henry van Asch, Queenstown, December, 1996.
manual on such things as operating procedures, equipment and training, and is still used today. In many instances it has been used as the benchmark in the adventure tourism industry.

Other adventure operators in Queenstown also recognised the inadequacies of safety regulations. The New Zealand Professional River Guides Association was formed in 1982 with the intention of drawing up a safety code of conduct. Likewise, Robynne Williams of Skydive Tandem and Clark Murphy of Max Air Parapentes revealed that industry regulations governing their respective activities were inadequate and that extra measures were adopted. It seems, therefore, that most operators adopted a responsible attitude towards safety, but was this in fact the case and why then have various aspects of adventure tourism been plagued with safety concerns and accidents, even deaths? One activity which underwent a rigorous investigation, more than any other because of perceived problems with safety, was rafting. The important point here is 'perceived problems' for there were some who questioned whether there was in fact a crisis. This will be examined later but first it will be important to understand what prompted the inquiry into commercial white-water rafting operations.

One organisation which was at the forefront of the controversy loudly expressing their concerns about safety in the rafting industry was the Queenstown newspaper, Mountain Scene. At first this group was accused of scaremongering and scandal-sheet journalism, but by the end of the campaign the Mountain Scene was heralded from some quarters with 'cleaning up' the industry and 'hounding out' the 'cowboys'. In the January 20-26, 1994 edition of the Mountain Scene a front page headline appeared entitled 'White Water Warning'. The article implicitly suggested the need for an official inquiry into rafting safety on the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers. Concerns were expressed about client safety, the experience, or lack of it, of rafting guides and the procedures of companies, particularly after recent flooding. At the time, as Frank

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7 A. J. Hackett Bungy Limited Promotional Fact Sheet.
8 Robynne Williams explained that Skydive Tandem is governed by the New Zealand Parachute Federation. She also revealed, however, that this was insufficient because as a regulatory body they do not have any real audit procedures. Interview with Robynne Williams, Queenstown, June, 1996.
9 Interview with Frank Marvin, Queenstown, December, 1996.
Marvin, publisher and half owner of the *Mountain Scene* admitted, the *Mountain Scene*, like most others, was unaware of any real problems in rafting. They had reported incidents in the past but according to Marvin, 'we thought at the time it was just one of the risks of rafting'.

What had prompted the *Mountain Scene* to issue this warning was the advice of long-time senior rafting guide and white-water safety consultant to the Department of Conservation (DOC), Rosco Gaudin. Gaudin expressed grave concerns among the rafting guides of some of the cavalier practices that the company owners were carrying out. On closer inspection the *Mountain Scene* revealed that incidents which the rafting companies officially reported as minor were in fact very close shaves. The degree of secrecy that the rafting bosses were attaching to incidents of this nature 'made us', according to Marvin, 'prick up our ears'. Gaudin feared that a death was imminent because of the lackadaisical attitude of the rafting companies to safety. Still believing that Gaudin was making excessive allegations Marvin decided to test him and organised a riverside stakeout with Gaudin and another senior rafting guide, to observe these alleged dangerous practices. The party witnessed a number of close calls and reflected that it was 'sheer luck that one avoided a potentially life threatening situation'. Gaudin strongly reasoned that 'you can't have people constantly swimming through major rapids like Pinball in flood without putting their lives at risk'.

Just as Gaudin had predicted, an Australian tourist, Terry Hardie, drowned after the raft he was travelling in flipped and attempts to rescue him failed. The most concerning part for Marvin was that it happened only 10 days after Gaudin's warning. The point was that Gaudin not only predicted the death, he predicted which rapid it would happen

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10 Ibid.
11 The Otago Daily Times carried a small article about a Mrs Liu, a Taiwanese woman who had sustained 'minor' injuries in a rafting mishap and had spent a night in hospital for observation. The MSA report and the specialist report at the Kew Hospital in Invercargill, however, indicated how close she was to drowning. Interview with Frank Marvin.
12 Ibid.
13 *Mountain Scene*, January 20-26, 1994, p.1. The article also printed a photograph of an allegedly overloaded raft that carried 15 passengers. Ibid., p.3.
at. He predicted how it would happen and it did. Exactly as Gaudin predicted. I've never struck in many many years of publishing such a uniquely coincidental circumstance. A prediction that comes so true so quickly in such identical circumstances. It was then that I knew Gaudin wasn't making excessive allegations.\textsuperscript{14}

The \textit{Mountain Scene} immediately jumped into action and published another article alerting readers in a forthright headline: 'Don't Raft Death Rapid'.\textsuperscript{15} They later felt that all rafting should be suspended on the Shotover River.\textsuperscript{16} Needless to say this was not received at all well by the rafting companies, but nor was the news of further fatalities on the Shotover River.

Sean Farrell, an English tourist, died after a mishap on the Shotover River on November 28, 1994. This was quickly followed by a series of accidents which claimed the lives of two more rafters and left one woman with extensive brain damage.\textsuperscript{17} It was not extraordinary that a death had occurred in rafting for there had been a number in the past. Ross Clapcott, head of the Maritime Safety Authority (MSA) inquiry recognised that at the time of the publication of the MSA report in mid 1995 16 fatalities had been reported since 1980. Moreover, these were spread relatively evenly over that 15-year period.\textsuperscript{18} What was newsworthy was the question of whether a high-profile industry-wide inquiry was warranted after five people had died while rafting on one river, the Shotover River, in an 18-month period. Were the incidences of fatalities acceptable when considering that 130, 000 clients rafted in this country annually, of which 80, 000 were international visitors? Some said yes. Some were ambivalent. Others proclaimed a resounding no. Already the fatalities had generated a

\textsuperscript{14} Interview with Frank Marvin.
\textsuperscript{17} Media reports indicated that Brenda Choos was severely brain damaged and that she needed 24 hour supervision to survive. An article which appeared on television, however, showed Choos to be in a much better condition. She had no movement problems nor any speech pattern problems and seemed only to be afflicted by short-term memory loss. Correspondence with Geoff Gabites, July, 1997.
great deal of media attention which no doubt had an influence on how the industry was viewed and how safe, or otherwise, rafting was perceived to be.

