

Landsborough Rangers Hut

A report prepared for South Westland / Weheka
Area Office

Heritage Assessment

Jackie Breen, TSO Historic Resources, West Coast Conservancy

JUNE 2006



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Cover: Warren Morunga at Landsborough Rangers Hut. T. Belton, June 2005

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

During the Recreational Opportunities Review (ROR) Landsborough Rangers Hut was identified as superfluous to requirements due to it being outside the spectrum of recreation opportunities planned for South Westland. It was tagged for removal unless an assessment of its historic values demonstrated it was of sufficient significance to retain as an Actively Managed Historic Site.

This area of Landsborough Flats has been used variously over the years for cattle grazing, a camp site for deer stalking parties and as a base for government deer culling. The Rangers Hut was constructed in 1941 to provide accommodation for government deer cullers.

The site is not currently a visitor site, but South Westland Area Office (AO) is investigating the potential for developing visitor opportunities in the Landsborough Valley. The road up the valley to Strutt's Bluff will be available for 4WD access.¹

Two field visits to the site were carried out. The first in 2005 focused mainly on the hut — participants Jackie Breen, (Technical Services Officer [TSO] Historic West Coast CO) and Paddy Driver (Programme Manager [PM] Visitor and Historic, South Westland Area Office [AO]). The second visit was in May 2006 and included a more general survey of the area surrounding the hut. Participants were Neil Freer (A2 Visitor and Historic, South Westland AO), Mark Nelson (PM Visitor and Historic, South Westland AO) and Jackie Breen.

The following assessment investigates the history of the Landsborough Rangers Hut and the integrity of its fabric. Recommendations are made to guide decisions on its future management.

1.2 LOCATION OF THE RANGERS HUT

The Landsborough Rangers Hut sits at the north eastern end of the Landsborough River Flats, between Quarry Creek and Parasite Creek. The flats are relatively open and contain a mix of introduced pasture species, weeds such as blackberry and native tussock species. The predominant indigenous species regenerating around the fringes of the flats are a mix of podocarp, hardwood and beech.²

VAMS site number: 1208047, VAMS asset number: 15770, GPS location: E 2227792 N 5687461

¹ Mere Mokeraka personal comment 20/7/2000

² Bamford et al. 1978. The Landsborough-Hooker region. An investigation for the National Parks Authority. p.33.

1.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Margaret Mort (Opus International) who kindly gave me access to the Opus micro-fiche collection of old Public Works Department plans, and let me scan the plans for tent frame huts for this report.

Dave Waters (DOC, Franz Josef AO) provided useful comments from the perspective of the hunting fraternity and gave some good leads on sources of information.

Tom Belton (DOC, TSO Weeds) assisted with identification of tree species at the Rangers Hut site and provided the image on the title page.

Steve Bagley (DOC, TSO Historic, Nelson CO) peer reviewed the report and provided many useful comments.

