

# The Waimea Plains Branch

## Part 2 – Getting down to business and the decline of traffic leading to the closure of the line.

By Jim Brown

**I**n this, the second part on the Waimea Plains Branch Railway, we look at the different sidings and stations along the line and the origins of the many unusual names given to those localities. We will also examine what might have been if a private company had not built this railway, and ultimately the final days of the Agricultural Company and its achievements. Although both the shareholders of the Land Company and the Railway Company did not get the return on their investments as hoped for, the legacy they left endures to this day.

New Zealand, during the 1800s, was in the financial doldrums! This brought Government and public spending to an all time low, which in turn meant financial hardship across a large part of the country and in particular, workers and their families.

The population of New Zealand had doubled in ten years, and by 1880 had reached half-a-million. However, the public debt was rising also, climbing to a figure of £27 million that caused many grey-breaded gentlemen to shake their heads and wonder where it was all going to end.

Nevertheless, the country seemed open to further and rapid development, but settlement day was approaching, as it always must for inveterate borrowers.

The Government had financed Vogel's public works programme with money borrowed in London, but Britain was now having one of her own financial crises as money was moved in mysterious ways to cover the plans and policies of bankers with international connections. Export prices fell disastrously, and investors became nervous about capital in New Zealand.

As the money market dried up, capital began to move across the Tasman and unattached men and others followed it to Australia in search of opportunity or higher wages. Immigration went into reverse, until by the end of the 1800s more people were leaving the country than those entering it.

From 1879 until 1894 New Zealand had to face an economic depression, not the first in its history, but certainly the longest. Southland suffered with the rest of the country, and Invercargill became the scene of anxious meetings between run-holders and bankers, and between businessmen and creditors.

### Times of Criticisms and Complaints

Under Sir Julius Vogel's railway development scheme, the South Island had received the lion's share. During the 1870s a far greater mileage of railways was built in the South Island than the North. The reason

was that in those days the South Island was in many respects the more important of the two main islands, with more wealth and greater exports. Development in the North Island had been hampered and retarded by the Maori (Land) Wars.

It is interesting to note that even in those days, Southland felt it was neglected to the advantage of Christchurch and Dunedin and therefore were not above making their concerns felt at the highest level.

So, it wasn't long before the general public were looking for someone to blame; of course this quickly became directed at the Government and in particular the Minister of Public Works, the Hon. Richard Oliver. The depth to which public feeling began to grow over the Government's retrenchment policies was beginning to surface and this resentment came to the fore when Mr. Oliver visited Invercargill in the early 1880s. He was accompanied by the Colonial Treasurer, the Hon. Major Atkinson, later to become Premier. Upon arriving in Invercargill they were greeted by a hostile demonstration and Mr. Oliver did not escape, he got the 'raspberry'.

In spite of the hostility aroused by the Government's policies, the two Ministers were entertained to a banquet. This hospitality seems to have come as a surprise to the guests of honour. They were apparently looking for quite a different reception, even from the leading citizens. Perhaps this banquet was arranged on the basis of a *quid pro quo*. No doubt the shrewd Scots of Invercargill thought it would be a good way of inducing the Ministers to look upon their numerous requests with a more friendly eye. Whether it achieved this purpose it is difficult to say, but no doubt it had the effect of allaying the feeling of irritation that Mr. Oliver and Major Atkinson must have felt at the hostile demonstration that greeted them on their arrival in Invercargill.

### Services on the Branch Railway

One large company that was to feel the



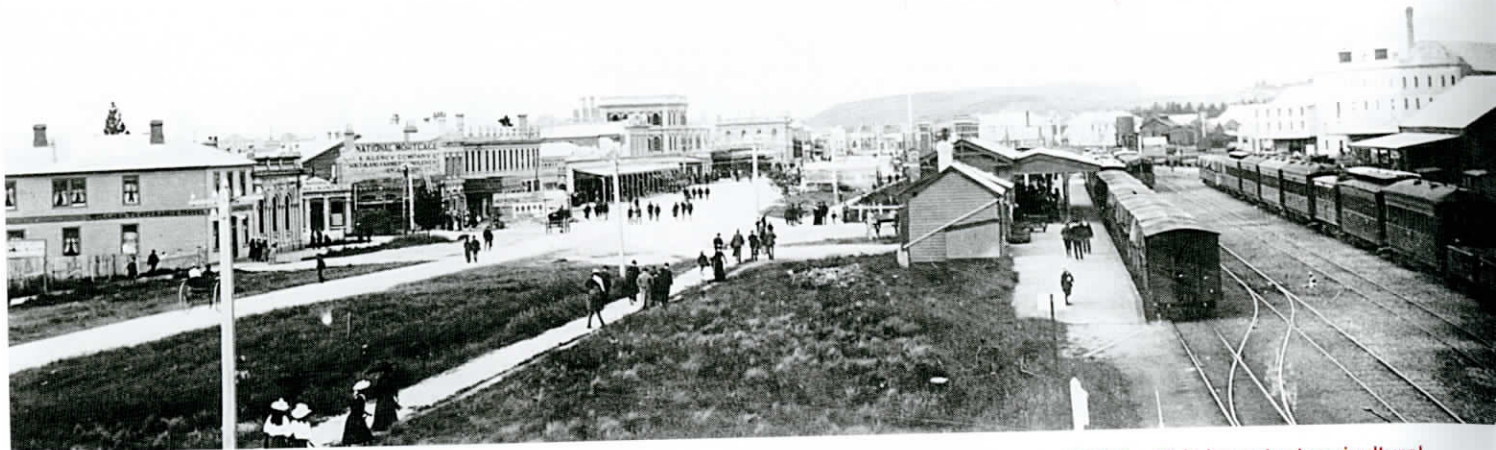
effects of this dramatic down-turn in the economy was the New Zealand Agricultural Company who suddenly found themselves in financial strife. Owning large tracts of the northern Southland countryside and no buyers able to purchase land due to the tight financial situation, the Agricultural Company was caught in a very awkward position. The flow-on effect meant that goods and service for the Waimea Plains Railway was also very quiet. Although the Branch was by then operated as part of the Government's railway network, the day-to-day operations over the line did not really change that much from when it was in private hands.

Over the following seven years the same basic timetable and services were continued on the Branch – That is, one train each way daily Lumsden to Gore and return except on Sunday, plus the Kingston-Gore and Gore-Kingston service which ran on alternate days Monday to Saturday.

As time went on there were adjustments made to the basic timetables to meet the requirements of the farmers and the travelling public.

Although there was still only a basic train schedule on the Waimea Branch, from around 1890 onwards, the Government did make a start at improving and adding infrastructure at the many sidings and stations along the line. Initially these stations were just platforms for passengers and in some cases, shelter buildings for the convenience of the travelling public, along with the erection of a number of goods sheds, a must for the ever increasing farm production throughout the district.

When the Waimea Plains Branch line came into use it brought about a day to day operational situation that endured till the line was closed; this had to do with the facing direction of the coupling hooks on rolling stock. It was standard that all rolling stock coming up from Invercargill on the Kingston Line would have the hooks on the leading or northern end of the wagons, while those coming in from the Waimea



**ABOVE:** The second Gore railway station and surrounding environs were captured in this panoramic view, believed to have been taken in 1904, just before work commenced on the new (third) building. A picture of the original 1875 Gore railway station was reproduced on page 32 in the first part of the history of the branch in the June 2015 issue of *New Zealand Railfan*.

**PHOTO:** Provenance unknown

Line always had the hooks on the trailing end of the wagons.

The standing arrangement was for all trains entering the Lumsden rail yards off the Waimea Branch and heading to Kingston would require no change, unless a wagon was put off at a siding, then it was the guard's responsibility to change the hook to the other end of the wagon. At Kingston, if the consist was not changed and was leaving for the Waimea again, there would be no change unless wagons were taken off, then Kingston railway staff had to move the coupling hooks to the opposite end of each wagon. Likewise, the same situation applied at the Lumsden rail yards where station staff had to see to any change-over of hooks.

### The Railway Line and Facilities

**Gore, 0m (0km), Alt. 233ft (71m):** The township of Gore was always considered the starting point for the Waimea Plains Branch line with the zero mileage peg taken at a point on the station platform. The

township of Gore came about because the early settlers found a spot along the Mataura River where it was safe to ford the river with horse and stock, resulting in the original name for the area being called 'Long Ford'. In those days the area was a wilderness of flax and tussock and when in 1862, the Provincial Government laid out the site as a new town, they gave it the name of 'Gore' to commemorate the Governor, Sir Thomas Gore Browne.

Before the Kawarau Gorge was 'roaded', much of the traffic between Dunedin and Lake Wakatipu passed through Gore. Also, the walking track from Invercargill to the 'diggings', before the Winton route was opened, passed through Croydon Bush and then later diverted through Gore. When it came to surveying the best route for the new rail line between Invercargill and Dunedin, it was decided to go up the Mataura Valley to Gore and there to cross the Mataura River. As a result the foundations for the railway bridge were laid in February 1873, with the Invercargill-Gore section opened two and a-half years later. The building of the Waimea Plains line and the opening of extensive farmlands along the route gave Gore a commanding position in the Mataura Valley.

As the Gore railway station and yards were part of the South Island Main Trunk line, it became a major stopping point and eventually had all the usual facilities.

Over the many years there were three

**GORE:** This important agricultural services town has long had an association with railways. As a major station on the South Island Main Line and the junction for the busy Waimea Branch, railway operations played an important part in the everyday life of the town.

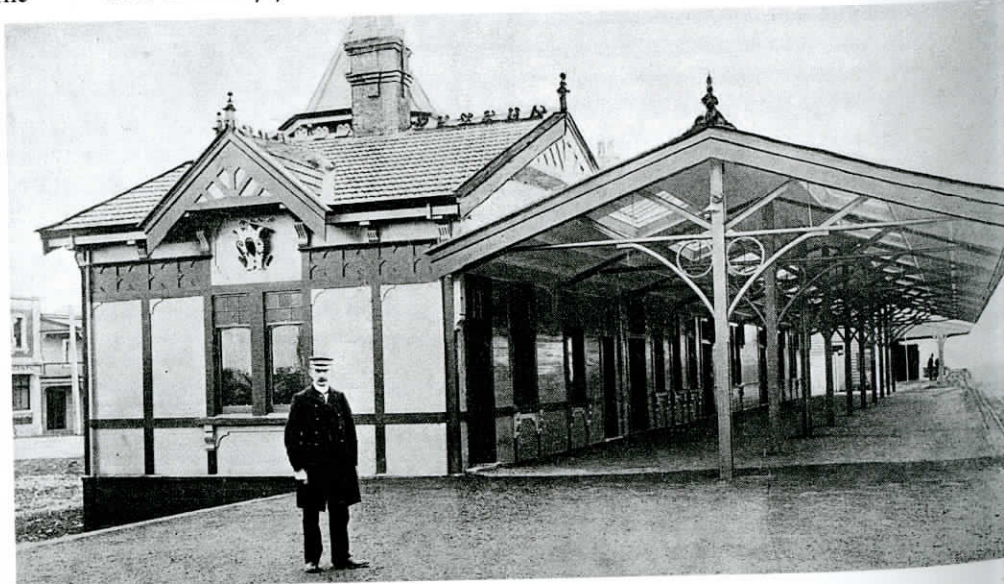
different station buildings. The original lean-to building lasted well into the 1890s by which time it was definitely too small for all the station staff and the daily business that had to be conducted on such a busy line. There was much relief when in early October 1893 the Railway Commission advised the Gore Mayor that a new station building was to be erected. This new structure was also a typical lean-to type of the period, some 93 1/2 feet long by 16 feet wide (28.5 x 4.87metres) with a full length verandah and an extended

**OPPOSITE BELOW:** This elevated perspective at the northern end of the developing Gore township has much detail of interest. Prominent is the Farmers' Co-operative and the businesses "Grocery Warehouse and Tea Depot". For the railway enthusiast, the main focus of interest would be a J class 2-6-0 heading a northbound Mixed train on the Main South Line to Dunedin and beyond, while what appears to be a D class 2-4-0T (along with another unidentified loco) was shunting wagons on the start of the Waimea Plains line.