A comprehensive review of safety standards within the New Zealand commercial white-water rafting industry was conducted between November 1994 and May 1995. It was completed by an industry advisory group under the auspices of the MSA and was initiated after safety concerns were expressed by sectors of the public and members within the industry. Although this was a nationwide review much of it centred on and was precipitated by events on the Shotover River. This advisory group highlighted a number of concerns relating to safety issues: inconsistency of guiding standards and inadequate training and qualification systems, an inability to apply and enforce minimum safety standards, poor client awareness of the nature of rafting (for a significant minority of clients), and poor communication and co-ordination within the industry.

The fact that efforts had been made during the 1980s to address some of these fundamental issues shows that there were concerns among the rafting industry from an early stage. In 1982 the New Zealand Professional Rafting Association (NZPRA) was established with the intention of drawing up a safety code of conduct. The Association was relatively ineffectual, as was the River Guides Association formed in 1987, because of internal feuding and jealousies. Geoff Hunt, well-known rafting and ski guide in Queenstown, revealed that he actually lost a job as a rafting guide at one time because of a disagreement over safety issues. The local branch of the Rafting Guides Association has generally been considered within the industry to be a 'toothless organisation, having few resources and even less clout'. This could not be said, however, of some rafting companies.

Rafting, particularly in Queenstown, has had a history of powerful leadership and being highly competitive. Cost-cutting

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19 The Shotover River carried the highest volume of clients estimated at over 40 000 a year. Ibid., p.12.
20 Ibid., p.5.
21 Interview with Geoff Hunt, Queenstown, June, 1996.
22 Shaan Miller, Mountain Scene, February 3-9, 1994, p.6.
23 Robert Eymann of Kawarau Rafts was reported to have placed immense pressure on new rafting companies and as a result of this often forced
measures, according to the MSA review, seemed to be influencing decisions on safety: when to raft, safety planning, staff training and equipment. In the area of guide training, for example, the review stated that 'although guiding standards were reportedly higher in this country than overseas, guide training and qualifications were producing inconsistent and often insufficiently skilled guides and trip leaders'. Guides attained their registration on completion of a required number of trips, not on any specific demonstration of competency. They were then directly responsible for between three and 14 clients, some of whom spoke little English, may have been overweight, elderly or a non-swimmer, or all of the above. Although it may have been easy to blame the system in which the guides were fostered, the guides themselves were also directly placed under the spotlight.

In very damning articles both the Mountain Scene and North and South condemned the attitudes and actions of the rafting guides. The Mountain Scene, acting on a supposed leaked rafting fatality report, suggested that the report slammed 'local raft guides as "immature young men...living life on the edge" whose macho attitudes risk client safety'. Emotions were running so high that it did lead to a group of rafting guides threatening to 'beat Gaudin up' if he went public again. Robert Eymann, former owner of Kawarau Rafts, was another perturbed by these accusations. 'It's ridiculous', he said, 'to suggest guides take unnecessary risks. They have got their own lives to look after, and kids too, some of them.'

these companies out of business after one season. An incident was reported in 1984 between Eymann and Bob Huffman who set up Skippers Canyon River Expeditions. Huffman refused to yield to Eymann's pressure and this led to a brawl between the two. It was also suspected that Marty Black circulated that Huffman was unsafe resulting in him being blacklisted by the booking agents. The company consequently went broke. Huffman took Eymann, the Queenstown-Lakes District Council and a booking agent to court over the incident and won $88,000 in compensation in 1993. Huffman represented himself in the case because he could not afford a lawyer and refused legal aid. Mark McLauchlan, 'White Water Death: Why is the Shotover New Zealand's Most Lethal River?', North and South, December, 1995, p.73.

24 Clapcott, p.18.
25 Ibid.
26 Shaan Miller, Mountain Scene, February 3-9, 1994, p.6.
27 Frank Marvin, Mountain Scene, April 11-17, 1996, p.1.
28 For this reason Gaudin was unprepared to comment publicly for the article that appeared in North and South. McLauchlan, p.72.
29 Ibid., p.76.
This may have been so but there was no denying the fact that the guides had more experience than clients in white-water. Rivers are an uncertain quantity and how different people react to different situations is a complicating factor for the one individual charged with responsibility for up to 14 people's lives. Ultimately it was the guide's decision whether to raft or not. There were, however, other influencing factors that may have affected the judgements of the guides and these need to be taken into consideration.

