

Molesworth Station

Lake Sedgemere Shelter

Interpretation Panel 1

When taken up as pastoral runs in the late 1850s, Tarndale and Rainbow Stations were first stocked with cattle and horses. This was followed by agile and high-grazing merino sheep between the 1860s–1930s. Repeated burnings to stimulate pasture growth coupled with overgrazing and high rabbit numbers stripped the soils of essential protection and led to severe erosion.

The Crown took over Molesworth Station in 1938. A long period of transformation took place under the management of Mervyn Mackie (Bill) Chisholm. Today Tarndale forms a part of Molesworth Station, a highly successful 180,476 hectare recreation reserve managed by the Department of Conservation for public recreation, native species and historic heritage protection, and for farming.

SUCCESS WITH CATTLE & HORSES

The land of the upper Wairau and Tarndale Basin was taken up in the 1850s by four brothers: Conrad, Edward, George and Charles Saxton. They stocked cattle, which were driven south in summer to feed the increasing Otago and West Coast gold rush populations. Their other success was the breeding of light horses. Saxton horses were renowned for their “good legs, feet and general constitution”.



Tarndale musterers 1908; Mowat Photograph Album. BACK Sansom, Bishop, Boddington, Stewwer. MIDDLE Palmer, Idle, Boyd, Livingston, Roper, Vivian. FRONT O’Conner, Cameron, Chisnall, Sloss, Chisnall, Beardsley, Legrome. Lex Mowat took many photographs between 1907–1914 with his half-plate stand camera and some were kept by Bob Boddington in an album, now held by the Marlborough Museum. Mowat also kept a diary.



1908



Tarndale in 1908, about the time Jack Tomlinson returned as a young man to muster on Molesworth Station under manager Bob Boddington. This Tarndale homestead was built by cob builder Ned James for John Kerr in 1874.

1908



Tarndale looking towards Mitre Peak. At 1000m above sea level Tarndale is said to be the homestead at the highest altitude in New Zealand.

ONE GIANT SHEEP RUN

It was not until 1868 that sheep were put on Tarndale Station, at this time the lease was held by Saxton and Pike. It was later sold to John Kerr of Lake Station. William Acton-Adams bought into a partnership with Kerr before taking over the properties in 1880 and then running them with Molesworth Station as one giant sheep run of 320,000 acres (129,500 hectares).



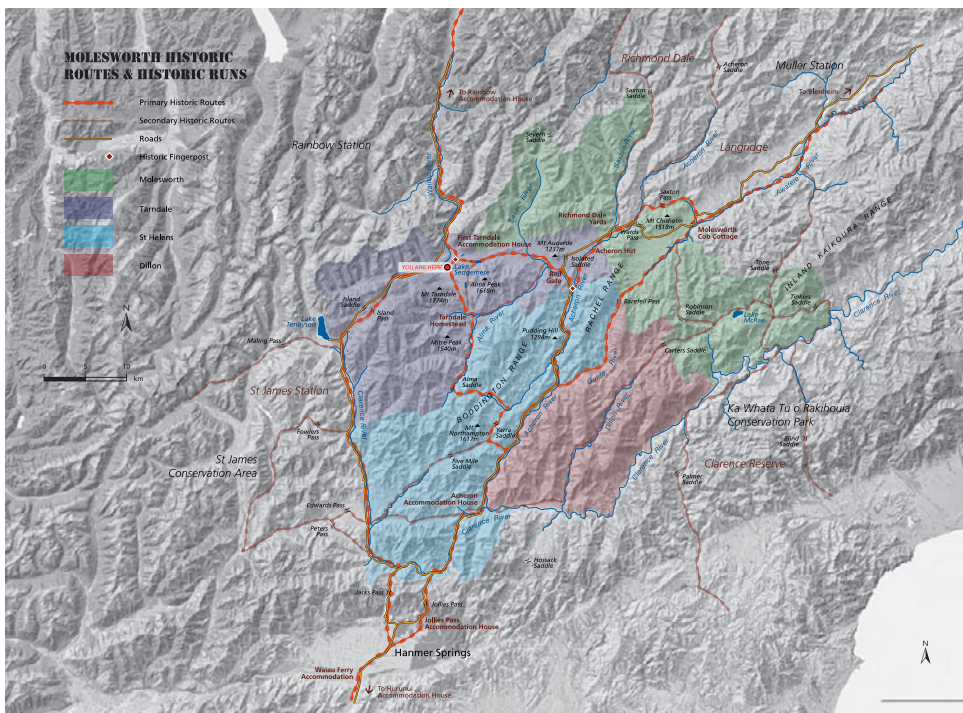
On the day of the muster breakfast at the Tynedale homestead was at 3 am. The sod-walled building is nearly 100 years old.