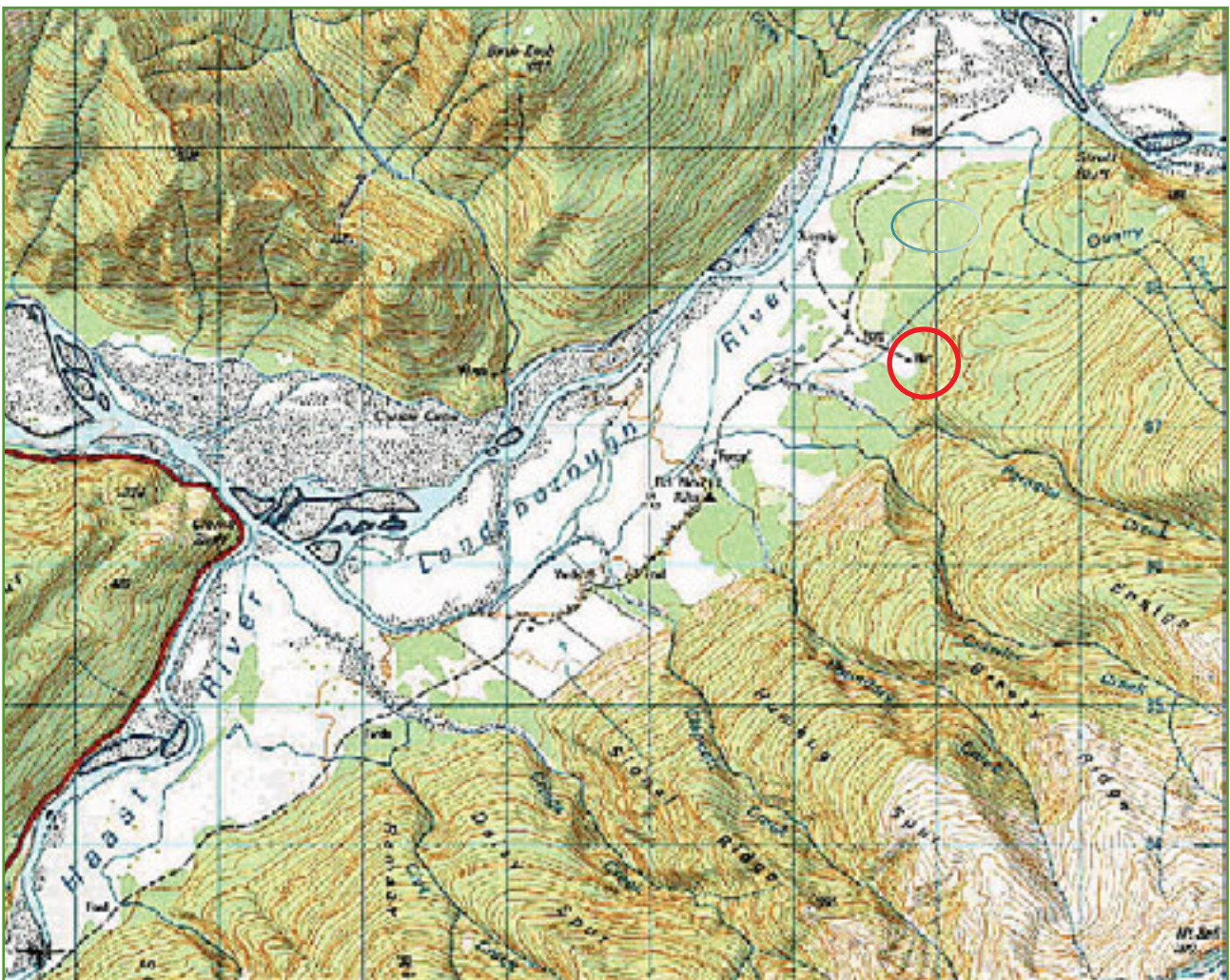


Figure 1: Lower Landsborough Flats showing the location of the Rangers Hut.

2.0 History

In order to fully understand the background to the Rangers Hut and its role in the history of the Landsborough, it is first necessary to look at the broader history of the valley and the activities that have drawn people to the area. The Rangers Hut is a physical remnant of some of this human history and understanding this context is vital in assessing its significance.

2.1 FARMING ON LANDSBOROUGH FLATS

The area has been used for grazing since at least the 1930s, with local farmers using the Haast and Landsborough Flats for cattle.³ This continued until about a year ago when the private land in the lower Landsborough was purchased by the Nature Heritage Fund for addition to the conservation estate.⁴ Farming in the Landsborough does not play a significant part in the history of Landsborough Rangers Hut.

2.2 THE GOLDEN AGE OF DEER STALKING IN THE LANDSBOROUGH



Photo 1: Stalking party at their fly camp in the Landsborough, 1928. From left, Lord Belper, Con Hodgkinson, Donald Bell and Jim Muir. WILSON 1963.

The 1920s have been described as the golden years of deer stalking in New Zealand. This could also be said about deer stalking in the Landsborough. Due to its inaccessibility deer stalking parties began hunting there relatively late compared to other areas — the Hunter Valley was being hunted as early as 1897 versus the Landsborough in 1921. However, it attracted some great New Zealand hunting guides and their

sportsman clients. Notable among these were guides Con and Harold Hodgkinson, Jim Muir, and clients John Forbes, and R.A. Wilson. As word of the exploits of these local deer stalkers spread the size of the trophies

³ See Field 1991:185-186.

⁴ DOC West Coast Conservancy File PAP-11-09-43. 10/11/2004

gleaned from the Otago red deer herd (which included South Westland) became world renowned.⁵

This reputation led to many wealthy overseas sportsmen visiting New Zealand to hunt deer. Among those that visited the Landsborough were Lord Latymer, who published a book about his stalking in New Zealand, Colonel Strutt, whose misadventures at the end of a stalking trip lent his name to the bluff at the northern end of Landsborough Flats, and Lord Belper who visited in 1925.⁶



Photo 2: John Forbes outside "Forbes' Castle" (also later known as the Rangers Hut). BANWELL 1968.

Another wealthy stalker was Welsh millionaire Godfrey Williams who made a number of visits to hunt the Landsborough. There are many stories associated with Williams, especially with regards to the well provisioned base camp at Makarora he used in 1927. The camp consisted of over 20 tents and a group of Maori entertainers from the North Island. While seemingly slightly eccentric, Williams did make a useful contribution to future deer stalking in the area. At the end of his 1928 trip he left money for a hut to be built on Landsborough Flats. In due course Con Hodgkinson and Mark Te Koiti used Williams' money to erect a hut below Strutts Bluff. The hut would later become known variously as Con's Castle, Forbes' Castle and the Rangers Hut.