Just under half of those river guides surveyed during the MSA inquiry felt that they could not refuse to work on the basis of safety without it affecting their employment. Some of the company owners were viewed as greedy and putting the safety of the clients at risk. In 1985 Neil Oppatt and the New Zealand River Runners Company quit Queenstown after two years operation. Oppatt was horrified at the antics of other operators who overloaded their craft and rafted when river flows were risky. Jim Archibald also reiterated these sentiments when he stated that 'companies are forcing guides to take overloaded rafts'. The small profit margins necessitated higher volumes of clientele. Accusations of using substandard equipment circulated along with the belief that clients' capabilities in water were not being fully assessed. Decisions on whether to raft or not were left to the individual guides and as a result some companies were accused of pushing these limitations in the interests of maximising their own revenues. Darren Shand, a former rafting guide who now works for A. J. Hackett Bungy, cited this as a reason why he left the rafting industry.

There were some practices that I considered were unsafe. I felt that I was being forced from a commercial perspective to do it.

This supposed revenue-driven philosophy was perhaps poignantly highlighted by the death of Englishman Sean Farrell. On November 28, 1994, heavy rain and snow melt had prompted three companies to cancel raft trips because of concerns about rising river

30 Clapcott, p.56.
31 Mountain Scene, January 20-26, 1994, p.2.
32 McLauchlan, p.72.
33 Interview with Darren Shand, Queenstown, June, 1996.
levels and an extension of the heavy rain warning. Kawarau Rafts, however, decided to proceed, which was approved by the harbourmaster, and took two rafts for the 16 clients. The subsequent death of Farrell led to Kawarau Rafts, trip leader Keith Haare, rafting guide Henry Duddy, and Kawarau Rafts director Ged Hay being 'collectively charged with 24 counts of negligently or recklessly operating a vessel to the peril of passengers' under Section 290 of the Shipping and Seamen Act 1952.\(^{34}\) Haare and Hay were convicted. Although Farrell's death was not a factor in the case, Judge Moran suggested that perhaps it should have been and that a charge under Section 160 of the Crimes Act 1961, of culpable homicide, was not unreasonable.\(^{35}\) The darkest hour in Queenstown's rafting industry had drawn nigh.

Whether to deflect attention or to fully examine the apparent shortcomings of the industry a number of other parties also came under investigation or joined the debate. One particularly loud voice was the Queenstown-Lakes District Council. From 1989 the Queenstown-Lakes District Council was involved in establishing by-laws that governed rafting in the area. They set standards in consultation with rafting operators in Queenstown and contracted the harbourmaster to monitor and enforce these.\(^{36}\) Accusations were made that the Queenstown-Lakes District Council had not enforced these by-laws and as a consequence operators did not take them seriously.\(^{37}\) Furthermore, harbourmaster Marty Black was publicly condemned, even by his own council, for his actions, or otherwise, following the series of rafting accidents. The MSA also accused him of being easily influenced by rafting operators and succumbing to 'small town pressure over whether to open or close the Shotover' River.\(^{38}\)

There are many uncertainties in rafting as opposed to other adventure activities. Rafting, in comparison with bungy jumping is less predictable, the major differentiating variable its reliance on

\(^{34}\) McLauchlan, p.74.
\(^{36}\) Clapcott, p.12.
\(^{37}\) McLauchlan, p.74.
nature. The weather and river conditions complicate any situation which may threaten the safety of clients. Human nature and a wide variety of individual responses may amplify a difficult situation on a river. Prior to the rafting trip the rafting companies who operate in Queenstown have always given instructions relating to safety and specific rafting scenarios. This would seem a necessary precaution given that 90% of their clients have never been rafting before and many Asian tourists, for instance, have little understanding of English and often only minimal experience in the water. Jim Archibald has suggested that, in his experience, Asians remain passive in a rafting emergency and wait to be saved whereas New Zealanders tend to go for shore. Another commentator echoed Archibald's sentiments suggesting that some clients enjoyed the raft being flipped but that 'some will sometimes be so stunned by their sudden immersion in cold, turbulent water that they will be unable to make any effort to save themselves or even take advantage of rescue attempts'. It was this sort of situation that the MSA was intent on investigating.

The MSA investigated client expectations concerning rafting. They surveyed 400 customers involved on trips on nine different rivers. The survey was separated into two parts: expectations which were completed prior to the trip and perceptions after the trip. Most of those surveyed felt exhilarated after the trip and filled with a sense of fun, excitement and accomplishment. 98% of respondents indicated that they would go rafting again given the chance. Although this represented a very high degree of customer satisfaction, concerns were expressed on safety aspects. The finding which caused the greatest amount of unease was that 6% feared for their life at some stage.

One of the attractions of rafting as an adventure activity is the expectation of safe thrills. Although most expect to feel fear at some stage they are confident in the expectation that this will be translated into excitement. Rafting was seen by many of those surveyed as a chance to pit themselves against the elements in a controlled setting.

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39 McLauchlan, p.73.
41 Clapcott, p.76.
Respondents did not want to experience actual danger, did not want to feel scared. They distinguished between 'real' danger on the one hand, and 'thrills' - a perception or sensation of risk promoting excitement and fun.42 Most were able to achieve this. Those who felt some anxiety but overcame it early in the trip experienced the greatest satisfaction.43 What did emerge, however, was a realisation that many clients, predominantly northern hemisphere visitors, had little idea what it was really going to be like. Stories have circulated about how many Asians who go rafting expect it to be much like flume rides that you see at funparks such as in Disneyland.44 Others envisaged that it would be more like a float trip similar to the operation Del and Graham Tinker established, Kon Tiki Rafts, in 1972.45 This preconception was evident in the responses of a large number of those surveyed. They did not expect rafting to require effort and work nor did they anticipate any real degree of risk, danger or fear. Asian rafters, for example, expected it to be less dangerous and less physically demanding than it was. Of all those surveyed, one-quarter stated that the trip was more dangerous than they expected. Of the 6% who feared for their life at some stage 70% were female and 45% were Asian. Interestingly, 85% of these people did not experience their raft being flipped 'showing that fear was not just a reaction to being thrown in the water'.46 Many, including Frank Marvin, have questioned whether clients are sufficiently aware of the risks to make an informed decision. But surely the customer has a responsibility to evaluate the activity before making any decision to go rafting or to take part in any adventure activity.