The Weekly News, March 16, 1960

A FINAL RETURN TO CATTLE

In 1911 Duncan Rutherford took over Tarndale/Rainbow while Molesworth was also held within the Rutherford family. They continued to run sheep. By the 1920s the NZ Farmers Co-operative held the leases to the three rapidly deteriorating sheep runs and in 1938 all sheep were sold and they were surrendered to the Crown. Rainbow was leased and later sold; it remains today in private ownership.

By 1949 Tarndale, Molesworth, Dillon and St Helens were operating as one large station managed by the Lands and Survey Department. Only cattle were stocked. Over several decades Bill Chisholm, supported by scientists, developed successful pasture restoration, grazing rotation, cattle breeding, pest control, tree planting, outstation and road building programmes. Today the historic Tarndale homestead is the centre of Molesworth's largest outstation.



Building cattle yards at Tarndale in the 1960s.



Cattle on the Tarndale Flats 1960s with the homestead and yards nestled in front of the distant trees.



Ann Chisholm and stockmen riding into Tarndale. Left to right: Bruce Chisholm, Wally Williams, Peter Poulson (obscured), Freddy Lunn, Ann Chisholm, Bob Peterson and Basil Boyce.

WILLIAM ACTON BLAKEWAY ADAMS (1843–1924)

William Acton Blakeway Adams known as William Acton-Adams began the amalgamation of runs that comprise Molesworth today. He was the most successful and effective of the Molesworth's various runholders and despite being a busy lawyer and politician devoted over 30 years overseeing the development and productive working of the property. He changed his name to Acton-Adams to avoid confusion with a brother also called William.

William Acton-Adams was born in Tenbury, Worcestershire in 1843, the son of William Adams a solicitor. The family emigrated to Nelson on the Eden in 1850. William senior practised law in Nelson and purchased Langleydale in the Wairau. He was one of the leaders in the separation of the provinces and became Marlborough's first Superintendant and Commissioner of Crown Lands. The young Acton-Adams joined his father's law firm Adams and Kingdon, was admitted to the bar in 1867 and then studied law in London for two years before returning to Nelson. While in England he married Harriet Francis Leadham. In 1873 William was elected to the Nelson Provincial Council and in 1878 was elected to the House of Representatives for Nelson. Retiring from his career in law and farm management he moved to London and died in Knightsbridge on 24 January 1924.

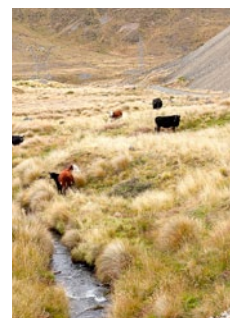


LEFT William Acton-Adams. ABOVE Tarndale sheep yards with new fencing in the foreground. Acton-Adams carried out an extensive fencing program – 34 miles of new fencing on Molesworth – and ordered his materials direct from English manufacturers.

Acton-Adams first acquired an interest in the Tarndale and Rainbow runs in 1877 and took on full ownership in 1880. He then focused on developing his Tarndale property. He used his legal status and knowledge vigorously in pushing for improvements to access through the Wairau Gorge. He began an extensive fencing program and built a shearing shed with a ten stand shearing machine imported from England, which obviated the taking the sheep down the Wairau. In August 1890 he purchased Molesworth and from then on ran the Rainbow, Tarndale and Molesworth runs as one under the name of Molesworth Station. Acton-Adams generally appointed good managers and stockmen and advised his managers on all aspects of the management of the station, including staff relations. In 1901 there were labour problems with the shearers who went on strike; Boddington got the blame for being too soft.



Angus bull.



Cattle in upper Wairau Valley.



Working dog.

WILLIAM ACTON BLAKEWAY ADAMS CONT...

For much of this time Acton-Adams was running a legal practice and was a member of parliament and had an interest in several other substantial farming properties. Not surprisingly his health suffered and he twice went overseas for extended periods to recuperate. Even so he still kept up a barrage of advisory correspondence with his managers. His managers included David Manson (1890–1892) Reggie Adams, his son, (1892–1895), Robert Jackson (1895–1900), Huddleston (1900), Robert Boddington (1900–1911).