**PHOTO:** Courtesy Gore Historical Museum collection

**RIGHT:** The third Gore Station was a significant advance in style and size over its 1894 predecessor. In this 23rd August 1905 rainy day looking-down-the-platform scene, the viewer gets an excellent impression of the new building's decorative trim and other ornate detailing. Note, the earlier fire damaged station building visible at the other end of the station verandah.

**PHOTO:** Courtesy Alexander Turnbull Library





**ABOVE:** Taken from the nearby Post Office clock tower, this image nicely illustrates the then latest railway developments at Gore. The older (second) station has been removed and the site tidied up. Of particular note is the station dock in the foreground, where trains for the Waimea Plains line would have been stabled. The size of

the yard is apparent, with a suitably enlarged 160 x 60 foot (48.7 x 9.14m) goods shed. Also of note is the station location in the townscape – almost at the far western end of the commercial zone beside the future State Highway 1.

**PHOTO:** Courtesy Gore Historical Museum



**LEFT:** Another attractive postcard, c.1907, scene of the 1905 Gore railway station, with the Post Office dominant in the centre background. The decorative nature of the third railway station, a George Troup special design, spoke of the importance of Gore to the Railways Department with substantial freight and passenger traffic being generated in that era of agricultural development and associated commerce duly generated.

**PHOTO:** Courtesy Gore Historical Museum collection





**ABOVE:** Gore locomotive depot was a wee cutie. This later era view from December 1968 nicely illustrates the rather run-down nature; note the lack of a turntable pit wall; a not uncommon detail in rural New Zealand. Located in a small wedge of railway land at the eastern end of town between the Main South Line heading north and the commencement of the branch line, it comprised principally of a suitably rustic looking corrugated iron clad engine shed, a 55 foot (16.7m) cast iron turntable and typical small depot coaling facilities via a pneumatic coaling crane plus a substantial water vat (see page 41).

**PHOTO:** George Emerson

**BELOW:** The Hokonui Hills are not just a notable geographic landform but also steeped in local folklore, be it the infamous 'Hokonui Hootch' whisky but as a remote area that various felons could hide from the law enforcement authorities in years gone by.... The said hills were quite prominent in railway photography too, especially where the line skirted the base formation between Croydon and Otamita. This landform detail was clearly apparent on 8th January 1958 as A class Pacific N<sup>o</sup> 427 worked the day's N<sup>o</sup> 583 Goods.

**PHOTO:** Bob Hepburn

platform. The newly completed station was opened on 7th May 1894.

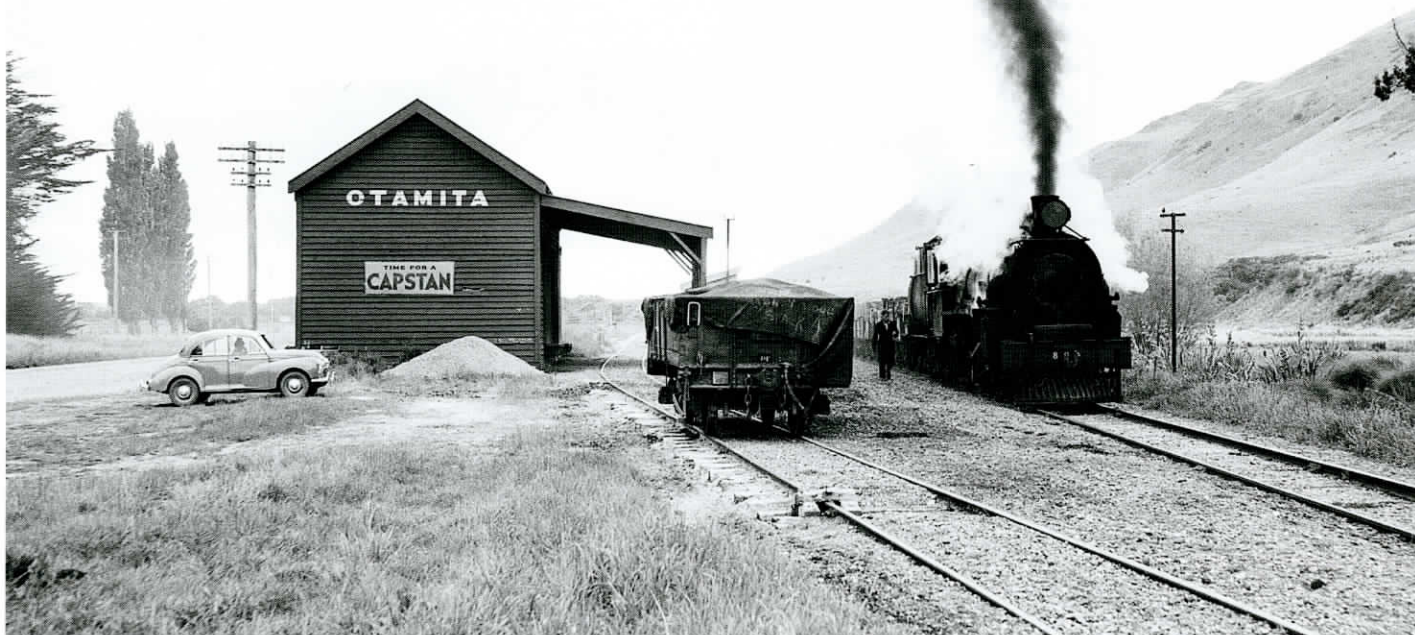
During the early hours of April 1st 1904, the station building was lost in a disastrous fire. The fire was first noticed at 4:25am and the local fire brigade called, but as they had already attended a fire earlier in the night, the local well had insufficient water and the flames took hold in a strong westerly breeze. Some carriages and trucks standing in front of the burning building were in danger for a time, but ultimately were pushed into a safer area by local railway staff and other helpers. Then for several minutes it appeared as though the goods shed on the opposite side of the line would also succumb to the sheets of flame beating across the yard, and at one time the timbers started smoking. Fortunately the burning station building collapsed before any other serious damage was done to other structures.

So once again a new building had to be built, this time a more prestigious and larger one than the previous. This new Troup designed building with its very distinctive peaked roof turret was opened by Sir Joseph Ward on the afternoon of Monday 7th August 1905. The plans for this modern and large station were drawn up in the Chief Engineers Office Wellington and boasted a length of 143 feet. (43.5m) and 3,073 square feet of floor area (285.5m<sup>2</sup>) along with a full length veranda. The total cost being £2,435. Other improvements made at the same time included lengthening the platform to 300 feet. (91.4m) and extending the rail sidings in the main yard by another 20 chains (402.3m).

**Croydon Siding, 4m 41ch (7.26km), Alt. 276ft (84m):**

This was the first siding on the Waimea Line and took its name from an area of Bush at the eastern end of the Hokonui Hills. This small country siding had only a short loop with a raised passenger platform and shelter.





**ABOVE – OTAMITA:** A typical rural branch line scene of the 1950s was captured in this November 1958 early morning scene as a 'Down' N<sup>o</sup> 583 Goods worked by AB 803 carried out some shunting at the siding. By this date the passenger shelter shed and platform had been removed. It's interesting to note that even in quiet rural locations, such as here at Otamita, there was still room for advertising as shown on the side of the goods shed! **PHOTO: George Emerson**

Although only a basic rail siding, it had a major industry alongside in the form of the Croydon Meat Preserving Works. This was a large two-storey wooden building and was opened on the 1st March 1890 to can rabbit meat along with the curing of the skins, all for export, mainly to Great Britain. This plant grew in size and in production and was a major employer for the area. A serious fire during the early hours of March 7th 1898 did much damage to the eastern end of the boiler house, the owners then taking the opportunity while repair work was being undertaken to also up-grade the canning machinery and plant.

During the busy seasons they were employing as many as 60 personnel, and had extended the canning business to include not only rabbits, but beef and mutton, potted meat, chicken and ham. Apart from giving local employment, this gave work to many dozens of men trapping and supplying rabbits for the preserving works. It was stated in the local paper of 1899 that the New Zealand Agricultural Company was employing as many as 70 trappers over their estate, these men being paid by the numbers of rabbits caught. About this time rabbits were also frozen for export, but had to be

of at least 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pounds (1.13kg) weight, with smaller sizes still being canned.

**Otamita Siding, 7m 54ch (12.37km), Alt. 305ft (93m):** This rail siding was a further 3 miles 13 chain from the Croydon siding and was alongside the Hokonui hills. The layout was typical of a NZR country rail siding, with a small raised platform and shelter shed on the right-hand side of the track, while there was a loop and a 40 x 20 foot (12.1 x 6m) goods shed on the right, along with a loading bank and stock yards. The original name for this area was Stoney Creek, however, the rail siding took its name from a major stream running down from the Hokonui Range called the Otamita, (pronounced O-ta-meet).

**Mandeville Siding, 10m 65ch (17.4km), Alt. 335ft (102m):** This siding was 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles from Gore and was the first small settlement on the line. The siding was a bit more extensive than most country sidings with a crossing loop, a 40 x 20 foot (12.1 x 6m) goods shed on a loop plus a back shunt to the stock yards, along with a loading bank and of course, a shelter shed.

As the Waimea Plains Railway was being built by a private company, they had the prerogative of deciding the name for their stations and also to survey where future settlements could be established. Mandeville was the first of these settlements. Before the railway arrived, there was only a hotel in the area, later to be named the Railway Hotel, a store soon followed and before long another country town had started.

When the railway went through, it was anticipated that Mandeville would become a centre of some importance, and

the proposed town survey had no less than 18 streets all named after places in North America. Although the directors of the Railway Company had high hopes for their settlements, many of their dreams did not materialise and in the case of Mandeville there was only a population of 129 some ten years later.

Over the years there has been much discussion on the origin of the name given to the area 'Mandeville'. It would seem that Patrick M<sup>c</sup>Caughan, the name giver, named it after Joseph Clarke's home at Macquarie Plains in Tasmania called 'Norton Mandeville', but for some reason left out the first half of the name. Joseph Clarke was at that time one of the leading men in the company.