Geoff Gabites, executive director of the Adventure Tourism Council, has been one to argue that the responsibility to choose an appropriate activity also lies with the consumer. Gabites contended that there always has been reasonably good efforts to inform potential clients.

42 Ibid., p.69.
43 Ibid., p.73.
44 Individuals travel on a specially made log over a stream of water which descends into a purpose-built pool.
45 Interview with Frank Marvin.
46 Clapcott, pp.68, 75, 76.
Figure 25: There have been reports that many clients expect white-water rafting to be more like the float trips that were offered by Kon Tiki Rafts in the early 1970s. Also note the absence of lifejackets.

Mountain Scene, Queenstown.
What amazes me is that you can walk into any one of eight or nine booking offices there [in Queenstown] and you can see these video clips of people in rafts going into water and being tipped out or going into holes and going 'holy shit'. Would I, if I was really wanting to learn about the dangers or otherwise of rafting, would I actually go rafting after having seen that? And you'd have to question that. So I think the answer is two-fold. One is, are the clients aware? No, they're probably not. Is the industry doing things about making them aware? Yes, they certainly are, and that information has been there for quite sometime. The question is, does the client take it on board? And I would argue that the client doesn't. It's not that it is not offered, but it's the getting the message through that is not working.\textsuperscript{47}

The Ministry of Commerce report also recognised this and challenged these assertions. They suggested that:

Consumers should be in a position to make informed choices. However, consumers may not have sufficient knowledge to make such a choice on the level of actual risk if there is a lack of information.\textsuperscript{48}

Keith Grantham concurred. He felt that the literature provided by the rafting companies did not 'have a safety warning that I consider clearly enough explains the serious adventure activity [that rafting is]'. Grantham, in citing the Danes brochure, confirmed that it did make suggestions that rafting 'is a serious adventure activity...not without an element of risk'. When explaining its section entitled 'Safety Talk', however, it reassured potential clients. 'Don't worry, you and the vast majority of people have never rafted before...we will teach you all you need to know.'\textsuperscript{49} It was also revealed that although there is a screening process companies were not allowed to refuse anyone if they wanted to raft.\textsuperscript{50} Rafting companies,

\textsuperscript{47} Interview with Geoff Gabites. Phone correspondence, May, 1997.
\textsuperscript{50} Interview with Toby Wild, Queenstown, June, 1996.
however, did indicate that they believed that very few people were unsuitable.\textsuperscript{51}

Geoff Gabites, like many others, actually questioned whether there was in fact a crisis in rafting.

Accidents happened, and I have to say that the accidents that did happen were no worse than accidents that have happened for the last ten years. There have been about two drownings per year for the last ten years. But this is an industry that is rafting up to 130,000 people [a year]. Well you have to say, 'Is there a problem with rafting?' If you're one of those two people there sure as hell is, but there's a huge number. What's an acceptable level? It's difficult to say.\textsuperscript{52}

What Gabites did indicate was that there was a significant increase in the media attention given to these accidents. He cited not only the \textit{Mountain Scene}, but also \textit{North and South} which 'ran a pretty condemning article', and television which regularly ran emotive pieces to bring the 'problem' to people's attention.

When you have an accident, it doesn't matter who it is. The media immediately uses a whole lot of emotive language and the 'cowboys' is an obvious and common one. 'We've got to get rid of these cowboys.' What is a cowboy? One of the worries that we should register is that the controls to prevent cowboys from occurring would have cut out, I believe, firstly Kiwi Experience, and probably more importantly, A. J. Hackett. So it's a fine line between a cowboy and an innovative entrepreneurial development. Henry van Asch may have been classed as a cowboy in his early days.\textsuperscript{53}

So was the media attention warranted considering that for most people adventures need an element of risk?

\textsuperscript{51} Clapcott, p.57. Guido Leek outlined the procedure of the Queenstown Rafting Company. He said that 'physically if they don't seem able to do a raft trip considering the river conditions of the day we advise them to do something else'. This process eliminates those that they think are too frail, too large to fit any of the equipment or those that are under the influence of alcohol. Interview with Guido Leek, Queenstown, December, 1996.

\textsuperscript{52} Interview with Geoff Gabites.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid
Many people did not think so. Robert Eymann, who was placed under the investigative spotlight by Mountain Scene was riled by the coverage of the newspaper. Why do people get so obsessed about rafting accidents when there were two skiing deaths this year?...Here the reporters just keep hammering on and on. What was once the main industry here has been damaged by the newspapers and everyone. They've made rafters feel like criminals at a time when we need support.\(^5\)

Likewise Guido Leek expressed distaste at the actions of Mountain Scene.