Acton-Adams had a constant battle with scab infecting his sheep (which he eradicated) and rabbits. He pursued an active rabbit pest control programme with the aid of dogs, poison and shotgun. He also developed a saturation approach to breeding and liberating the rabbit's natural enemies. In 1885 he purchased over 200 cats, much to the amusement of Christchurch folk, and shipped them in special cages by wagon to Tarnedale. This was repeated a number of times. Large numbers of ferrets (460 in one month alone) and stoats were also introduced. Despite his best efforts the rabbit problem remained beyond his tenure and was eventually a major factor in the degradation of the property and its being resumed by the Crown in 1938.



Station manger Bob Boddington (second left) at Rainbow Accommodation House with a pack team, deer hunters and sheep dogs.

Historical information obtained from many sources including Department of Conservation archives and *Remembered Trails* J. E. Tomlinson, 1968. Photographs – The Nelson Provincial Museum; *Molesworth*, L. W. McCaskill, 1969; Don and Ann Reid Collection; Marlborough Museum and Historical Society; Rob Suisted www.naturespic.com



REMEMBERED TRAILS

Jack Tomlinson came to live at Tarnedale aged 4 years, in 1894. His family stayed until 1899.

One winter the snow was so high that a mob of twenty horses walked over the fences to the house and ate the thatch off the roof of the buildings. Inside was cosy with a fire in the big iron stove. One day his flannelette nightgown caught alight while his mother was out of the room. With deep drifts of snow in the gullies preventing travel, they had to make do with home remedies of baking soda and bluestone. Jack recovered after two months in bed and carried the scars for the remainder of his life. Other hazards for children playing in the 'back yard' of the station were stream crossings and sheep dips.

Jack Tomlinson's parents, Arthur and Jessie, ran the station homestead that also served as an accommodation house. His father was employed to do sheep work and fencing while his mother cooked for passing travellers and baked bread for musters and rabbit-poisoners; Tarnedale at this time was an outstation of Molesworth.

In his book *Remembered Trails* Jack recalls that life was happy for him and his two sisters. The musters made a fuss of them and even sent sweets to them after returning to town at the end of a season. However it was hawkers that provided the main entertainment. Harry Halcott and Ted Merlan came about three times a year. They each had four packhorses carrying clothing, boots, jewellery, medicines and invaluable comforts such as cocoa while for the men, tent camp essentials such as tobacco and matches.

As a young man Jack returned to Molesworth as a musterer.

Molesworth Station

Lake Sedgemere Shelter

Interpretation Panel 2

Lake Sedgemere is sited near the important junction of historic routes arriving from four points of the compass. A wooden fingerpost sign directed travellers onwards, many of whom were passing through this country for the first time. The original post has weathered well over 130 years and remains on site. Another strategically-placed fingerpost was sited at the junction of the Severn and Acheron rivers but was later moved to Red Gate.

MĀORI TRAILS

The Molesworth country was one link in the Māori trails developed throughout the high country of Te Waipounamu (the South Island). The trails, resting places, mahinga kai (food gathering resources), burial sites and stories relating to the trails are recorded in Ngai Tahu traditions and are of immense significance to Ngai Tahu today. The rugged upper Wairau Gorge was one such linking route. Early European explorers used the Māori trails to expand their knowledge of the land and its potential for access, pastoral land and settlement.



The second Rainbow Accommodation House, built in the early 1890s, the first being destroyed by fire with loss of life. This second house remains today as part of the privately-owned Rainbow Station. Note the bicycles and not a horse in sight.

THE 'CANTERBURY TRACK'

Following the opening of the Nelson to Canterbury track through Tophouse and the upper Wairau Gorge a series of accommodation houses were built to serve the travelling public. The first Tardale Accommodation House was built at the mouth of Horse Gully and was visited by Nelson artist John Gully and Commissioner of Lands James Crowe Richmond in 1864. Nearby stood the Saxton brothers' homestead. Little remains of these first European dwellings. The first Tardale was superseded in 1874 by a larger Tardale Station homestead at Cat Creek that doubled as an accommodation house. The early track followed natural landforms such as river terraces but at 'Hell's Gate' a high track was formed to avoid the almost sheer-sided river gorge. RIGHT James Crowe Richmond's sketch of the high track above Hell's Gate in the lower Wairau Gorge.