In 1887 a flour mill was established at Mandeville when a Robert Doull shifted his plant and equipment from a similar mill at Wyndham. This was quite appropriate as the Waimea Plains by then was becoming the prime grain growing area in the province. The mill was worked by a water-wheel some 13 feet (3.96m) in diameter, with water directed from the Otamita stream using a water race that was just under 4,000 feet (1.2km) in length by 7 feet (2.1m) in width. During the course of the next 25 years the mill had two other owners before it was closed in June 1911.

After leaving the Mandeville yard, the railway line swung around to the right and headed out over the 207 foot (63m) Waimea River bridge, the largest on the line. Then a short distance further on swung to the left crossing the main road and headed in a northwesterly direction in a straight line for 8 miles 60 chains (14.08km) across the lower Waimea Plains. Over this long



**ABOVE:** While little tangible remains today of the Waimea Plains Branch railway, there is the notable exception of Mandeville, where the Waimea Plains Railway Trust has an ambitious long-term project to relay a few kilometres of the line from Mandeville to just beyond the Waimea Creek. In the interim, it's great to have such wonderful

reminders of the past as this charismatic scene of A 427 strolling through the Mandeville of old on a long ago January 8th 1958 summer day. The train was a northbound N<sup>o</sup> 583 Goods.

**PHOTO:** Bob Hepburn

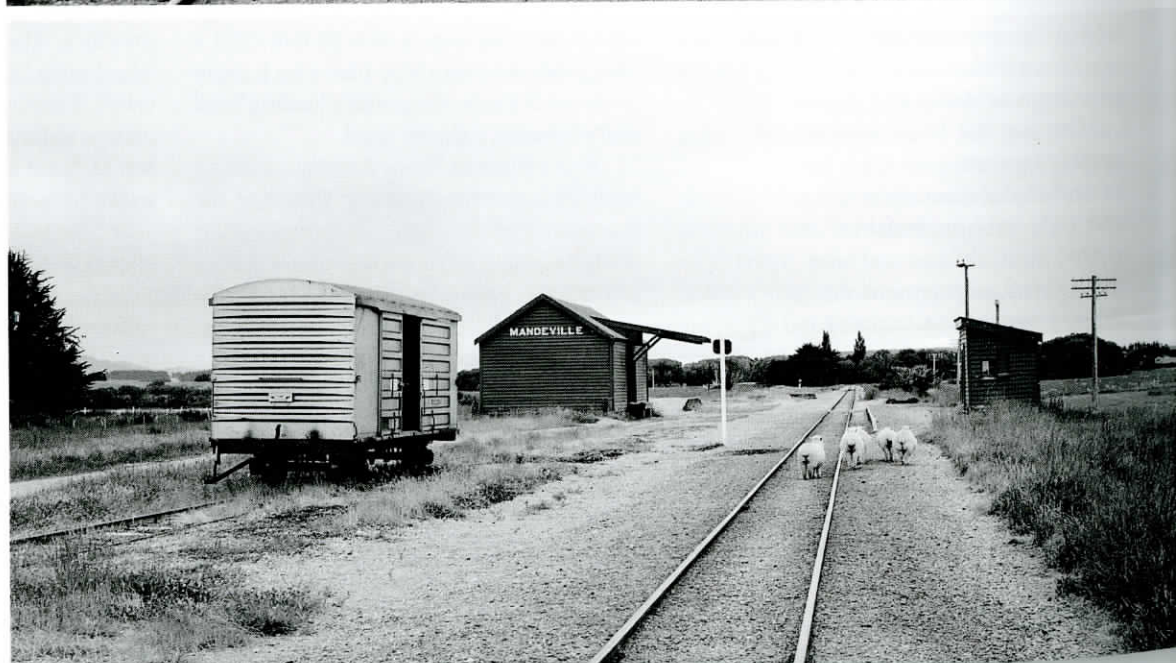
**RIGHT – MANDEVILLE:**

A general view of the Mandeville Station yard, looking towards Gore, on 1st January 1969. It had the usual basic facilities of a small passenger shelter and a goods shed. The verandah on the goods shed is obviously a later addition. Of the many buildings and goods sheds that were along the Waimea Branch, this shed is the only one to this day that still remains on its original site.



**RIGHT:** Viewed from the other direction on the same day, this delightful photo at Mandeville shows some local sheep out for a stroll along the station yard that very much typifies a late 1950s rural station of that period. The lone KP wagon on an overgrown siding and the general run-down appearance of the yard and buildings shows the declining use of the branch and its sidings along the way.

**BOTH PHOTOS:** George Emerson.





**LEFT:** A substantial, bridge crossed the Waimea Stream, north of Mandeville. It was the setting for this scene as AB 726 worked a southbound N<sup>o</sup> 576 Goods to Gore in February 1968. The bridge, N<sup>o</sup> 4 on the branch, was 207 feet (63.1m) long.

**PHOTO:** Chris Bradley

straight there was a further country siding, Pyramid, and the station and sidings at Riversdale.

**Pyramid Siding, 14m 27ch (23.84m), Alt. 374ft (114m):** Situated some 4 miles (6.43km) on from Mandeville this small country siding was a flag station. There was a short crossing loop with 27 wagon capacity, shelter shed, loading bank and stock yards. This siding was named after a well known landmark some five kilometres to the northeast on the eastern side of the

Mataura River. When viewed from the right position this prominent peak looks exactly like a Pyramid.

**Riversdale Station and Sidings, 17m 69ch (28.74km), Alt. 413ft (126m):** This major railway complex was situated almost exactly halfway between Gore and Lumsden. The naming and original planning for this settlement was carried out by the Agricultural Company, this all before the railway was put through. When the rail line came through, a rudimentary passenger

station of wood and iron was built, then some years later when that building became inadequate it was shifted out to the back of the Station Masters house where it was used as stables and outbuildings. The Government replaced this with a more substantial building round 1895. It was also constructed of wood and iron and contained a ladies waiting room, public lobby, booking offices, a store-room and separate postal department.

The Waimea Railway Company also built a goods shed to the west of the main

**RIGHT:** Located a little further on was bridge N<sup>o</sup> 5, a short, low-pile, six-span structure 70 feet (21.3m) long. It made for a picturesque setting on 8th January 1958 as A 427 wandered north with a Waikaia-bound N<sup>o</sup> 583 Goods. In the background were the Hokonui Hills, the dominant landform of the landscape northeast of Gore.

**PHOTO:** Bob Hepburn



**RIGHT – PYRAMID:**

This general view of the Pyramid siding shows AB 721, this time with an 'Up' N° 576 goods train heading to Gore. Like most of the smaller sidings on the Waimea Branch, Pyramid was a flag station, and had the same basic layout of a loop with a passenger shelter and platform, a loading bank and stock yards as did Lintley and St. Patricks at the Lumsden end of the Waimea Plains Branch.

**PHOTO: George Emerson**



yard; later to be purchased by an Alfred Peasse in 1888. It was then taken over sometime round 1900 by the well known mercantile firm of J. E. Watson & Company Ltd., who used it for grain and fertilizer storage. This large building which had a storage capacity for 50,000 sacks of grain was for many decades a local landmark, the company name being written in large letters across the roof.

As traffic and goods on the line increased, so the rail yards at Riversdale became more

extensive, until finally Riverside had a crossing loop, another loop with the 60 x 30 foot (18.2 x 9.1m) goods shed on it, two back-shunts, one of these to J. E. Watson's shed, plus another loop.

While the Waimea Plains line was still being run by the Company, in 1882 the Government made a start on building the Switzers Branch, this leaving from the northern end of the Riversdale rail yards. However, due to many delays over the years this branch at 13 miles 64 chain (22.2km)

did not reach Switzers (Waikaia) until September 1909. Riversdale then became a major junction and it was around that time that fixed signals were installed to protect train movements due to the increasing

**RIVERSDALE:**

The most important station on the branch, by virtue of serving the only township of any consequence, as well as being the junction where the Waikaia (Switzers) Branch commenced.



**LEFT:** Seen from the north, the Riversdale Station comprised a substantial station building with a distinctive verandah. It was designed by renowned railway architect George Troup. The yard was served by a 60 x 30 foot (18 x 9m) goods shed, along with sheep and cattle yards including a low-level loading bank and small water vat.

**PHOTO: George Emerson**

**RIGHT:** The south end of the station building incorporated some later additions for railways operations and additional station staff facilities. This section was later relocated to Kingston as a new station for the reborn *Kingston Flyer* tourist service that began in December 1971.

**PHOTO: George Emerson**







**ABOVE:** Riversdale also featured a lone junction signal, to control train workings from the Waikaia Branch. Back on 8th January 1958, A 427 was captured as the A. & G. Price built 4-6-2 steamed away from Riversdale Station with a N<sup>o</sup> 581 Goods bound for Lumsden. **PHOTO: Bob Hepburn**

activity brought about by the new branch line.

Station staff round this period included a Station Master assisted by a cadet, a messenger and a porter.

With increasing services and Riversdale being a major crossing point for rail traffic, it soon became necessary to replace the existing station building which was moved up to the Freshford rail siding on the Switzers Branch. A new Troup designed station was built at Riversdale. That fine new building was opened in August

1908, and was a classic Troup structure with a 'Marseille' tile roof and many other decorative features. Apart from accommodating through trains on the main platform the new station had a dock at the northern end to cater for trains going to and from Switzers.

**Dudley Township, 19m (30.57km):** This was surveyed out as another township and rail siding and had been given the name of Dudley. There were 29 quarter-acre sections and two main streets, one on the east side named Arthur Street, while one on the west side had been given the name Crown Road. Whether any sections were sold is not known, but this proposed settlement and rail siding never eventuated, in all probability because it was too close to Riversdale which was only little over a mile (1.8km) away.

**Waimea Siding, 21m 10ch (34.04km), Alt. 456ft (139m):** This was another country siding at a distance of 3 miles 28 chains (5.39km) from Riversdale. Again there was a loop, shelter shed, 40 x 20 foot (12.1 x 6m) goods shed, and stock yards etc. This rail yard was more notable for the private siding that branched off and went across to the woolshed on the Waimea Plains sheep station.

This siding was 72 chain long (1.45km) and branched away from the main line at an angle of about 45 degrees, crossed the main road then alongside the woolshed just in off the road.

This siding was constructed at the same time as the main line was being constructed from Lumsden. Many would have seen this as favouritism to George Bell, the owner of the Waimea Plains sheep station. However, there was a more practical

**RIGHT – WAIMEA:** A rare photo of the siding at Waimea with AB 726 on a 'Down' goods passing through and heading for Lumsden in February 1968. By the time this picture was taken, the goods shed had been removed along with the stock yards. The original siding that went into the Waimea Plains sheep station came off the loop as shown near the bottom of the photo and swung out across to the left. Note the later style of building for the shelter shed which had a shallower roof pitch.

**PHOTO: Chris Bradley**





**LEFT-KINGSTON CROSSING:** Once again, this station had the standard yard layout and buildings, although the goods shed was bigger than usual and had two access doors. Another feature was the line to the high-level loading bank and stock yards (out of view to the right and behind the goods shed) that went around the front of goods shed and obviously was an after-thought. The goods shed lasted until 2005 before being demolished.