I thought it was actually shocking. I feel they had a personal vendetta against a couple of the company owners. They went hard at it to try and discredit them and in doing so brought the whole industry into the limelight. There was a lot of very adverse publicity that was completely unnecessary. Companies were well on the way to improving safety standards and the Mountain Scene was still carrying.\(^5\)

The media attention surrounding the accidents and perceived problems within the rafting industry had a major impact on numbers willing to raft. Robert Eymann suggested that business plummeted to half its normal level.\(^5\) Unofficial reports received by Geoff Gabites confirmed this.\(^5\) During one period in September 1995, tourists were so 'gun-shy' that only 50 were taking the trip each day when around 500 could be accommodated.\(^5\)

The media's coverage was not just, however, impacting on the rafting industry. Other adventure operators reported downturns as well. Jim Boult of Shotover Jet, for example, reported cancellations would be made with Shotover Jet following a rafting accident. People had heard there had been an accident on the Shotover River and assumed it was Shotover Jet. Boult's consternation was obvious.

Our safety record is unblemished. We have had no association with these incidents. While we

\(^{54}\) McLauchlan, p.76.
\(^{55}\) Interview with Guido Leek.
\(^{56}\) McLauchlan, p.80.
\(^{57}\) Interview with Geoff Gabites.
\(^{58}\) McLauchlan, p.80.
have no doubt our own safety was 100% before these incidents, we are now insisting on 110%. The bad press which filtered down the tourist industry was of real concern. Any negative publicity as a result of an accident or the publication of any accident report was felt by the adventure industry as a whole. Consequently, the Ministry of Commerce was commissioned by the New Zealand Tourism Industry Association, which acts as the voice of the industry, to undertake an inquiry into the adequacy of safety regulations in New Zealand adventure tourism following declining patronage of adventure activities. The Ministry of Commerce recognised the severity of the situation. For inbound travellers the recent spate of adventure tourism accidents may have undermined the view that New Zealand is a safe destination for adventure tourism activities. Media reports of injury and death...[might influence people to] decide to go to an alternative destination they perceive as having better safety standards or not to undertake adventure activities at all.

Although most activities recovered their numbers, it does show the potential disastrous effect it could have had on the tourism sector as a whole. The Japan Tourist Bureau, for example, struck off rafting on the Shotover River from its recommended list for its clients, deeming it too dangerous. They had adopted similar measures following flightseeing and ballooning accidents. Some American travel agents also adopted a comparable line. Such stances and subsequent cancellations constituted a major threat to, not only Queenstown rafting, but also the image of Queenstown as a safe destination for adventure activities.

What became apparent was the need for greater accountability among adventure operators in this country to avoid similar situations and subsequent bad publicity in the future. For many activities there had not been any established industry safety criteria nor any minimum entry standards. It was very easy to

60 Ministry of Commerce, p.2.
61 Ibid., p.1.
62 The American agents were concerned about possible liability cases being brought against them in some instances of accident and death. *Mountain Scene*, February 10-16, 1994, p.1.
become a rafting operator, for example, with very few, if any, safety requirements. Furthermore, some operators could refuse to adopt codes of practice and there would be no way to enforce safety standards or check that they were being adhered to. This situation was a source of apprehension for Geoff Gabites. He was prompted, under the guise of the Adventure Tourism Council, to launch a Standards Assurance Programme. The industry, according to Gabites, had expressed disquiet about a number of things, not least of all the short term operator who could disappear as quickly as they arrived. Gabites was also intent on establishing a system which could demonstrate to clients that the operator had met the necessary standards, standards that clients often assumed the operator had.

The Standards Assurance Programme was launched recently with a view to rectifying the shortfalls that Gabites had exposed. Using horse trekking as a pilot study operators were consulted and an established industry-agreed minimum standard and code of practice was put in place. After qualification and assessment the operator becomes accredited and will be able to attach a logo to brochures and other merchandise that is easily recognisable by the client and booking agent. This logo assures these groups that an operator meets certain standards. Although it will be only a voluntary association Gabites is hopeful that eventually pressure to become affiliated will be such that operators cannot afford not to be a part of the programme and booking agents will not be able to reserve clients if the operator does not have accreditation. The Ministry of Commerce review cited this as one of the options that the adventure tourism industry could adopt to improve their reputation in terms of, among other things, safety.

Although a Standard Assurance Programme would be a valuable tool, there is widespread acceptance among the industry that accidents will happen, it is part of the territory. Was it just then a matter of bad luck that five people lost their lives while rafting on the Shotover River in a matter of 18 months? Guido Leek believed so.

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63 Clapcott, p.18.
65 Interview with Geoff Gabites.
66 Ibid.
I think some of them definitely could have happened to anyone at anytime. It's the nature of it [the rafting industry], unfortunately. You can have the greatest safety standards in the world but at some stage someone can slip past you.\textsuperscript{67}

The fact that there is an element of risk, it could be argued, constitutes part of the attraction. Of course people want 'safe thrills' but if there was not an element of risk much of adventure tourism would lose its appeal. It is just a matter of what is an acceptable level. Dale Gardiner remembered that people were queuing up to go rafting the day after a fatality.\textsuperscript{68}

There will be jetboats running aground and rafts flipping just as there will continue to be car and aircraft accidents. It should not be assumed that operators are running unsafe trips.\textsuperscript{69}

All the operators which I spoke with said that efforts were made to eliminate risks to the greatest extent possible, but, as with most aspects of life, there were always dangers. Henry van Asch summed this up.

I can't say that all risks are eliminated. I can't say that all risks in life are eliminated. I might be dreaming and walk out in front of a bus. It [bungy jumping] is very safe.\textsuperscript{70}

Despite these reassurances, more accidents occur in the adventure tourism industry than people are led to believe. 'The industry statistics tell you that the industry is relatively safe, however, there are a range of incidents which occur which never get reported.'\textsuperscript{71} Although all accidents are required to be reported under Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) guidelines, this does not seem to be the case.