It is likely that the hut obtained the name 'Rangers Hut' because of Forbes' position as a ranger for the local branch of the Acclimatisation Society.

Stalking continued in the Landsborough and surrounding catchments until Acclimatisation Society '*control of access to deer for hunting purposes*' ended in 1933. This coincided with the establishment of government deer control in the area by the Department of Internal Affairs.⁷

2.3 THE GOLDEN AGE OF GOVERNMENT DEER CULLING

By 1930 deer were increasingly seen as a menace. Prior to this the control of deer populations was managed by Acclimatisation Societies and legislation that gave protection to introduced species such as deer. The efficacy of this was questioned during the 1930s as the impacts of deer on the landscape

⁵ Banwell, D.B. 1968. *The Highland Stags of Otago*. A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, pp70-80. Philip Holden, 1985. *New Zealand Hunters' Paradise*. Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, p 16. Banwell, 1968, p 120, 155; Wilson, Major R.A., 1961, *My Stalking Memories*. Pegasus Press, Christchurch, pp 70-78. See also Holden, Philip 1983. *The Golden Years of Hunting in New Zealand*. Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland.

⁶ Holden, Philip 1983:321-334; D.B. Banwell, 1968:119-136; Wilson, Major R.A. 1961:70-78, 120.

⁷ Banwell, 1968: 124-127; Jack McNair 1971. *Shooting for the Skipper*. A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, p 107; Wilson, 1961:119-120.

and indigenous flora became apparent. Ken Francis, an Internal Affairs government deer control employee at the time described the situation:

Not only were station owners being driven off their land by deer and rabbit infestation, but the continual browsing of bush and vegetation clothing the steep country was triggering massive erosion. The hills were literally falling down and filling up river channels with shingle. ... Flash floods frequently raced down stream, sweeping away roads and bridges and even threatening townships.

He also laid much of the blame on the Acclimatisation Societies,

*... who thought that a knowledge of shooting and fishing endowed them with the experience and ability to manage and understand the problems of wildlife control. Furthermore, a substantial part of their revenue ... came from deer shooting licenses, so they naturally protected the ever-growing herds ...*⁸

While government deer culling in New Zealand began in 1930, the first big government culling operation in South Westland did not take place until the 1933/34 summer season. The South Westland culling programme was described as being ‘*more difficult than anything previously attempted*’ and was set on curtailing the spread of deer in ‘*[t]he rough inaccessible country in the South Island*’. It was seen as ‘*imperative that this Department [Internal Affairs] deal with South Westland*’, as *no one else will do so*. Bases were set up at Makarora, Haast Pass, Burke River using tourist department huts, and at Landsborough and Clarke rivers respectively.⁹ The log hut built by Hodgkinson and Te Koiti on Landsborough Flats was soon sequestered as a base for the field officer servicing the hunters further up the valley.¹⁰

These were the truly great days of government deer culling. Skyrocketing unemployment during the Depression years (late 1920s until 1935) meant that only the best applicants were chosen for the physically demanding job. The gear provided to the hunters was rudimentary and minimal. The lack of good, accurate maps meant that skill in reading the lay of the land was important. Compounding this, tracks and river crossings had yet to be established and there was little or no back country accommodation, and shelter was often confined to tents. Supplies had to be brought in by a pack horse team or carried in on foot.¹¹

From the start of deer culling work in South Westland the ‘mighty’ Landsborough and its tributaries became the main focus of effort. As with other afflicted parts of New Zealand, the Landsborough was suffering from a burgeoning deer population. Bert Barra, renowned culler and later

⁸ Francis, Ken 1983. *Wildlife Ranger*. Whitcoulls Publishers, Christchurch. p. 39, 72.

⁹ McKinnon, A. D. and L. Coughlan 1961. *Data on the establishment of some introduced animals in New Zealand forests. Volume 3 - extracts from Annual Reports of Department of Internal Affairs 1916-1957*. New Zealand Forest Service Wellington.

¹⁰ See Francis 1983.

¹¹ Galbreath, Ross. 1993. *Working for Wildlife*. Bridget Williams Books Limited, Wellington & Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, pp. 22-23; Francis, Ken 1983. *Wildlife Ranger*. Whitcoulls Publishers, Christchurch.