**PHOTO: George Emerson**

reason; at that time the Waimea sheep run was amongst one of bigger farms in Otago and Southland covering an area of 48,361 acres (19,586 hectares) and carrying around 59,000 head of stock. When it came to the annual shearing, there would have been approximately 985 bales of wool to ship out, so a siding directly alongside the shearing shed would have saved much time and labour. How long this siding was used is unknown as a newer and bigger shearing shed was built near Balfour sometime during 1880. This 25 stand wool shed was able to cater for the growing sheep flock. This is shown when the tally for 1887 was put at 60,000.

Just ahead of the Waimea rail siding was the next section of interest along the main line, this being the embankment and climb up the escarpment to the upper plateau of the plains. This involved a gradient for most of the distance at 1:100 with a short section at 1:120 near the top. The total distance of the gradient being of 150 chain, (3.02km). Once on this upper level, it was only a short distance to the next siding.

**Kingston Crossing Siding, 23m 26ch (43.09km), Alt. 545ft (166m):** Only 2 miles 14 chain (3.5km) on from the Waimea Siding, Kingston Crossing was once again of the standard layout. The platform and shelter shed were put there in the mid 1890s while the goods shed was built in 1898, this shed being 50 x 30 feet (15.2 x 9.14m). A loading bank was provided in 1899. There was also a loop to the stock yards that went around, behind the goods shed. The goods shed lasted until around 2005 when it was broken up after being found to be full of wood borer.

The name Kingston Crossing came about during the wagoning days, for it was here that wagons coming from Dunedin met those coming up from Gore, and from this junction some would go to Lake Wakatipu and others to Te Anau. The names of Kingston and Kingston Crossing did cause confusion, especially to railway travellers, and one story goes that a honeymooning couple bound for Queenstown left the train at Kingston Crossing only to realise their mistake after the train had resumed

its journey!

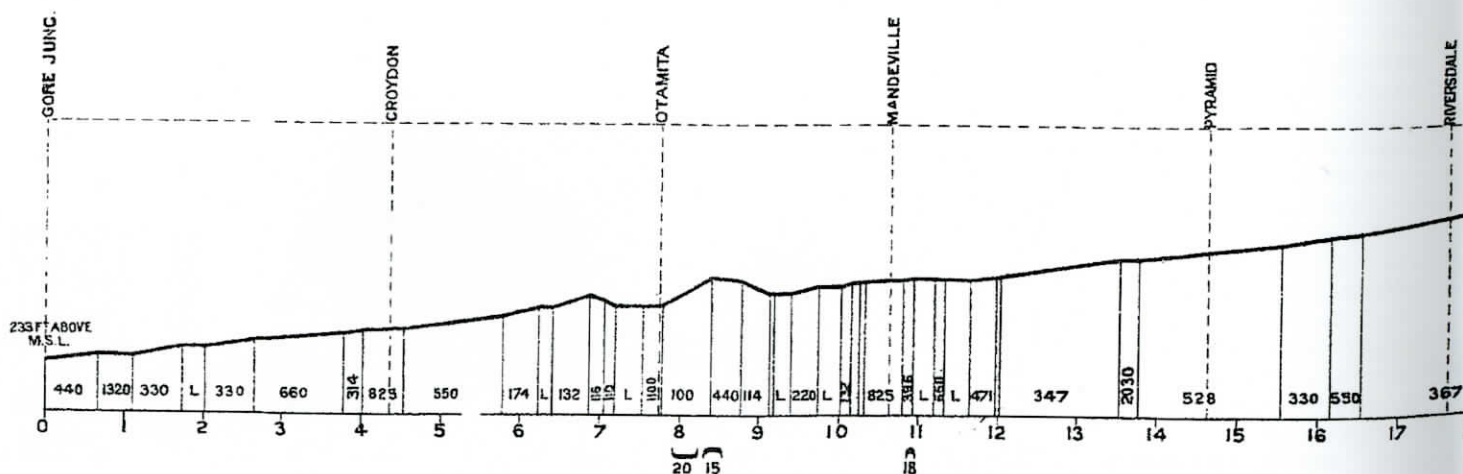
**Balfour Station and Sidings, 26m 51ch (43.09km), Alt. 541ft (165m):** With the arrival of the railway in the area, the township of Balfour became the second largest on the Waimea Plains. The original name for the station was 'Longridge' but this was changed in 1888 to save confusion with similar names used by the local School, Post Office and a sheep station in that part of the country. Where the name Balfour came from is not exactly known, it may have been taken from a British statesman, while others believe it came from a stockman who used to live in a hut near the railway.

The rail yards were fairly typical with a crossing loop, another loop with two goods sheds, a back shunt, and another loop that served the large grain store owned by Wright Stephenson & Co.

The two 40 x 30 foot (12.1 x 9.1m) goods sheds were placed approximately back to back; one having a round roof while the other had a conventional pitched roof. The pitched roof shed was built on site during

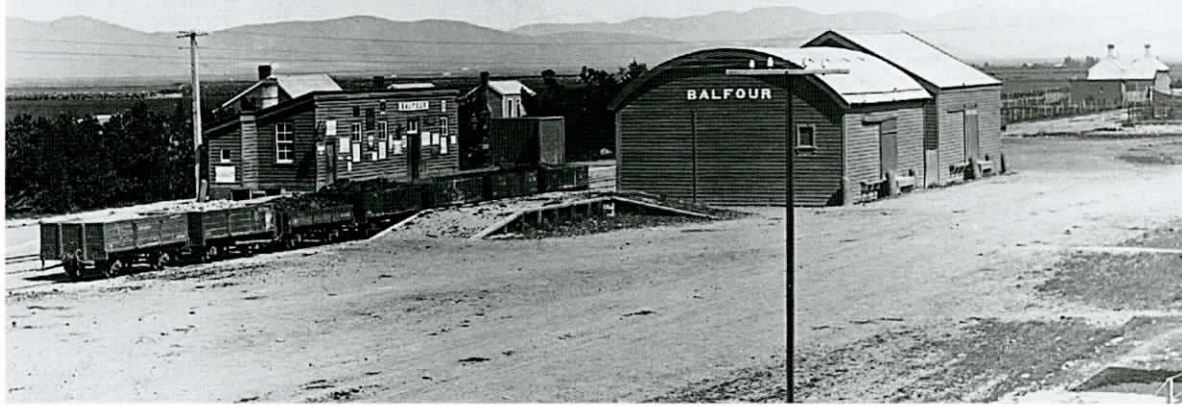
**GRADIENT PROFILE:** The 36 mile (59 kilometre) Waimea Plains Branch was unremarkable from any geographic perspective. Gradients were modest, with a couple of kilometres of 1 in 100 between Waimea and Kingston Crossing the most significant. With no tunnels and just five bridges (plus a number of culverts), the branch was better known for the trains that operated over it; most notably the original *Kingston Flyer* services from more than a century ago to the 1950s and '60s era passenger holiday specials that ran via the branch to Kingston.

**DRAWING: Jim Brown collection**



**BALFOUR**

Ten miles (16 kilometres) from Lumsden, Balfour gained some latter years notoriety when this section of line was retained for irregular shunts to convey grain to Lumsden and beyond. Rather amazingly, the 'Balfour Branch' lasted almost an additional seven years until it too was closed to traffic on 15th January 1978 and the track lifted.

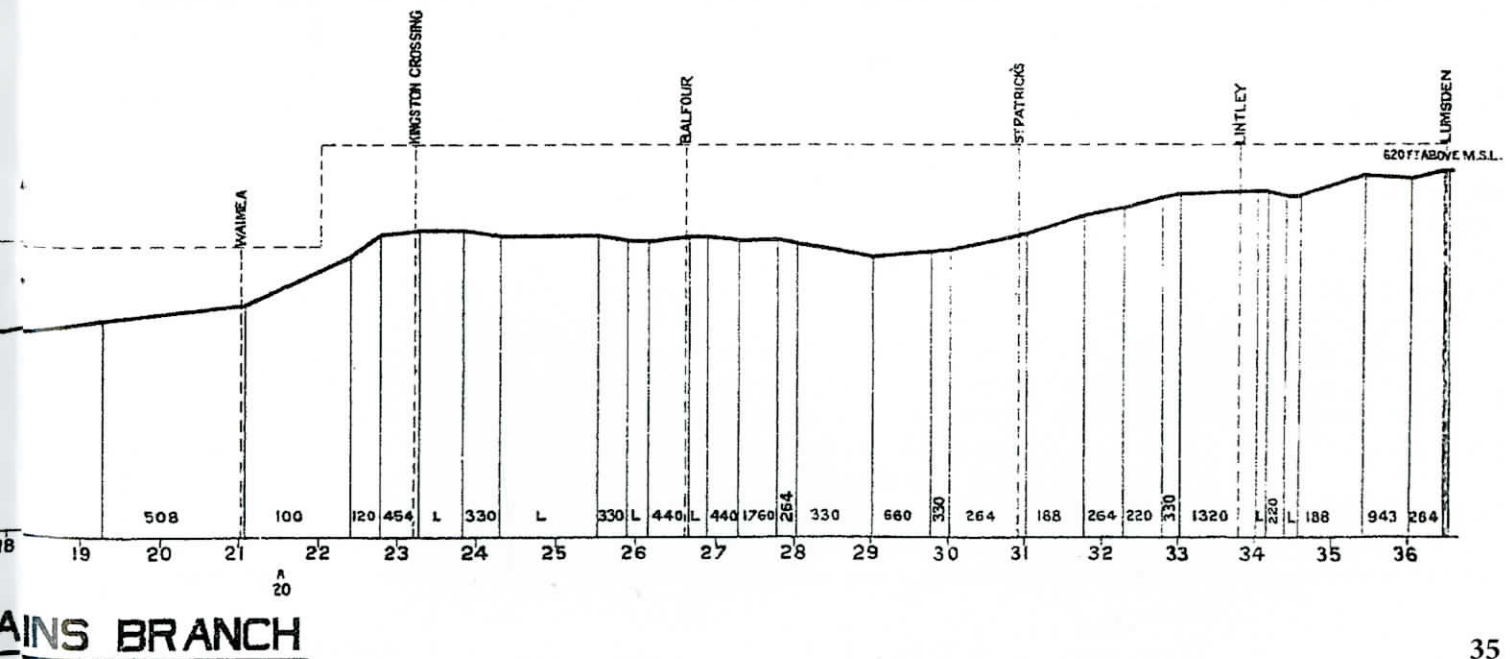


**BELOW:** Balfour was a hive of activity when this April 1969 scene was recorded, as fertiliser was being transferred from wagon to a local farmer's truck, while an unidentified AB hauled goods service paused at the station, perhaps after shunting a wagon or two on or off the train. The tractor out to the left, sitting partly on the roadway, was a David Brown shunting tractor, has a large flat board across the front for pushing rail wagons. By the time this image was taken, the radial rooved goods shed had been moved off-site, with just the peaked roof example still in service.