Henry van Asch understated the prevalence of accidents with A. J. Hackett Bungy when he said 'we have had a few fairly significant incidents over the last eight years'.\textsuperscript{72} What this constitutes is unclear. A report appeared in the \textit{Mountain Scene} of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} Interview with Guido Leek.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Interview with Dale Gardiner.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Dale Gardiner, cited in \textit{Mountain Scene}, February 5, 1981, p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Interview with Henry van Asch.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Interview with Geoff Gabites.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Interview with Henry van Asch.
\end{itemize}
one man who had been 'knocked out' and who sustained extensive facial bruising after 'splashing' into the water at high impact. A similar accident occurred at the site of the Pipeline Bungy operations in 1994 in which a jumper sustained facial injuries when she apparently hit the bottom of the Shotover River. Other incidents occurred in which two people suffered dislocated shoulders and another was 'trawled' underwater with their feet still attached to the bungy cord. This is not to mention the numerous cases mounting up suggesting that bungy jumping caused ocular haemorrhage, peroneal nerve palsy, quadriplegia, spinal injuries, fractures, dislocations and reports of near hangings.

Two highly publicised incidents occurred with A. J. Hackett Bungy Limited Queenstown within a month of each other in December 1996 and January 1997. Englishman Martin Formby suffered a punctured diaphragm and a collapsed lung after a karabiner apparently failed. Nancy Todd, a 20-year-old Canadian tourist, was reported to have suffered serious back injuries when the ankle connection came loose and she fell 40 metres into the Shotover River. Doctor Tom Milliken suggested that the fact that she landed flat on her back saved her from more serious injury and possible death. These accidents followed an incident late in 1996 at the A. J. Hackett Bungy Bali site in which a woman was injured when a bungy cord snapped. Again, were these accidents just a matter of bad luck or bad management?

Asked whether an accident like the one in Bali could happen in Queenstown van Asch adamantly replied:

That won't happen in Queenstown. I'm very, very certain that it won't. I can't guarantee it but I'm very certain that it won't.

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75 Lydia Vanderford and Michael Meyers, 'Injuries in Bungee Jumping', in *Sports Medicine*, 20(6), December, 1995, pp.369-372. Sudden deceleration, for example, puts pressure on eyes and causes fluid build up in the head. These people have experienced blurred vision for around one month. Ibid., p.371.
79 Interview with Henry van Asch.
But it did. It happened twice. Immediately following these incidents a two karabiner system was introduced to ensure that accidents of this nature would not occur in the future. It must be emphasised that, generally speaking, bungy jumping, among other adventure activities in this country and particularly in Queenstown, is a very safe activity considering the number of participants each year.

The fact that these accidents occurred in Queenstown was an important determinant. As New Zealand's leading provider of adventure activities and premier tourist resort the nation's collective attention was soon focussed on this serene hideaway. Once the first editorial had been published, the first television report aired concerning the 'crisis' in adventure tourism, accidents that followed and any hint of wrongdoing or malpractice was quickly highlighted and magnified. 'Queenstown', according to Geoff Hunt, 'has always had the highest standards of anywhere in the country.'\(^{80}\) It has been the leader, not only in terms of adventure activities, but also safety regulations associated with these. It appeared that there were some problems inherent in rafting and steps needed to be taken to rectify these. This has been done and these changes will be made law later this year, but whether the waters will ever calm remains to be seen.\(^{81}\)

With recent changes to the Accident Compensation Corporation legislation, it seems that more and more cases for damages will be brought against, not only the adventure company concerned, but also other organisations which may be directly or indirectly involved in some way. For example, the relatives of Brenda Choos who supposedly suffered extensive brain damage in a rafting accident on the Shotover River in 1995, have lodged a case against the rafting operator as well as the Queenstown-Lakes District Council, the harbourmaster and even the attorney general representing the police.\(^{82}\) This law suit, and the likelihood of many more similar cases in the future, makes it imperative that safety codes of practice and accident management strategies are put in

\(^{80}\) Interview with Geoff Hunt.
\(^{81}\) See Appendix 2 for the MSA recommendations.
\(^{82}\) The case against the police was lodged because of the belief that the search and rescue operation launched by the police had been handled negligently.
place to avoid a situation in which damages are sought for even minor injuries. If this situation did occur it could make many existing and potential operators gun-shy and detrimentally effect not only the image of adventure tourism in the country, but also the availability of these activities.

It is interesting to note that there has not been a rafting fatality since the end of 1995. Whether this says that inadequacies in safety regulations within the rafting industry have been ironed out or that the industry was unlucky would be a point for contention. One fact does remain clear, however, operators cannot afford, either financially or logistically, to be seen to be negligent in any way in the future. Adventure tourism wants to project the image of being 'on the edge', it does not, however, want to go 'over the edge'.
Conclusion

Queenstown evokes a variety of emotions and expectations for all who come into contact with the area. From its earliest days one quality has consistently attracted visitors: its ability to challenge individuals to seek adventure. Queenstown has changed markedly in appearance since the arrival of William Gilbert Rees and the goldminers of the 1860s, but essentially it is still the same place, the same local environment and magnificent scenery, the same upstart people, and a township which boasts a proud tradition of adventure.

Prior to the 1950s most people ventured to Queenstown because of the scenery. The landscape motivated people to probe the wilderness and the early explorations in the district were adventures in themselves. This was a time when there were no roads, few means of transport, total reliance on nature, and little idea of what actually lay around the next corner. In their own way, these early explorers pushed the limits.