Photo 3: Marlborough deer cullers, 1931. From left: Merv Newman, Ken Francis and Bert Barra. All worked in the first government deer culling campaign in the Landsborough in 1933/34. PHOTOS 3—5 FRANCIS 1983.



field officer in the Tararuas,¹² shot in the Landsborough those early deer culling days and describes the dire situation:

I used to see hundreds of deer — mobs of 500 were not unusual in the Landsborough. Sometimes the deer were so poor they were starving to death. I saw them lying dead in the Willis Valley, just bags of bones. . . . When the deer had been through forest of a while there was no undergrowth left, because they ate out the young seedlings and small plants, and barked the big ones leaving dead sticks. You could see right through. . . . I've seen deer tracks round the side of hills as if you'd gone round with a bulldozer — just mud, stirred-up mud. Around the Landsborough, the Clarke and Burke it was just like a stockyard in the bush.¹³

Hunting operations were reportedly hindered by bad weather and problems accessing hunting camps, yet it is not surprising given the description of the vast numbers of deer in the area that some of the highest tallies ever recorded by government cullers at that time were shot in South Westland during that first 1933/34 culling season. A case in point was in the Landsborough, where Merv Newman shot a departmental record of 68 deer in one day.¹⁴



The Landsborough was to remain a focus of culling operations. The 1933/34 season had identified a large deer population in adjacent valleys, so the 1934/35 season extended the campaign to these (e.g. Okuru, Franklin and Turnbull valleys). The priority of the work in South Westland was stressed in Annual Reports of the Department of Internal Affairs, to the extent that in 1934 a special ministerial party including the Minister of Internal Affairs, J.A. Young and Director of Deer Control, Skipper Yerex visited the area.



Photo 4: Typical DIA deer culler camp.

Photo 5: Dried deer skins tied to pack horses. Picking up skins was often carried out by the field officer.

¹² DOC 2003. Wairarapa hunting update: autumn 2003, pp4-5.

¹³ Ryan, C. 1991. Bert Barra: *A Hundred Deer a Day*. Terra Nova 5 pp55-56. See also McKinnon, A. D. and Coughlan L, 1961:13-14.

¹⁴ McKinnon, A. D. and Coughlan L, 1961:12. Francis 1983, chapters 13 and 14 especially p. 105.

After a break during the 1934/35 season and a subsequent increase in funding, culling in South Westland was occurring on an almost permanent basis and as culling proceeded in the 1930s, all thoughts of a short term eradication project dissipated. It was realised that there was no quick fix approach to the deer problem, and a scheme extending over a number of years was settled on.¹⁵

2.4 END OF THE GOLDEN ERA — HUTS, AIR TRANSPORT AND DEER CONTROL WORK IN THE 1940S AND 1950S.

During the 1940s the issue of adequate accommodation for workers increasingly became apparent especially in some of the more remote areas where a lot of time was spent setting up camp and packing stores. In 1939 at a conference of Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) field staff, Skipper Yerex commented:

*The remedy appears to be, to build more huts, and to build them in the more remote places and we must have more tracks into the remote places ... and even in places like the Landsborough we must try to get horses up there. If we could put a horse track over Harper's Bluff we could run our stores right up to the head of the valley. ... We do not want to make pack horses of our men. They will work better if they have less carrying to do.*¹⁶

From 1940 huts started to be constructed specifically for deer control purposes. The emphasis was on placing huts where they could be accessed by pack horses, using the winter months at the end of the culling season to build them. Yerex encouraged field officers to proceed with hut building as they saw fit, and to follow the methods used by a field officer from the North Island who had built a hut at Ngamatea earlier that year.¹⁷

In 1941 when the Public Works Department (PWD) began selling surplus gear from their road building camps in the Haast/Makarora area, DIA officials recognised the opportunity to purchase a number of tent frame huts as ready made, easily transportable accommodation for cullers. After gaining funding and approval, a network of 10 of these ex-PWD tent frame huts were established in the Haast/Makarora area. Two of these tent frame huts were re-erected at the Landsborough Flats, replacing the deteriorating Rangers Hut.¹⁸

¹⁵ F McKinnon, A. D. and Coughlan L, 1961:15-16; Francis 1983:116-118.

¹⁶ 1939 Conference, HO IAD 48/26 Part 1 A.P. & Game Act - Deer Destruction - Conference of Field Staff, Head Office, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. 27/10/1937 to 30/9/1946

¹⁷ 1940 Conference, HO IAD 48/26 Part 1 A.P. & Game Act - Deer Destruction - Conference of Field Staff, Head Office, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. 27/10/1937 to 30/9/1946

¹⁸ 10 April 1941, letter from B. Vercoe (as acting director of Deer Operations) to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs; 9th May 1941 - Letter from B. Vercoe (as acting director of Deer Operations) to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs re: purchase of the PWD huts. Both on file IAD HO 48/51/1 Pt 1.