Tardale homestead.



Canada goose feather.



Canada goose culling.

HELL'S GATE

In 1880 Jonathan Brough was contracted to blast and hand cut the Canterbury Track through the solid rock at 'Hell's Gate': a deep, water-worn cut in the mountainside. Bridging the chasm gave Rainbow Station sheep free run through to Tarndale. A gate was put on the bridge and the gorge became known as Hell's Gate.



John Gully sketches of the interior and exterior of the early Tarndale that consisted of two small buildings and an enclosure for horses.



Memorial monument of the bones of Donald Ross's horse.

KILLED BY LIGHTNING.
THE WAIRAU GORGE FATALITY.

Rabbitier Donald Ross was riding with stock inspector Mr Munro in February 1904 through the Wairau Gorge. They left the Rainbow Accommodation House at 9.35 am, stopped to speak with rabbitiers at a camp on the Rainbow side of the gorge at 10.20 am and pressed on through the gorge where a storm was building. Flashes of lightning became blinding before the men were struck. In Munro's words at the inquest: *"I looked back to Mr Ross who was about a horse's length behind me. He smiled. I remember nothing more till I began to recover consciousness. I found myself rising from the ground in a stupefied state. I saw the body of Mr Ross on the ground and his horse beside it. I looked at my watch. It was ten minutes past twelve. As soon as I could move about I caught my horse and then examined the body of Mr Ross. He was dead. I noticed a mark on his forehead. The horse was lying on the track."* After a short rest Munro made for Tarndale. A party recovered the body that night and Munro went on to Hanmer where he reported the incident to the constable at Culverden the next day.



FAULT LINES & ICE

The landforms of this area were formed by glaciation and faulting. The low hills between the tarns are moraines from when this area was glaciated. Many of the smaller unnamed tarns are the result of either infilling of impermeable moraine depressions, or the melting of large blocks of ice. Bowscale Tarn has a distinct straight margin on one side created by faulting, while Fish Lake has been formed by damming of water against the moraines. Of all the lakes in the Tarndale basin, Fish Lake is the only lake which drains north into the Wairau. Water from all the rest finds its way into the Clarence via the Severn and the Alma Rivers.

WILLIAM THOMAS LOCKE TRAVERS (1819–1903)



William Travers pursued many interests including botany and was described by Joseph Hooker of London's Kew Gardens, to whom Travers sent specimens, as an 'acute collector'. A number of New Zealand plants are named after him. He was also an early amateur photographer. Throughout his life he wrote books and papers on a variety of natural and cultural history subjects and was a founding member of the New Zealand Institute (which later became the Royal Society).

William Travers, lawyer, MP, District Court Judge, explorer, botanist and photographer, made some of the earliest European explorations of the upper Wairau and Waiau rivers. He gave many of the place names in this area and for a time held the Lake Guyon Run, now part of the St James Conservation Area.

Although born in Ireland, William Travers spent much of his youth in France where his father, an army captain, had retired. William joined the British Auxilliary Legion of Spain and fought in the Spanish Carlist Wars between 1835 and 1838. In 1842 he made a short visit to Nelson before returning to London where he married Jane Oldham in 1843. The following year he was admitted to the bar and five years later emigrated to Nelson with Jane and their two children.

In Nelson he practised as a lawyer and became involved in politics and at various times was member of the Nelson Provincial Council and represented Waimea in the House of Representatives. In the 1860s he moved to Canterbury where he became active in politics. In his later years Travers retired to Wellington. He died in 1903 after falling while alighting from a moving train on the Hutt railway line.



William Travers on the shores of Lake Guyon; photograph taken by Travers. In the 1870s Travers took up the Lake Guyon Run in the upper Waiau and established a homestead on the eastern side of the Lake. This remote station was occupied by his manager William Newcome and his wife and family.



LANDLOCKED

The wetland complex here at Sedgemere/Tarndale is the most significant high-country wetland system in South Marlborough. These tarns and lakes are home to a population of native fish called Tarndale bully *Gobiomorphus alpinus* (1). Found only in these lakes, these fish are thought to have evolved from a landlocked population of the more common bully. The lakes and rivers support large numbers of waterfowl as well as populations of black-fronted tern *Chlidonias albotriatus*, pied stilt *Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus* (2), South Island pied oystercatcher *Haematopus haematopus finschi* and banded dotterel which breed here over summer then disperse to lower altitudes and warmer climates over winter. At least 14 threatened plant species are found in the wetlands and their surrounds. One of these, a small woollyhead daisy (3) *Craspedia "tarn"*, is known to occur only here.