Although the local runholders did not entirely welcome the arrival of a wave of different explorers, the goldrushes were an important factor in the future development of Queenstown. A bustling shantytown was quickly replaced by more permanent features. Businesses and systems of communication which had been put in place to service the needs of the miner were invaluable when the second gold rush, tourism, hit the area. Consequently Queenstown was able to encourage this traffic of tourists and expand on its attractions to further entice visitors.

One such attraction was the development of skiing on Coronet Peak. Initially this was pursued as a way to encourage patronage on the Mount Cook Company buses and later on Mount Cook Airways. The development of tourist jet boating and ultimately Shotover Jet, on the other hand, was not purely commercially driven. Alan and Harold Melhop began the service as a way in which to raise money for the construction of a Christian camp in Kelvin Heights. Other attractions surfaced that encouraged a constant flow of tourists to the Queenstown area. For that reason,
by the time A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch entered the scene in 1988, Queenstown was seen as the ideal site for bungy jumping.

There were a number of factors that enabled Queenstown to develop its reputation as an adventure playground. It is no coincidence then, that many of these adventure activities originated in Queenstown as they rely heavily on its natural resources, the rivers, mountains and lakes. An added advantage is in Queenstown's case is the fact that these are located in a relatively small area. People who previously came to marvel at the scenery now come to do this as well as act out their own adventures.

Technology has also been an important factor in the origins of the various adventure activities examined in this thesis. As well as enabling visitors to travel quickly and comfortably to an area which was once considered the outer reaches on the tourist trail, it also provided people with greater periods of leisure time and ways and means to utilise this. New Zealanders have traditionally been innovative with technology and the development of jet boating and bungy jumping provide obvious examples.

The people of Queenstown have made the area into what it is today. From the goldminers who were proactive in attempting to seek out their fortunes to the residents of today, Queenstown people tend to be upstart doers and go-getters rather than procrastinators. Dale Gardiner, for example, saw an opportunity and despite a lack of any of any knowledge set up the first white-water rafting company in Australasia. Likewise, A. J. Hackett and Henry van Asch were adventurers of the daredevil variety who immediately fitted in with Queenstown's persona.

The development of Queenstown as a tourist centre, in which adventure tourism played a significant part, was a gradual one. The advent and introduction of new adventure activities also took place over a number of years and they continue to develop and be refined. One offshoot from this has been the catch-cry 'Queenstown - Adventure Capital of the World'. This has been a label that some have attached to Queenstown as a means of marketing and promotion. There have been mixed reactions as to whether this description has been warranted and whether in fact this is a constructive message. Geoff Hunt contended that a number of other adventure centres around the world, such as Chamonix in France and Aspen in the United States, lack
Queenstown's combination and range of winter and summer activities. 'Combining that with all the new activities like bungy jumping', explained Hunt, 'Queenstown deservedly rates that title.' Warren Cooper, Queenstown mayor, agreed. Geoff Gabites, executive director of the Adventure Tourism Council, on the other hand, felt that 'adventure capital of the world' was a convenient label that was perhaps accurate when speaking of New Zealand but as he said 'whether it's in the world, the world's a big place, ah?' Similarly, Sarah McLauchlan Regional Liaison Manager of the New Zealand Tourism Board in Queenstown saw dangers in attaching a label such as this.

I don't see the future in that because you can do adventure anywhere in New Zealand or the world and I don't think that is going to be Queenstown's key icon...If you call yourself the adventure capital of the world and then you have a number of accidents like in rafting and then suddenly the next day you have a helicopter crash, that can really affect your whole image and it can kill it.

Unfortunately, however, tourism can be a fickle market and can be significantly influenced by such things as the value of the New Zealand dollar and media portrayals of accidents in adventure tourism. For that reason Queenstown needs to understand its markets and how they are changing. Queenstown suffered a downturn in tourist numbers during 1995 and 1996 and McLauchlan has attributed some of this to complacency within the region and a failure to recognise changes within the industry.

[Some local businesses] probably haven't realised that people aren't into sticky tickys and linen tea towels anymore. It's easy to blame the tourist. I think in Queenstown's case there's always been a feeling that we've got it all. We've got all this magnificent scenery, we're the adventure capital of the world, everyone has come to us, they all want to, they're scrambling to get here...There's a lot of complacency and there's been some markets that they've ignored that have probably

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1 Interview with Geoff Hunt, Queenstown, June, 1996.
2 Interview with Warren Cooper, Queenstown, December, 1996.
4 Interview with Sarah McLauchlan, Queenstown, June, 1996.
been their bread and butter markets...It's just not having their finger on the pulse.\(^5\)

Queenstown has already experienced the demise of one gold rush, it can ill afford to experience another.\(^6\) Queenstown seems to have addressed some of the complacency, and many within adventure tourism have consolidated to ensure the survival of the industry. The rafting situation heightened the need for this and the Adventure Tourism Council's drive to implement a Standards Assurance Programme could enhance the entire industry. Most within adventure tourism have predicted that it will continue to evolve and will continue to represent a major drawcard to the Queenstown area. Likewise, Wanaka has developed a reputation recently as a secondary area for the adventure enthusiast. Adventure tourism will always have an ability to attract participants and Queenstown has proven to be an ideal location. What the face of this will be in the future is not totally certain.