After a culling campaign of around 10 years in the Landsborough Valley, results were starting to be noticed. In 1944 veteran culler Bert Barra commented to Yerex, Director of Deer Operations:

Just a few words to let you know that I have just returned to here [Rangers Hut] after spending eight days in the upper reaches of the Landsborough, and although it rained most of the time I still managed to get a good look around both in the bush and above the bush line and the country on the whole gives one the impression that never at any time were there thousands of deer in the Landsborough.¹⁹

The impact of the programme was beginning to be seen elsewhere too. The Southern Lakes District Conservator's report to head office commented '*[i]t can be confidently claimed that the deer population in these two areas has been reduced to a large degree, there being only isolated localities where they are in any large number*'.²⁰ But while in the early 1940s there was optimism about the impact of culling, the intervention of WWII saw easing of pressure on deer populations, and a subsequent boom in deer numbers. The Landsborough River valley remained strategically important during this time due to its northeast/southwest orientation running parallel to the main divide for around 60km. Effective control here was seen as important for stemming the flow of deer from heavily infested catchments in the west to more lightly infested areas in the east.²¹

As mentioned above, the provision of appropriate and strategically placed huts in the back country was key to any future goal of eradication of noxious animals. Freeing hunters from the necessity to pack in supplies and tentage enabled more effective use of fine weather for hunting. Retention of skilled workers was also an issue and providing good accommodation was important in addressing this. After WWII, in 1946, an officially sanctioned air transportation plan was drawn up. The placement of huts in the high country was to be '*in strategical [sic] positions with an eight hour walking [interval] between them*' and huts would be provisioned from the air.

By July PWD aeroplanes were being used to supply DIA goat cullers in South Marlborough in what was described as '*one of the biggest freight-carrying undertakings yet attempted in New Zealand*'. The mission was contingent on the presence of suitable landing strips and after its completion was hailed as an outstanding success. In November two more supply flights were made in South Marlborough, this time dropping provisions from the plane using parachutes tied to 30lb loads.

¹⁹ 22 April 1944, note from H. P. Barra to the Director of Deer Operations. Written from the Rangers Hut at Landsborough, 48/51/1 part 1.

²⁰ Annual report Deer operations in Southern Lakes District June 1st 1945 to March 31st 1946, IAD Head Office Files, 48/28/3 v1.

²¹ 1939 Conference, HO IAD 48/26 Part 1 A.P. & Game Act - Deer Destruction - Conference of Field Staff, Head Office, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. 27/10/1937 to 30/9/1946; Southern Lakes District. Deer Control Operations. Summer Season 1951-52 in 48/28/3 v2.z 48/51/1 pt 1 newspaper article and photo.

The use of air transport continued and the first prefabricated 'alpine' hut built with air dropped material was constructed in the Tararua Ranges at Mount Crawford in 1946.²² Southern Lakes District readily saw the advantages to be gained from air transportation and built their work proposals for the 1946/47 season on the initiation of an 'air provisioning scheme'. Flying stores and ammunition into pre-determined locations was seen as cheaper and would lead to the areas in question being worked more effectively. Many of the places tagged for control were, increasingly, in far flung parts of the district with main supply routes (e.g. the Haast Pass road) being in a bad state of repair.

Southern Lakes District inaugural air provisioning scheme got off the ground on the 1st of January 1947, using a PWD Proctor plane and pilot. The initial job was dropping stores at Lake Roe (Southland). After a break while the plane returned to Wellington, the next phase of air supply was decided, and the scheme began again on 23rd January. The following day tragedy struck with the Proctor plane crashing, killing the two PWD employees on board. All air provisioning plans were temporarily suspended.

However, the idea did not languish for long, and District Field Officer, Ron Fraser arranged for a local private operator, who also owned a Proctor plane, to pick up where the programme of air dropping had finished earlier in the year. The area on the river flats to the west of Landsborough Rangers Hut had been levelled off to form an air strip (called the Landsborough Aerodrome) and this was one of the bases where supplies were dropped. Once on the ground supplies were sledged up to the Rangers Hut for storage.²³

It is unclear if the proposed Southern Lakes District scheme eventuated, but by late 1947 plans were in motion for an extensive national air transportation scheme dropping hut building materials and supplies. The Minister of Internal Affairs approved the scheme and inter-departmental requests for services were written to PWD (requisition of building materials) and the Air Transport Standing Committee (for air transport services). Plans of the scheme even made it to the newspapers.²⁴

Doubts about the Air Transport Section's ability to carry out the entire programme were expressed early on, and it seems that the dropping of hut materials part of the project was abandoned. Work carried out by the RNZAF in December 1947 and January 1948 respectively, consisted of reconnaissance and supply dropping only.²⁵

The Rangers Hut at Landsborough was one of the areas where supplies were parachuted in. The event was such that representatives from the

²² 48/51/1 pt 1, newspaper article and photo.

²³ Memo to the Conservator of Fish & Game, Southern Lakes District, from R. Fraser, 7th May 1947, 48/28/3 v; Memo to the Conservator of Fish And Game, Southern Lakes District, from R. Fraser, 10th July 1947; Memo to the Under Secretary from B. Vercoe, Conservator, Southern Lakes District, 17th July 1946, 48/28/3 v1.