**PHOTO:** *Balfour – Pioneers To Present, 2004 (book)*

**ABOVE:** For many years Balfour featured two goods sheds. Indeed, both featured in this 1907 vintage postcard scene. Although both were 40 x 30 feet (12.2 x 9.1m) in size, they were immediately different with one having a radial roof, the other peaked. The station was a typical Vogel-era lean-to building; note the array of advertising signs plastered over the front wall. Also of note are the railway houses behind, the short loading bank and a rake of period 'highsider' wagons.

**PHOTO:** *Courtesy Gore Historical Museum collection*





**LEFT:** A picture of a less busy post-Christmas time is seen here as AB 721 rolled into Balfour on 27th December 1968. The consist of N<sup>o</sup> 576 Goods that day comprised just a 47 1/2 foot (14.5m) guard's van, although a few wagons were uplifted from intermediate stations as the train headed to Gore. By that era, Balfour's station building had been replaced with a much more utilitarian structure, the round rooved goods shed had been moved to a location nearby, while the yard trackage looked neglected.

**PHOTO:** George Emerson

1888 – the first building to be built in Balfour, while the other was shifted there during 1890 from the Josephville rail siding south of Lumsden.

Before a proper station was built there had been a shelter shed for the travelling public, this was erected during October 1893.

The first station building was built during early 1899 with a Station Master being appointed from April 1st. At this same time the Post and Telegraph office moved into the new station and remained there until they moved out into new premises in November 1912. It was also during 1912 that a full length verandah was added to the station. From October 1921 it became an 'officered' station during the depression period and did not reopen as a full station until 30th May 1949.

On 26th July 1955 the railway station at Balfour was destroyed by fire, a replacement being constructed in Invercargill and conveyed to Balfour by rail. This new building included a general waiting room and a store room for parcels and goods in transit.

**St. Patricks Siding, 31m 21ch (50.40km), Alt. 545ft (166m):** Continuing a further 4 miles 24 chain (6.9km) up the line was the siding of St. Patricks. This was a standard loop siding with a capacity of 20 wagons, along with a shelter shed, stock yards and loading bank. The Railway Company rather humorously named this siding after the well known personality and shareholder Patrick McCaughan.

**Lintley Siding, 34m 13.5ch (55.05km), Alt. 597ft (182m):** Two miles and 70 chain (4.62km) further along was the last siding

on the line before Lumsden. This was Lintley and here, once again, there had been surveyed another settlement, this to be called Lintley Village. However, this did not come about because it was too close to the developing main centre of Lumsden. On the railway side, the set-up and layout was exactly the same as St. Patricks. This siding took its name from a row of hills just to the north of Lumsden called the 'Lintley Range'.

**Lumsden, 36m 46.5ch (59.07km), Alt. 630ft (192m):** It was the coming of the railway that made Lumsden. Prior to that the only building was a shepherd's hut. The town's first name of Elbow was given by the well known surveyor, J. T. Thomson, who took the name from the characteristic shape of the Oreti River just to the west. Confusion came when this name was used by the railway and growing township while an area to the west was known as the Elbow District. The residents of the Elbow District wrote to a Mr. George Lumsden (a member of the Otago Provincial Council and at that time, Mayor of Invercargill) referring to this difficulty. Mr. Lumsden sent a telegram to the Railways Department notifying of the problem but did not offer any suggestions. Some 'bright' official, noting the telegram was signed by Lumsden, suggested that his name would be suitable for the new township. As there were no objections the suggestion was adopted and in this rather unusual way, the name came into being. Again confusion persisted when the Railways Department continued to use the name Elbow for the station, and it wasn't until 1885 they changed to the name of Lumsden.

Soon after the railway reached the area a township was surveyed and buildings

began to spring up around the railway station. The station and yards at Lumsden became a major junction when the main line to Kingston was completed in July 1878, followed some two years later by the Waimea Branch that was opened in July 1880. This was then followed by the opening of the Mararoa Branch line to Mossburn in January 1887.

By the early 1900s, Lumsden was a booming township with a population of about 300. The town boasted three hotels, two blacksmith shops, two general stores, two bakeries, and a butchers shop. There was even a bootmaker and a tailor's shop.

The first railway station building was built when construction of the new line to Kingston reached Lumsden in February 1876. This basic building was to last just on 49 years, but during those many years there were many additions and improvements. The first of these came in 1897 when there were additions made for a guard's room and lamp room, these being built onto the back of the main building. Then there were extensions made during 1901, followed by more additions during 1902. By then the station had all the usual appointments including waiting, refreshment, and reading rooms. Finally, a verandah was added during 1909.

In October 1902 a local delegation raised the question with their parliamentary representative on the possibility of getting a new and larger station built – they were given a resounding 'no'.

Shortly after midnight on 30th of January 1935 a fire completely destroyed the station along with the tea rooms owned by a Mr. Alexander Macalister. Once the alarm had been raised a bucket brigade was formed to try and save the building, but their efforts

**RIGHT:** This delightful postcard scene, although previously published, is still worthy of a repeat. Created by the well-known commercial team of Muir & Moodie with a "protected" (copyright) date of 7th June 1906, the actual date of the image may have been some months earlier. Of note, the station is without a verandah, while the 80 x 30 foot (24.4 x 9.1m) goods shed was a perfect display wall for advertising literature of the era for travellers to study and perhaps make some informed decision? The passenger train at the platform could be going to either Invercargill or Gore.

**PHOTO:** Jim Dangerfield collection



### LUMSDEN

The 'other end' of the Waimea Plains Line was also a junction with the line from Invercargill continuing on to Kingston and Mossburn. Lumsden, like Gore, enjoyed a long association with the NZR, that furthermore gained national prominence as the operations base for the 1970s era *Kingston Flyer* tourist train, that ironically commenced running some eight months after the majority of the Waimea Plains Line closed!

**BELOW RIGHT:** Another Muir & Moodie postcard scene of Lumsden railway station and environs. It was overprinted with a 'protected' date of 1.11.12 (1st November 1912) and certainly it does show the station building with its post 1909 verandah. Adding interest to this picture were the two trains assembled in the yard; on the left a V class 2-6-2 worked a mixed, while on the right was a 'Canterbury J' 2-6-0 (note the distinctive cab 'porthole' window!) Both locomotives by this date had Westinghouse air compressors mounted on the smokebox on the fireman's side of the locos.

**PHOTO:** Jim Dangerfield collection

**ABOVE:** A standard NZR style passenger verandah was added to Lumsden's Station building in 1909. In this formal record scene, the station staff were duly lined up for the occasion, all dressed in their appropriate

NZR issued uniform and associated attire. This building was the original 1876 station, albeit with many alterations and additions in the following years. **PHOTO:** Courtesy Gore Historical Museum collection



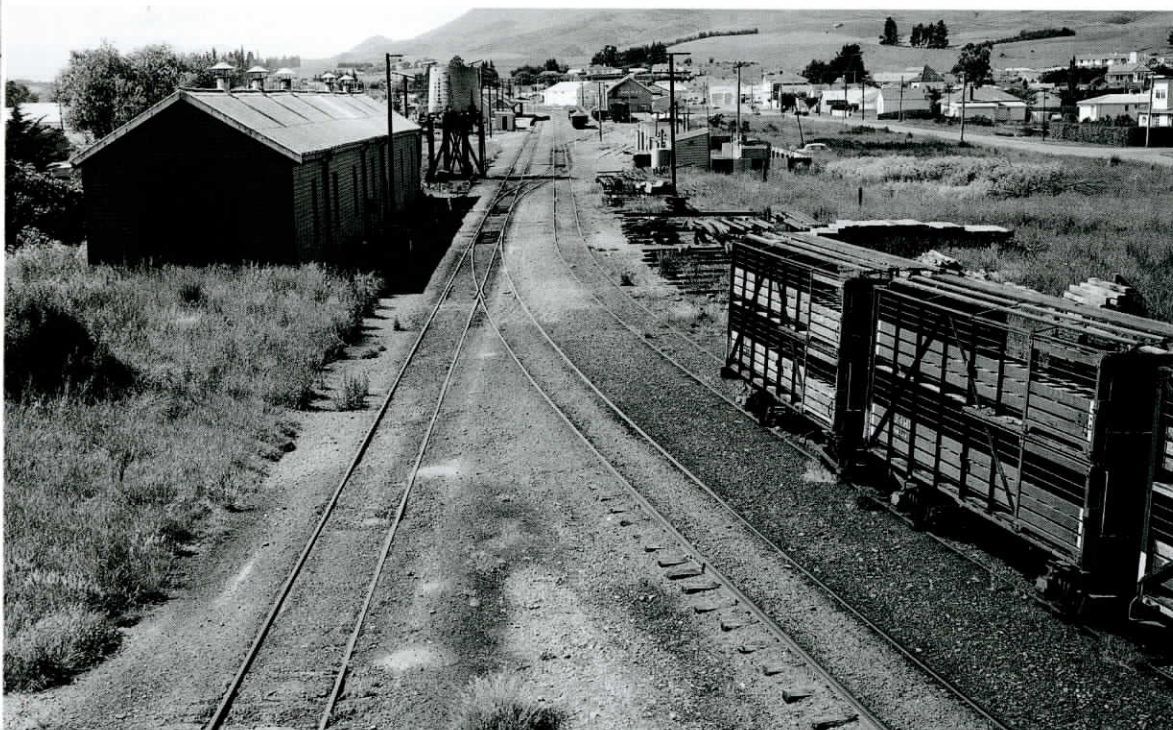


**LEFT:** The latter day Lumsden Station building was the Dunback Station, re-sited to replace the former structure destroyed by fire, with the main part dating from early 1936 and the verandah added two years later. It still stands today as part of the township's recent rail heritage precinct developed as a local tourism initiative. However, back in January 1971 it was still a working station on the far-flung NZR network. The station building featured a tall peaked roof and an extended platform verandah. It was still a working yard too as witness the wagons on the sidings; the tarpaulin-covered highsiders no doubt carrying grain from the remaining Balfour Branch.

**PHOTO:** George Emerson

**RIGHT:** The presence of DJ 1221 on a made-up goods service from Invercargill was illustrative of the changes underway at Lumsden in this era. In the centre background were the goods shed and station, while in the right foreground, the commanding presence of a water vat, both of which went on to enjoy a new role later in that year – 1971 – when the *Kingston Flyer* operation commenced.

**PHOTO:** George Emerson



**LEFT:** This view nicely captures the junction of the Waimea Plains Line as the track curved in from the right – in reality from the southeast. The line was still in use as the 'Balfour Branch' for grain shipments. On the left of this picture was the engine shed, water vat, and in the centre distance the adjoining station and goods shed buildings. Adding interest to the overall scene were the two JC class sheep wagons and assorted track fittings scattered alongside the yard tracks.

**PHOTO:** George Emerson

were to prove hopeless and once the fire had burnt itself out all that remained were two chimneys. During the height of the blaze the Invercargill mixed train standing opposite the station had to be pushed clear, but one of the carriages was scorched. Five wagons in the loop containing stone were also pushed clear. An emergency office was established during the morning and business was carried on as usual, but the loss of railway records and correspondence caused a considerable amount of inconvenience.

Rather than build new it was decided to relocate two surplus station buildings, one of these from Waikaia on the Switzers branch and the other from Orawia in western Southland. By June 1935 the shifting and re-erection of the buildings at Lumsden had been completed along with a verandah taken from the Waikaka Station. Once these buildings had been adapted and furnished it had cost just over £703.