It is likely that activities such as rafting, jet boating and bungy jumping will remain in Queenstown as features of the landscape. They have enduring qualities that will continue to attract participants. The adventure industry is, however, becoming more and more competitive making it more difficult to enjoy financial success. Presently it is actually difficult to break into the market. The benefits of being the first company to offer a particular activity in the area have been all too evident. The Mount Cook Company (skiing), Shotover Jet and A. J. Hackett Bungy, for example, continue to lead in their respective fields and command a large proportion of the market. When one considers that the average visitor stays in Queenstown for 2.3 days it shows how difficult it is for fringe operators to break in. Geoff Gabites has recognised this.

What are the must-do icons? And you can identify those. That's what people are going to do while they're there and those are so powerful that you discover the new operators only have maybe one-third of a day to compete against the other activities. [For a new business] you have to compete with businesses that are already well

\(^5\) Ibid.
established and have got huge marketing dollars. Unless you can find some unique marketing niche, then it's just getting harder and harder...If you're going to succeed in Queenstown you're going to have to do things well right across the line and you're going to have to be well financed and well resourced.\footnote{Interview with Geoff Gabites.}

Thus, it is unlikely that lunatic laddering\footnote{Lunatic laddering is a pastime in which the participant attempts to climb an unsupported ladder as high as possible before it falls over. Joanna Wane, In Search of the Rush, Pacific Way, December 1995/January 1996, p.102.} and kayak dragging\footnote{Kayak dragging has been described as a version of waterskiing in which the kayaker sits on top of a kayak and holds onto a ten-metre-long rope which is tied onto a car. One commentator suggested that 'this is a great spectator sport. It's interesting to see which destructs first: car, kayak or kayaker.' Johnathon Kennett, et al, Classic New Zealand Adventures, Wellington, 1992, p.195.} are going to emerge as trendy worldwide phenomena. Geoff Gabites has identified that it takes between three and five years for an adventure operator to break even. For this reason it is the opinion of most within the industry that adventure tourism will consolidate and be refined. The very nature of adventuring and those who participate means that new activities will emerge. There is a real desire to try something different, be innovative and push one's limits. Rudolph Wigley was a visionist and entrepreneur of this kind in the early twentieth century. Harry Wigley, Alan and Harold Melhop, Trevor Gamble, Dale Gardiner, John Lee, A.J. Hackett and Henry van Asch were others.

There is a belief, and a hope, that there is another bungy jumping out there waiting to be discovered. Whether this is managed and marketed appropriately to become a successful attraction is a different story. The only limit is one's imagination. Just ask Dale Gardiner what he sees for the future of adventure tourism in Queenstown.

It's never going to stop...You can't stop the Kiwi brain from thinking of these things and trying them...Perhaps zeppelin rides to Milford Sound, a hovercraft or hovercar which is 250 metres above the surface and you go up the river for a change instead of down it. Go around Skippers...
Road on the hill instead of on the road. A UFO type thing I guess.\textsuperscript{10}

For Dale Gardiner it seems only the sky is the limit. Or is it?

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Dale Gardiner, Queenstown, June, 1996.
Appendix 1

Adventure Tourism Activities

Ballooning
Black-Water Rafting
Bungy Jumping
Canoeing (white water)
Caving
Charter Sailing
Cross-Country Skiing
Diving/Snorkelling
Downhill Skiing
Fishing
Gliding
Guided Glacier Trekking
Hang Gliding
Heli-Bungy Jumping
Heli-Skiing
Horse-Trekking
Hunting
Jet Boating
Jet-Biking
Mountain Biking, Cycling
Mountain Guiding
Parachuting
Paragliding/Parapenting
Para-Sailing
Rafting
Rap-Jumping/Abseiling
River Kayaking/Sea Kayaking
River-Surfing/River-Sledging
Rock-Climbing
Scenic Aerial Touring (small aircraft/helicopter)
Ski-Touring
Trekking/Hiking
Water Skiing
Windsurfing

Appendix 2

The Maritime Safety Authority Advisory Group recommendations:

1. Commercial white-water rafting should be regulated by the Government under Section 133 of the Maritime Transport Act 1994.

2. The Maritime Safety Authority should be involved as the body with overall responsibility for setting and enforcing safety standards for commercial white-water rafting.

3. Systems and structures developed should ensure that decisions regarding rafting safety standards are made by people with direct industry experience and understanding of operational systems.

4. Safety regulations should be in the form of a mandatory code of practice. The code of practice should have three sections dealing with:

   4.1 The introduction of minimum safety standards for all operators regardless of their operating situation.

   4.2 The introduction of an entry requirement to the industry based on the evaluation and registration of an operational plan. This may include, where applicable, river specific requirements.

   4.3 The compulsory qualification of rafting guides and trip leaders with an appropriate industry body.

5. That authority for auditing and approving operational plans be delegated to Maritime Safety Authority approved 'authorisation organisations'.

6. A system of penalties for non-compliance with any of the three sections of the code of practice should apply under the Maritime Transport Act 1994.

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7. Training and qualification systems within the industry should be based on demonstration of required competencies and on specified levels of experience.

8. All rafts should be guided by qualified guides and all trips should be directly supervised by qualified trip leaders.

9. A system that improves the industry's ability to self-monitor should be developed. This should include reporting procedures and criteria.

10. Support material and training should be provided to rafting operators to ensure that requirements can be met by the industry.

11. The national industry body set up to oversee guide standards should also be responsible for co-ordinating industry action on matters of common interest.
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Letters

A number of letters were received by many of those who have been involved in the adventure tourist industry. These included such people as Thierry Huet, John Lee, Harold Melhop, John Woods, Darren Smith, Geoff Hunt and Geoff Gabites.