²⁴ Various correspondence, October, 48/10/2 pt 1; 48/51/2 pt 1

²⁵ Letter to Air Department - Operation Deer Control 11/12/1947, 48/10/2 pt 1; Memo to the Officer-in-Charge, Deer Control Section 12 February 1948, 48/10/2 pt 1.

National Film Unit were on hand at Landsborough Aerodrome to film the drops and subsequent unpacking. Fred Stratford, the local field officer, reported on the National Film Unit's success stating that it gave '*better access to the heart of deer country that previously had never been shot for longer than a week at the one time*'. A smaller plane was used to provision two more remote camps at the head of the Landsborough, and this was seen as even more successful as the accuracy of dropping was greater and there was less loss due to goods being damaged on impact.²⁶

Initially the DIA's main air transportation support was via the Aerodromes Branch of the Public Works Department (South Marlborough drops 1946) and later this was taken over by the RNZAF (1947/48). After these two projects it seems that both agencies pulled out of the scheme because of a lack of suitable aircraft for the job - the PWD had lost its aircraft in the January 1947 crash, and the larger RNZAF planes were only effective in areas away from the steep mountain ranges of the Alps where they could fly low enough drop the supplies. The gap in the provision of air transportation was increasingly met by private providers who had suitable light aircraft such as Popeye Lucas and his company Scenic Air Trips Ltd from Queenstown.²⁷

From 1950 the DIA took over management of Landsborough Aerodrome,



Photo 6: Popeye Lucas' Auster, unloading supplies at the Landsborough Aerodrome. Lucas 1968.

(consisting of a shed, a tent frame hut and an airstrip on the river flats to the west of the Rangers Hut), from the Civil Aviation branch of the Ministry of Works. It was used extensively during deer control work especially during summer.

The pre-eminence of South Westland in early culling operations was directly related to deer control policy. From the 1930s the aim was to

²⁶ 12th February 1948, memo to Officer in Charge of the Deer control section from R. Lawrence, 48/10/2 pt 1; report on Operations for the 1947-48 season for the South Westland Area by F. Stratford, 48/118/5 part 1. See photo of Stratford and pilot Popeye Lucas with small plane at the Landsborough in Field 1991.

²⁷ Lucas, F. J. 1968. *Popeye Lucas*. A.H. and A.W. Reed, Wellington. pp 62-64.

kill the greatest number of deer for the lowest cost. This led to efforts being concentrated in the areas that had the highest deer populations. Ultimately it was believed that deer could be wiped out. Deer control work continued in the Landsborough area into the 1950s as witnessed by the names and dates inscribed on the framing of the Rangers Hut but this was about to change.

In the early 1950s scientists were employed by the Wildlife Service (part of DIA) to directly study the deer menace, and they came up with results that challenged the status quo. The focus of deer control on areas of high deer numbers meant that other areas under threat from soil erosion and forest damage were overlooked.²⁸ Murmurings of the impact that this shift in emphasis for deer culling in South Westland would have was foreshadowed early in 1952. Proposals for the 1952/53 season were sent up the line from Southern Lakes District in August 1952. These included an extension of operations into the area south of Jacksons Bay and an extensive hut building programme to replace aging tent camps. However, Head Office priorities for deer control had changed, with more concentration on areas prone to erosion and deforestation and the reply to the Southern Lakes District's proposals reflected this. In the national scheme of things maintaining pressure on the large remote deer herds of South Westland was not as important as shooting in areas such as North Canterbury with its high percentage of farm land downstream from erosion prone protection forests.²⁹

It is interesting to compare this with the situation in Westland — as a priority area 'opening up work', including hut building, was approved at a speed not ever seen before. By the end of 1953, 11 new huts had been built in the area from Wanganui River in the south to Slaty Creek (Waiheke River) in the north. By the time the NZFS took over deer control operations in 1956, 25 huts had been built. However by this stage, the great government deer culling era in the Landsborough had ended.

2.5 HUTS AT LANDSBOROUGH FLATS



Photo 7: First Rangers Hut during its use by Ken Francis, field officer for some of the early Internal Affairs culling campaigns in the Landsborough. FRANCIS 1983.

2.5.1 First Rangers Hut

The area at the northern end of Landsborough Flats below Strutts Bluff was often used to set up base camps for stalking trips further up the valley.

The first Rangers Hut built by Con Hodgkinson and Mark Te Koiti in 1928 established the area as a more

²⁸ Galbreath 1993: chapter 5.