Then some 10 months later on 16th November around 1:00am another fire not only destroyed the building, but also threatened railway trucks and carriages in the vicinity which had to be moved from danger. Apparently it was a calm night, but the lack of water hampered efforts to save the building.

To provide another station it was once again decided to relocate a surplus building, this time from Dunback on the Inch Valley Branch out from Palmerston. By December of 1935 it was reported that the removal was in hand, which would have meant partly disassembling the building so that it could be transported by rail. This time the costs of shifting including the fitting of a verandah was £1,000.

During mid 1937, a full length extension some 12 feet wide (3.65m) was built along

the back of the building. Then in November work was put in hand to put a gabled roof over the whole building. Later that year and into 1938 the verandah was extended to the north to cater for the railway bus passengers. Today this building still remains on site in Lumsden and is looked after by a community trust that use it as a local history museum with one end leased as a craft shop.

As trade and business grew, so did the facilities at the railway station. The rail yards were to eventually have a main crossing loop, another three loops one of which had the large 80 x 30 foot (24.3 x 9.1m) goods shed, along with back shunts for the stock yards, engine shed and loco coaling siding.

Although Lumsden had a locomotive depot there was no engine turntable, instead there was a turning triangle to the south of the rail yards. This was formed by using the incoming Waimea Branch line and a cross connecting track to the main line coming in from Invercargill, thus forming a triangle.

One unusual feature of the rail yards was the use of a Ramapo points lever and indicator stand where the branch line from Waimea came onto the main line at the south end of the Lumsden yards. This American designed switchstand, was one of 40 imported by the New Zealand Railways during 1899 and were used in selected areas around the nation. The Lumsden switchstand was used right up to the beginning of 1962. This stand and one at Makarewa Junction were the only examples used in Southland.

### The Busy Years

The years from 1890 until around 1920 were the busy years for the Waimea Branch,

when freight and farm produce were the main business. The freight carried during those times included wool, stock, dairy products, grain and rabbits. From the 1890s through to the early 1900s rabbits were a major source of revenue for the railways with thousands upon thousands being transported to the preserving works. These, along with dried rabbit skins, came from as far a field as Five Rivers on the Kingston Line.

The cartage of stock was another important business for the Railways, especially during the major seasonal stock sales held in Gore. Then, as the farms improved, the cartage of fat stock became a regular item, such as lambs and beef cattle to the local freezing works at Mataura.

Another seasonal product was the transporting of wool, either to the store of a local mercantile firm, or straight to the shipping port of Bluff.

Over the many decades of supplying wagons to the different rail sidings there were always complaints from farmers of either insufficient wagons being brought in, or of not arriving on the day or days requested. This was a serious problem during the late 1870s and beyond. But as the years went by and the railways were able to improve their supply of wagons, it became less of an issue.

During the early years it was not unknown for large pieces of mining machinery, that had been manufactured in Dunedin, to be transported to Central Otago via the Waimea Branch and up Lake Wakatipu to Queenstown.

The biggest tonnage of freight by far to be carried on the Waimea line was the carting of bagged grain, wheat and oats, particularly oats. During the harvest season

**RIGHT:** Little is known about this vintage postcard scene taken in the early years of the 20th Century. An original *Kingston Flyer* passenger service from Kingston and Lumsden is shown nearing Gore Railway Station. Although the K class 2-4-2 is unidentified, one can see the Westinghouse air compressor mounted on the driver's side of the smokebox. In the applicable timeframe of 1905-1910, we do know that K's 92, 94, and 95 were all active in Southland in this period.

**PHOTO:** Courtesy Gore Historical Museum collection



Gore once possessed a wonderful railway presence with a magnificent station, various secondary structures including a substantial goods shed, two signal boxes, one at each end of the station, with an interlocked yard and accompanying semaphores and related signalling gear ... plus a compact loco depot, complete with a single road shed and a turntable.

THREE PHOTOS: George Emerson, courtesy Richard Emerson

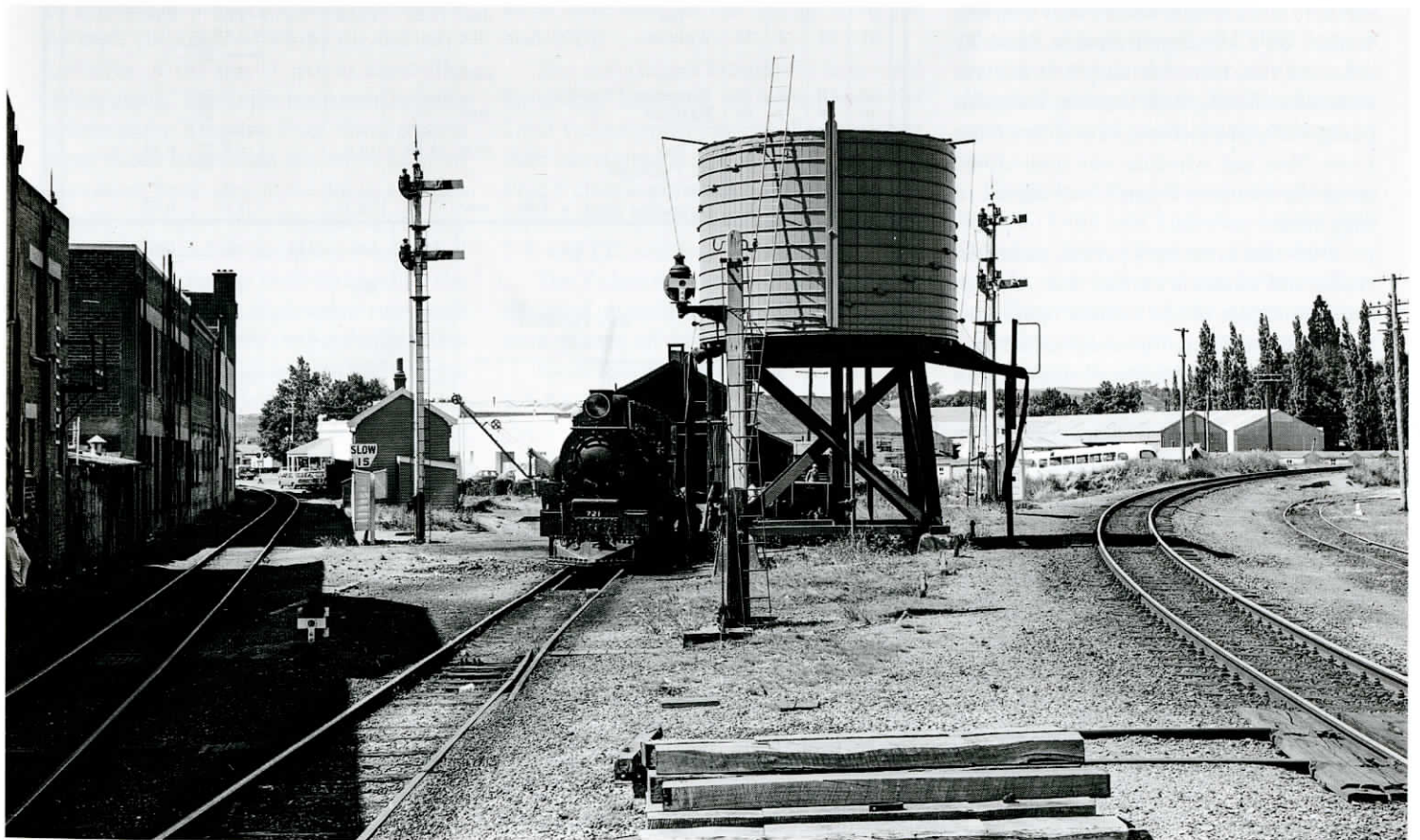
**RIGHT:** Quintessentially Gore! The town's once grand rail precinct was forever associated by Gore's signature Creamoata cereal and grain factory. It was indeed a dominant aspect of this charming 27th December 1968 view as AB 721, just arrived ex-N<sup>o</sup> 576 Goods from Lumsden, shuffled through a holiday period yard almost bare of the usual assortment of goods wagons that were commonly found at this busy railway junction in eastern Southland.

**BELOW LEFT:** It's all so very different today – but back on a sunny post-Christmas day from the final week of 1968, AB 721 seemed right at home amongst a range of period motor cars and trucks as she rolled into Gore with a short holiday-time Friday Lumsden to Gore N<sup>o</sup> 576 Goods. The intersection was an earlier pre-roundabout State Highway 1 entry into Gore after crossing over the Mataura River Bridge. Real sixties magic!

**BELOW RIGHT:** Sandwiched between the Main South Line (curving off to the right) and the start of the Waimea Plains Branch (left), Gore's photogenic little locomotive depot featured all the basics, with a modest single-road engine shed, a 55 foot (16.7m) turntable, a twin-spout water vat and basic fueling facilities of a pneumatic coaling crane and tubs of coal ready for a hungry steam locomotive.







this was a very busy time for the railways when thousands of tons of grain were moved from sidings to the local grain stores. A report from the *Mataura Ensign* of 1901 said, ...so heavy was the grain business that whole train loads of the golden cereal were sent away at a time.

It was not unknown at Wright Stephenson's store in Balfour to have bagged grain stacked from the floor right up to the roof-rafters.

Also there were at times when hundreds of yards of bagged grain was stacked outside, running from Wright Stephenson's store right out to the roadway on the east side. Tarpaulins and wagons were at a premium, and as to be expected there were disputes as to whose wagon was whose.

During the early 1900s the quantities of grain being exported from the Southland region was averaging round 32,000 tons per annum, most of this coming from the Waimea Plains.

To give some idea of the quantities, during the year 1919 there were 17,201 bags of grain handled at Balfour, while in 1922 this had risen to 30,212 bags.

Inward freight to the many sidings on the branch for the numerous farms would have included bagged fertilizers and lime, stock, farm machinery, timber for new buildings and sheds, fencing materials, and other items used in everyday work in the development of farms along the route.

When the Switzers Branch came into use from 1909, it contributed to the freight traffic on the Waimea Line, especially between Riversdale and Gore. From 1926 on there was a freight service only that was worked on a Monday, Thursday, Saturday schedule, then from February 1931 this was reduced to Tuesday and Thursday the trains being worked by locomotive and crew from Gore. That last schedule was maintained until the Switzers Branch was closed in May 1959.

Over that same busy period, passenger traffic and numbers carried were also an important part of the railway operations over the branch line. The scheduled services were nearly all mixed and usually ran first thing in the morning and again late afternoon, the early train from Lumsden to Gore picking up secondary school pupils for manual training classes and high school.

Then there were the weekend specials, chartered trains for special events such as going to the race meetings held in Gore or Wyndham, or sports meetings like the annual gathering for the Balfour Caledonian Society sports. Picnic specials were also very well patronised, going to places like the lakeside at Kingston, or a trip up the lake to Queenstown. Other trips were

to the south coast, the popular places being Riverton or further along to Colac Bay.