1.



2.



3.

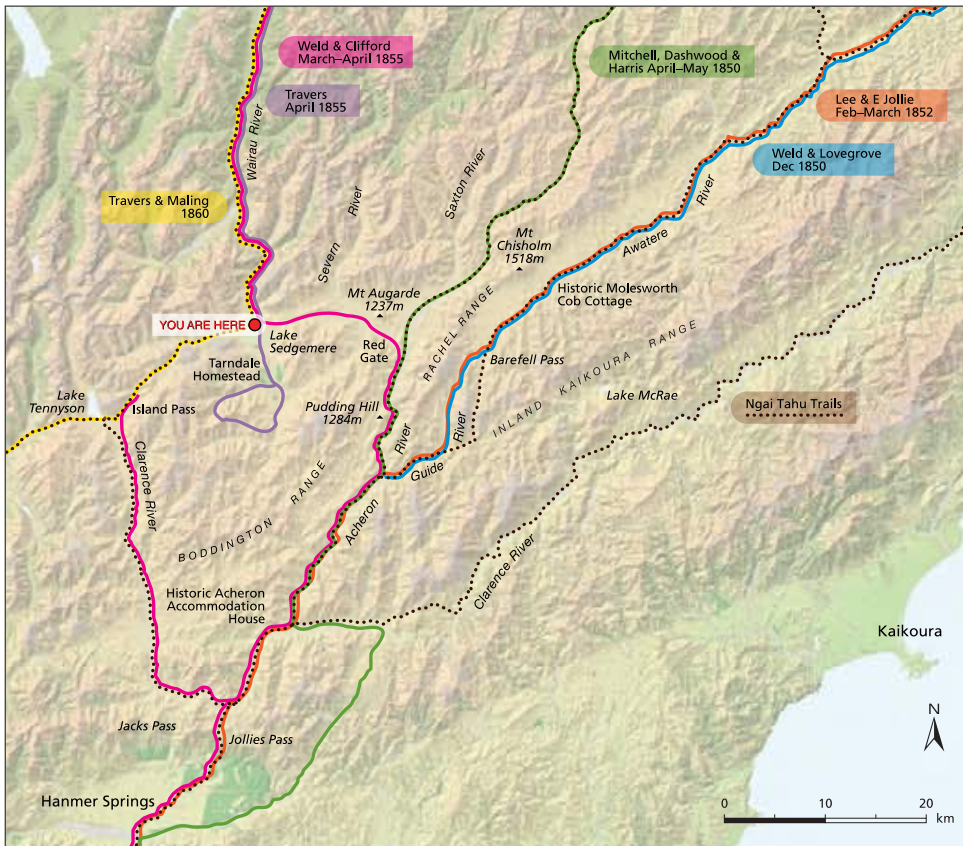
TRAVERS THE EXPLORER

In April 1855 William Travers joined the exploration for a viable stock route south and travelled the upper Wairau route 'discovered' by Frederick Weld a few weeks earlier.

The Travers party comprised his brother-in-law John Oldham, William Strange and two Māori guides one of whom was Napera. The party encountered rough weather and became snowbound at the southern end of the Tardale plain. While searching for the way through the upper Alma River Napera lost his bearings in the snow and the party gave up and returned home. Travers made another expedition into the area in 1860 when he and Christopher Maling crossed Maling Pass into the upper Waiau and then explored the Waiau's western tributaries which he named the Ada, Henry Anne and Boyle. Travers also named many of the surrounding mountains including Balaclava, Inkerman, Alma, Crimea, Southey and the Spenser Mountains.



Fording the Upper Wairau River, 1855. Painting by Frederick Weld. The Travers party explored the same route just a few weeks later, unaware of the party before them.



Historical information obtained from many sources including *Molesworth*, L. W. McCaskill, 1969; DOC archives and *Papers Past*, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, NZ. Photographs – Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, NZ; A..D..R. Russell Collection; Marlborough Museum and Historical Society; Jan Clayton-Greene; Cathy Jones; Department of Conservation; Rob Suisted www.naturespic.com



Fly fishing Lake Sedgemere.



Lake Sedgemere & Bowscale Tarn; south-east.



Pied stilts above Lake Sedgemere.