### A New Passenger-Only Service

In an effort to boost tourism at the time of the Government purchase of the Lake Wakatipu steamer service, it was arranged that the former mixed train service between Kingston and Gore become a purely passenger train. This new service which started on November 1st 1902 and allowed approximately 3 1/2 hours for the journey from Kingston to Gore. The new service had much the same schedule as the mixed train with stops at all stations *en route* to pick up and put down passengers where required. There were ten intermediate stops between Gore

and Lumsden and eight on the line up to Kingston.

On this run the train nearly always consisted of a set of three carriages and a guard's van, one of the carriages being a clerestory-roofed car of which half was an open balcony - commonly known as a 'birdcage car'. This type of car had, at one end two small compartments capable of seating six people each, access to the compartments being gained via the balcony of which the open side was protected by a

**Table 1 - Summary of Working Timetable  
1 November 1902**

To Gore		To Kingston	
Kingston dep	9:00 am	Gore dep	1:45 pm
Lumsden arr	10:45 "	Riversdale dep	2:36 "
Lumsden dep	10:55 "	Lumsden arr	3:30 "
Riversdale dep	11:45 "	Lumsden dep	3:40 "
Gore arr	12:30 pm	Kingston arr	5:30 "

**BELOW:** Reproduced from the December 1916 Working Timetable. In the midst of the Great War, the Waimea Plains Branch was a busy line with Goods, 'Goods with car', Mixed and straight passenger services all scheduled to run, although curiously the two Goods in each direction - 'Down' Trains 575 and 577, and 'Up' Trains 578 and 582, were timetabled as 'Runs when Required' (RR) services. Note too the train crossing stations - Balfour and Waimea.

**TIMETABLE:** Jim Brown collection

WAIMEA PLAINS BRANCH.										
DISTANCE.				DOWN		573	575	577	579	581
From		Between Stations.		STATIONS.		Fri. only Goods with car.	RR	RR		
Mls.	Chs.	Mls.	Chs.				Goods	Goods	Pass	Mixed
				Gore Junct.	x CWE dep.	10.1	10.1	11.15	12.45	4.35
4	28	4	28	Croydon	...	"	"	"	"	"
7	41	3	13	Otamita (W 1/2-mile Up)	...	"	"	"	"	"
10	46	3	05	Mandeville	...	"	"	"	"	"
14	53	4	07	Pyramid	...	"	"	"	"	"
17	54	3	01	Riversdale	x W arr.	...	...	12.40	1.33	5.42
				Do.	...	dep.	11.20	11.28	1.37	5.50
21	03	3	29	Waimea	...	arr.	...	...	1.46	...
				Do.	...	dep.	"	"	1.48	"
23	13	2	10	Kingston Crossing	...	arr.	...	...	...	...
26	49	3	36	Balfour	x ... arr.	...	...	...	...	...
				Do.	...	dep.	11.52	12.0	2.2	6.23
30	60	4	11	St. Patricks	...	"	"	"	"	"
33	60	3	00	Lintley	...	"	"	"	"	"
36	41	2	61	Lumsden Jct.	x CW arr.	12.26	12.35	...	2.27	6.55
DISTANCE.				UP		576	578	580	582	584
From		Between Stations.		STATIONS.		Mixed	RR	RR	RR	Fri. only Goods with car.
Mls.	Chs.	Mls.	Chs.				Goods	Pass	Goods	
				Lumsden Jct.	x CW dep.	7.15	...	1.3	1.18	1.18
2	61	2	61	Lintley	...	"	"	"	"	"
5	61	3	00	St. Patricks	...	"	"	"	"	"
9	72	4	11	Balfour	x ... arr.	...	...	...	1.58	1.58
				Do.	...	dep.	7.50	1.26	2.10	2.10
13	28	3	36	Kingston Crossing	...	"	"	"	"	"
15	38	2	10	Waimea	...	arr.	...	1.44	...	...
				Do.	...	dep.	"	1.48	...	...
18	67	3	29	Riversdale	x W arr.	...	...	1.54	2.45	2.45
				Do.	...	dep.	8.25	8.45	1.56	3.0
21	68	3	01	Pyramid	...	"	"	"	"	"
25	75	4	07	Mandeville	...	"	"	"	"	"
29	00	3	05	Otamita (W 1/2-mile Up)	...	"	"	"	"	"
32	13	3	13	Croydon	...	"	"	"	"	"
36	41	4	28	Gore Junct.	x CWE arr.	9.30	10.0	2.38	4.15	4.15

wire screen. The other half of the car had a more conventional arrangement that has been a feature of NZR carriages, an open saloon with an aisle down the centre between the seats.

The timetable for this new service is summarized in Table 1.

The morning service was the 'Up' train, N<sup>o</sup> 580, Kingston to Gore with a scheduled time for the whole journey of 3 hours 38 minutes. The afternoon train was the 'Down' N<sup>o</sup> 579, Gore to Kingston with a running time set for 3 hours 40 minutes. During those early years it was usual for the Kingston based train crews to change over with Gore crews at Riversdale.

It was on this service that the famous Rogers'-built, K' class 2-4-2 locomotives were almost exclusively used and gained a reputation for putting up some sleek times, especially when they had to make their connections at either Gore or Kingston. During the period of 1914 it is known that there were three K class engines used on this service, Numbers 88, 92 and 94.

With a consist weighing around 46 tons these modest sized 2-4-2s were able to maintain steady running times to keep on schedule. The average speed of the trains to meet the timetable had to be over 20 miles per hour (32 kph), while the section between Riversdale and Gore called for an average start to stop speed of just on 26 mph (41.6 kph). On the Waimea Branch passenger-only trains were allowed a maximum speed of 45 mph (72 kph).

From these figures it can be seen that if a train had to make up time it would not be impossible to reach speeds in excess of 30 mph (48 kph), which to the ordinary traveller of the day it would seem like 'flying along.' Hence the train soon became known as the 'Kingston Flyer'. Some reports from those times said the train had, on occasions, been seen to be doing a mile a minute (96 kph). Whether this speed was actually attained or not is not known, but stories of prodigious performances by the train were such that high-speed runs were often talked about, and the passenger trains on the 'plains' to Kingston run had become legendary even while they still ran. Today these stories occupy a special place in the folklore of New Zealand Railways.

Later on, when the scheduled run times for 'Flyer' trains was changed (sometime round 1915), it was usual for the crews working Trains 579 and 580 to change at the Waimea siding or on some occasions at Kingston Crossing. The morning crew who took N<sup>o</sup> 576 Mixed from Lumsden would arrive in Gore at 9:30am. The driver, fireman and guard from 576 would then take the N<sup>o</sup> 579 'Flyer' from Gore at

12:45pm. and go up as far as Waimea where they would cross the 'Up' train, N<sup>o</sup> 580 at 1:44pm. At that siding the two crews would then swap trains.

During the Christmas and Easter holidays it was usual to have double the number of cars on the trains and for them to be double-headed. During the early hours of 12th May 1919 misfortune struck when fire completely destroyed the loco shed at Kingston, and the K class locomotive housed there was badly damaged. A replacement engine had to be obtained from Lumsden to run the 'Flyer' service to Gore.

Towards the end of 1926 and through 1927, most of the K class locomotives were laid up and written off having reached the end of their economic working life. The 'Flyer' service then ran using the NZR U and UA class 4-6-0 locomotives, and it was these locos that were used until the service ended on 4th October 1937 when regular passenger services by train between Lumsden and Kingston were discontinued.

### Locomotives Used On The Branch

The very first locomotives used on the Waimea Branch line were the two Neilson-built 0-6-0 saddle-tank engines, later to become the NZR F class when the line was taken over by the Government. In their place the line was operated by the 2-6-0 J class tender locomotives; these versatile engines being at home on any type of service regardless whether it was freight only, or an express passenger train. These locos were used on the line up until the mid-1920s.

The next class of locomotive to be used for general duties on the branch were the 2-6-2 V class tender engines. Exactly when their use started is not known, but around 1922 V class locos, numbers 35 and 63, were stationed at Lumsden, along with J's 26, 117, 118, and 121, and two K's, 88 and 95.

The V class probably worked the line at the latest up until 1926 as most of the class were written off during 1927.

From that period on, the NZR U class 4-6-0 locomotives were in general use along the branch, and would have been used through till the end of World War II.

Once the War was over, the services were gradually taken over by A and AB 4-6-2 class locomotives, these engines being used up until the late 1960s. The AB class locomotives were the heaviest to be used on the Waimea Branch. Finally the diesel age had arrived and services on the branch were headed by the Mitsubishi-built DJ class diesel-electric locomotives, these being used until closure of the line in April 1971.

### The Final Years

During the latter part of the 1930s and through World War II, freight and passenger numbers on the Waimea Branch began to fall away as people began to use the motor car more and more, and freight was being carried by privately owned road-transport companies.

Railway services around the region had fallen on lean times. As a result the Waimea Line was closed to all passenger services as from 17th September 1945, but special trains could be run during the Christmas and Easter holidays, this situation lasting until 1959.

Until 1956 the line still enjoyed a daily goods train five days a week from Lumsden, but in 1959 this was reversed and the train was worked from Gore. This goods only service was run by either an A or AB based at Gore, and usually ran on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday scheduled to depart Gore at 10:00am and returning at 4:00pm.

On the 1st of July 1967, the Minister of Railways, Mr. J. B. Gordon, held a meeting in Lumsden where he stated that the Government was seeking ways throughout the entire railway system to eliminate all loss-making services, especially where suitable alternative transport was available. He argued that many lines were expensive to maintain and that \$14,000 would have to be spent on renewing communications equipment alone along the Waimea Plains line. His final injunction was *use it or lose it*.

During 1968, with that in mind, a 'rail retention committee' was setup by the people in the Waimea District to try and meet an annual target of 27,000 tons of freight as required by the Minister. But despite their best efforts, stock and station agents still sent goods to the farmers by road.

Regular through trains ceased to run between Gore and Lumsden on the 19th October 1970. However, two shunting services were initiated, one between Gore and Riversdale, and the other between Lumsden and Kingston Crossing, these to run three times per week. This left a gap of 5 miles 42 chains (8.89km) unused, though the track was still in place.

Then at a public meeting held in Lumsden on 28th July 1970 the Minister, Mr. Gordon, told those attending that unless some 'rabbits were pulled out of the hat' the line would be closed from the 1st April 1971. He said that he was prepared to keep the 10 mile (16km) section of line from Lumsden to Balfour as a spur to serve the grain and seed stores, as there was still some 4,000 tons of wheat grown in the Balfour region.

With the final day of operation on the

Waimea Plains set down for Wednesday 31st March 1971, there was a final flurry of activity with excursions over the line. On March 20th a train of eleven carriages and a guard's van left Dunedin at 8:30am behind two D diesel locomotives, 1224 and 1228.

This train made its way to Invercargill first, where complimentary cups of hot tea were served to the passengers on the platform during the stop for lunch. Then it was north along the line to Lumsden where the locomotives were run around the train at the station in readiness for the trip down the Waimea. The consist then travelled down the plains to arrive at the Gore

Station, where once again the locomotives were run round the train and then the final trip back to Dunedin which was reached at 7:10pm. A round trip of 328 miles (525km).

One week later there was another excursion when 400 people took the opportunity to go on a farewell trip over the Waimea Line. That excursion started in Invercargill going up to Lumsden, down the Waimea Plains to Gore and then returning to Invercargill.

On Wednesday the 31st, the day before closure of the line, there was one final fling in the form of another excursion over the line taking pupils from Knapdale,

Mandeville and Wendonside schools along with other interested parties. They made the trip from Gore to Lumsden and return. Also on this day there was one last goods train, 24 wagons of cattle that had been loaded at the Castle Rock siding on the Mossburn Branch, and were being shifted from Walter Peak sheep station to Palmerston.

From and including April 1st 1971 the Waimea Line was closed from Balfour to just north of Gore at the Gore Gravel and Crushing Company's private siding. Ultimately this short section of line (1.91km) was also closed from 1st October 1972.

During the later part of 1971 a start was made on the lifting of the Waimea Plains line, working eastward from Balfour. The rails were sent to the North Island and the sleepers sold off at 10 cents each, as is-where is. There was no lack of buyers for those cheap fence posts.

At one stage it was proposed to leave the section of line from Gore to Mandeville in place as a service siding for a planned meat works to be built in the area of Mandeville. However, the never eventuated and that track was closed and lifted.

In the meantime services were to continue on the line to Balfour, the Lumsden Station Master arranging a shunting train to Balfour as and when required. This branch was to last in an operational manner for another three years after 1974. The line then lay abandoned till officially closed on 15th January 1978. With the closing of this last section of the rail line, the long and involved story of the Waimea Plains Railway finally come to an end.

### A Retrospective Look Back

When the last section of the Waimea Plains Railway was closed, the line had lasted just two and half years short of making it to the 100th Anniversary of the official opening. This was a creditable record, as the line had in the end helped to

**LEFT:** Reproduction from the December 1952 Working Timetable. In the post-World War Two years of rural development and new farming enterprises, the Waimea Plains Branch Working Timetable still fielded a selection of trains in both directions. By the 1950s, Trains 579 ('Down') and 580 ('Up') passengers had been reduced to running when required, primarily during major holiday times such as Christmas, Easter and school holidays. Mixed trains no longer ran, while a twice weekly goods to/from Waikaia was shown. Of particular interest were all the train crossings (four) recorded for the 'Up' RR passenger service N<sup>o</sup> 580, that would have begun its journey at Kingston.

**TIMETABLE:** Jim Brown collection

WAIMEA PLAINS BRANCH											
DISTANCE				DOWN		583	587	579	581	585	
From		Between Stations		STATIONS		Tu,Th.	Th.	RR	Mo,Tu, We,Fri.	RR	
Mls	Chs	Mls	Chs			To Waikaia Goods	Goods	Pass.	Goods	Goods	
				Gore	CEIRWX	dep	a.m. 7.40	a.m. ...	p.m. 12.15	p.m. 1.5	p.m. 4.5
4	41	4	41	Croydon	J	"	...	...	*	...	...
7	54	3	13	Otamita (W 1/4-mile Up)	J	"	...	...	*	...	...
10	65	3	11	Mandeville	J	arr	8.22	...	...	1.50	...
							8.30	...	*	2.1	...
14	65	4	00	Pyramid	J	dep	8.30	...	*	2.1	...
17	69	3	04	Riversdale	WX	arr	9.0	...	...	2.29	...
							9.0	...	...	2.29	...
							9.15	1.0	582	2.50	5.25
21	17	3	28	Waimea	J	"	...	...	*	...	...
23	31	2	14	Kingston Crossing	J	"	...	...	*	...	...
26	63	3	32	Balfour	X	arr	...	...	1.21	...	...
							10.10	1.24	580	3.50	6.20
31	07	4	24	St. Patricks	J	dep	Thence as shown on page 101	...	*	...	...
33	77	2	70	Lintley	J	"	...	...	*	...	...
36	63	2	66	Lumsden	CRWX	arr	10.55	1.45	...	4.40	6.55
				Lumsden		dep	...	...	p.m. 1.58	...	...
				Kingston		arr	...	...	3.35	...	...

DISTANCE				UP		576	584	580	582	
From		Between Stations		STATIONS		Mo,Tu, We,Fri.	Th.	RR	Tu,Th.	
Mls	Chs	Mls	Chs			Goods	Goods	Pass.	Goods	
...	...	...	...	Kingston		dep	...	...	a.m. 11.0	...
...	...	...	...	Lumsden		arr	...	...	12.35	...
				Lumsden	CRWX	dep	a.m. 6.0	a.m. 7.0	p.m. 1.0	p.m. ...
2	66	2	66	Lintley	J	"	...	...	*	...
5	56	2	70	St. Patricks	J	"	...	...	*	...
10	00	4	24	Balfour	X	arr	...	...	1.20	...
							6.50	7.50	1.25	...
13	32	3	32	Kingston Crossing	J	"	...	...	*	...
15	46	2	14	Waimea	J	"	...	...	*	...
18	74	3	28	Riversdale	WX	arr	...	8.35	...	...
							7.55	...	1.45	...
21	78	3	04	Pyramid	J	dep	7.55	...	*	...
25	78	4	00	Mandeville	J	arr	...	...	...	...
							8.25	...	1.45	...
29	09	3	11	Otamita (W 1/4-mile Up)	J	"	...	...	*	...
32	22	3	13	Croydon	J	"	...	...	*	...
36	63	4	41	Gore	CEIRWX	arr	9.15	...	2.23	3.55

**RIGHT:** As the inevitable fate of line became clearer, a variety of excursions were run that traversed the branch from Gore to Lumsden. One of the earlier ones was a 'Railfan's Reunion' run by the RES that toured most of the South's remaining branch lines. On 13th April 1968, a trip along the Waimea Line, that featured AB 731, trudded through a day of less than inspiring weather. It's captured in this view taken at Riversdale as the excursion headed south to Gore.

**PHOTO:** Wilson Lythgoe



open up and develop a large section of not only northern Southland countryside but areas as far away as the Lakes District and Queenstown.

The Central Otago Branch Railway that could have taken trade away from the Waimea line, was plagued by difficult terrain and stop-go funding from Central Government. It was only when the line reached Omakau in September 1904 was there an adverse effect on trade coming from Lake Wanaka, Cromwell and Clyde. It was estimated the quantity of freight lost by the lake steamers and the railhead at Kingston to be round 600 to 700 tons of goods and 1000 bales of wool per annum. Up until this time the goods and services serving these far off places had been coming via the Waimea Plains Branch.

The big question that has to be asked, would there have been a railway across the Waimea Plains if it had not been funded

and constructed by private enterprise? The definite answer to that question is no – it would have not eventuated. In that case, would there have been a branch line laid into the Waimea Plains at all? In all probability yes, but not on the route taken by the private company. It likely would have left from East Gore on the north side of the Mataura River and headed in an Northwesterly direction across the rich farm districts of MCNab, Chatton, Otama and as far up as Wendon. Whether it would have crossed the Mataura River into the central Waimea Plains is another question. Again hard to say, probably wouldn't have due to the expense of bridging the Mataura River and many other factors both political and financial.

And what became of the The Waimea Plains Agricultural Company and its nearly 200 shareholders?

During 1878 when the land boom in

New Zealand was at its height speculators were falling over each other to acquire land at almost any price. Land prices were run up to absurd values and prices paid were altogether out of proportion to their earning power. The New Zealand Agricultural Company, who's properties formed the Waimea Estate was perhaps one of the worst. The price paid for freehold land averaged about 6 pound 1 shilling per acre. The capital of the Company consisted of £960,000 of share capital and £540,000 of debentures, making a total of £1,500,000.

A Company paying such an extravagant price for its properties had only one end result, hastened by the onset of the bad times through the 1880s – financial hardship.

However, it was reported in June 1879 that the Company had increased the sheep flock to 170,000 and had 16,000 acres (6,480 hectares) under cultivation growing



**LEFT:** A dedicated 'farewell' trip over the branch was run on 20th March 1971. Powered by DJ's 1224 and 1228, the substantial 12-total consist was seen passing through Balfour. The public excursion, organised by the NZR themselves, was the last through train before the majority of the branch line between Gore and Balfour was closed to traffic on April 1st 1971.

**PHOTO:** R. J. Meyer

**RIGHT:** To satisfy demand for grain traffic to be railed out and fertiliser to be brought in, the ten mile (16 kilometre) section from Lumsden to Balfour was retained so that shunts could be run to satisfy this demand. Renamed the 'Balfour Branch', this section of the old Waimea Plains line lasted almost seven years, until it was closed on 15th January 1978. Views of shunts servicing the latter Balfour line are uncommon; however, here is a view of DJ 1241 with a shunting service near Balfour as it headed back to Lumsden in July 1975.

**PHOTO: Reg McLeod**



English grasses, clovers and grain.

The Agricultural Company struggled on until 1890 when it went into liquidation and the shareholders lost the whole of their £960,000 of capital. In 1895 Wright Stephenson & Company were appointed attorneys in the Colony for the liquidator, and a Mr. James Paterson, who up to that time had been the manager of St. Helens station in Marlborough, came down to take up the management of the Waimea Estates.

In 1898 a new company was formed from amongst the debenture holders of the old company to take the estate out of the hands of the liquidator and run it as a going concern until realized. The new company took over the estate on the basis of 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> per cent of the debenture stock. This meant that the debenture holders lost £360,000 out of the £540,000 that they had put in. This loss, together with the shareholders capital of £960,000, meant that £1,320,000 of British capital had been sunk into the Waimea Plains.

Up to the time the Company had gone into liquidation in 1890, it had disposed of 21,913 acres of land. From that time until 1896 no land sales had been made, but in that year land selling had resumed and proceeded steadily until the final sales in 1906.

The final clearance of the Waimea Estate took place on Saturday the 30th June 1906 in the Gore Horse Bazaar under the direction of Wright Stephenson & Company. The sale attracted an enormous amount of interest, especially from the Waimea Plains which according to one reporter ...*practically emptied themselves into Gore for the day.* There was also a large attendance of farmers and other interested persons from various parts of the South Island.

That sale marked the end of the Company's activities on the Estate and the end of an era for all concerned with farming on the plains. However, despite criticism

levelled at the Company throughout its existence, the value of the Company's activities on the Waimea Plains is today recognized as having been the means by which the foundations of the present prosperity were laid.

Even by today's standards, what the New Zealand Agricultural Company achieved in its land purchases and the building of a private railway was a huge undertaking both in money and management. Taking a conservative estimate of current land values, the total area that was under the Company's control would today be worth around NZ\$4.63 billion.

When New Zealand was a new and growing Colony, it had been blessed with the character and quality of the early explorers and pioneers who, with foresight, entrepreneurial skill and dedication contributed greatly to the advancement of the country. No project was too big or too small and problems were there to be overcome. Perhaps the restless energies of these people and their ideals can be summed up in the following way:

*The ideal life is in our blood  
and never will be still.  
Sad will be the day for any  
man when he becomes  
contented with the thoughts and  
the deeds he is doing –  
where there is not forever beating  
at the doors of his  
soul some great desire to  
do something larger  
which he knows that he  
was meant and made to do.*

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