²⁹ Deer Control Operations: Southern Lakes District. Summer Season : 1952-53 by M. Kershaw, 48/28/3 v3; Memo from Ron Fraser, Controller of Wildlife to Conservator of Wildlife, Southern Lakes District, 16th September 1952, 48/28/3 v3. See McKelvey 1995 and Caughley 1983 for more detail on the rationale behind this.

permanent base. The hut became inextricably linked with Con Hodgkinson (a well respected deer hunting guide) who spent much time there often breaking horses in on the flats to the south of the Hut and training others to jump fallen logs.³⁰

When Internal Affairs hunters began their deer culling campaign in the Landsborough in 1933, the hut at Landsborough Flats and its adjacent horse paddocks became a useful stopover for further operations upstream, and became ubiquitously known as the Rangers Hut. This was much to the ire of old time stalkers and guides, who knew it as Forbes Castle or Con's Castle.³¹ This hut was replaced as a base in 1941 by the current Rangers Hut, and was pulled down by the DIA in 1946 as it was '*in danger of collapse*'. The iron from the hut was stored on site for later use.³²

2.5.2 Second Rangers Hut - Public Works Department 1930s depression workers' accommodation

Apart from DIA deer culling operations, the other major government work in the Haast area during the 1930s was the construction of the Haast to Makarora road. This was initiated as part of the 1930s depression 'work relief scheme' overseen by the PWD. Landsborough Rangers Hut began its life as worker accommodation for the men who built this road.

The Haast road work had much in common with relief work in other parts of the country. The work was hard, physical and often in remote places. The camps provided as worker accommodation were temporary and the design of huts reflects this. They needed to be able provide adequate shelter, yet be versatile enough to be moved easily. This type of hut was used extensively on the West Coast (see photo 8) and work relief camps in other parts of New Zealand.³³

2.5.3 Second Rangers Hut - a hut for government cullers

By 1941 the PWD were closing down their operations in the area due to constraints imposed by WWII, and were ridding themselves of surplus gear.³⁴ The opportunity to purchase surplus tent frame huts from the PWD came to the attention of the DIA and Bert Vercoe, assistant director of Deer Control Operations, who requested funding to secure some of these huts for culling purposes.

The utilitarian nature of the huts suited the requirements for hunter accommodation (cheap, easy to transport and re-build) and Vercoe described his proposal thus:

³⁰ D. B. Banwell, 1968:127.

³¹ Jack McNair 1971:107; Francis, Ken 1983:105; D.B. Banwell, 1968:127.

³² Memo for the Conservator of Fish and Game, Southern Lakes District, from R. Fraser, District Field Officer, 48/28/3 Vol I.

³³ Numerous examples of these types of camps used in the building of the road south of Fox Glacier, West Coast CO Archive. For images from the Southland examples see Anderson, H.J. 1985 *Men of the Milford Road*. Craig Printing Company, Invercargill. See Noonan 1975 for North Island examples

³⁴ Noonan, R.J. 1975. *By Design - A brief history of the Public Works Department Ministry of Works 1870-1970*. A. R. Shearer, Government Printer, Wellington, Chapter 8.

These huts are 8 x 10 with iron roofs, iron chimney, wooden floor and the sides boarded up half way or approximately 3 feet, the rest of the wall being 8 x 10 tents. ... these frames [of the huts] are all bolted and it would be an easy matter to take them down and shift them. As our operations are being carried out in the vicinity this year it is proposed that we buy a number of these huts and during the winter months take them down and pack them to various points for bases for our shooters. This would be much less costly than having the timber cut out of the bush as once the material is landed on the spot the hut will be erected in very little time. At a later date the sides could be boarded right up and a small window put in.



Photo 8 right: Public Works Department road builders huts at Jacksons Bay, 1939 - almost identical to those procured by the DIA in 1941. AUCKLAND WEEKLY NEWS, WEST COAST CONSERVANCY COLLECTION.

Reasons cited for the value of using these huts were: 1) saving on transport and tentage; 2) retention of cullers due to better living conditions; 3) savings on owning versus renting huts and 4) blocks will be worked more efficiently with less staff.

Approval was gained for the purchase of the huts and they were placed at the following localities:

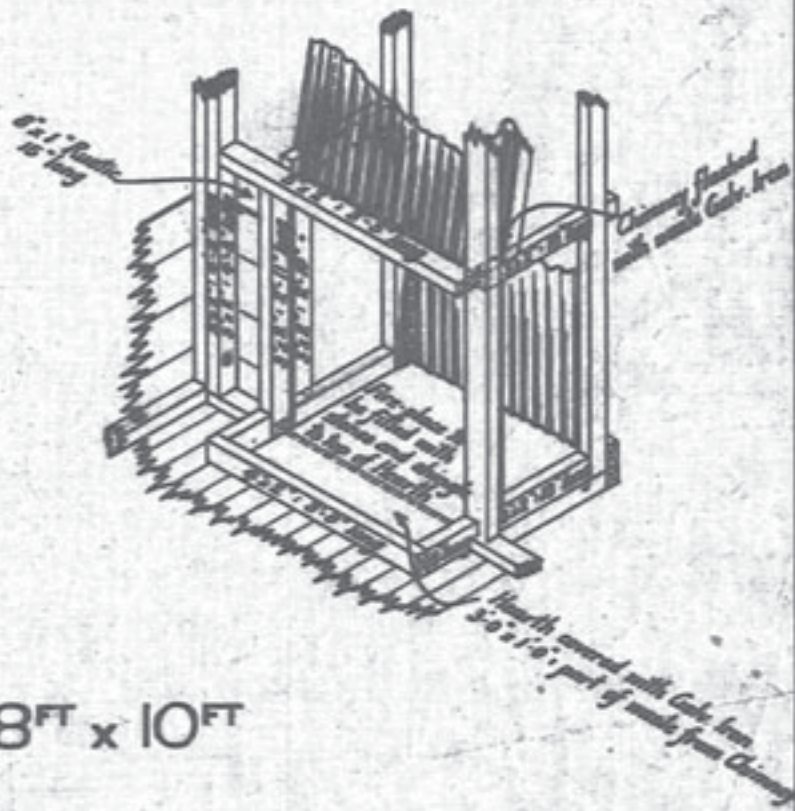
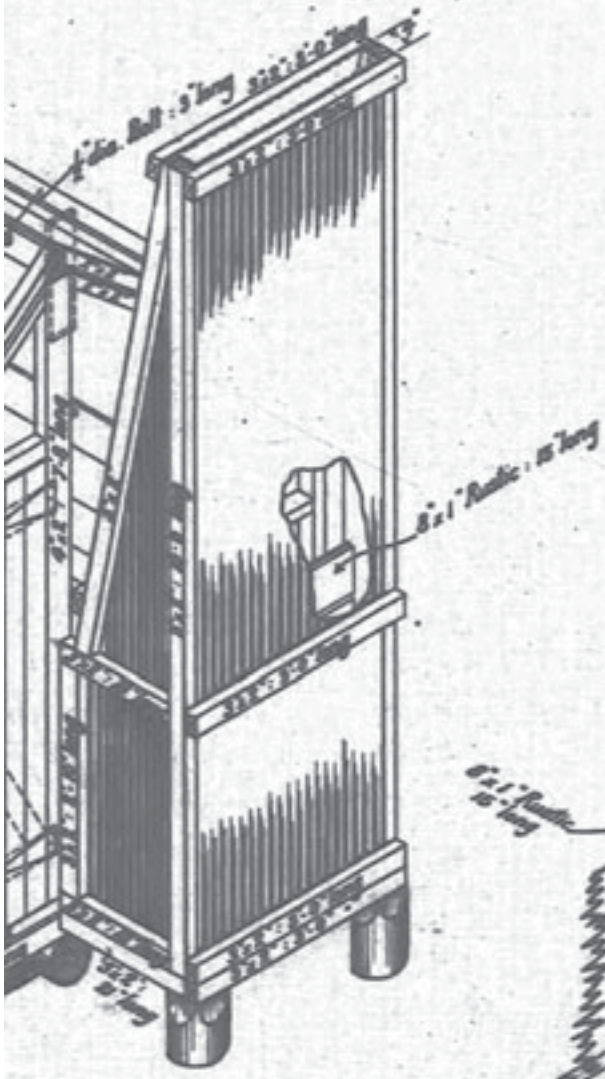
<i>2 combined with porch between</i>	<i>Bakers Creek, Makarora</i>
<i>1 combined with porch between</i>	<i>Bakers Creek, Makarora</i>
<i>1 tin shed (movable)</i>	<i>Bakers Creek, Makarora</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Young River Forks</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Albertburn River</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Mouth of Minaret Creek</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Forbes Hunter River</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Ferguson Creek, Hunter River</i>
<i>2 combined with a porch</i>	<i>Rangers Flat, South Westland</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Rough Creek, Clarke River</i>
<i>1 tent and frame</i>	<i>Roaring Billy Stream, Haast River</i>

There are still two more stored in a Public Works Department Hut at the Haast Pass and will be erected next season by Mr M.M. Chisholm, who will again be in charge of the area.³⁵

³⁵ 10 April 1941, letter from B. Vercoe (as acting director of Deer Operations) to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs; 9 May 1941, letter from B. Vercoe (as acting director of Deer Operations) to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs re: purchase of the PWD huts. Both on file IAD HO 48/51/1 Pt 1.

**MATERIAL REQUIRED FOR
8' x 10' FRAMED TENT: COMPLETE 2 STRETCHERS AND
SMALL TABLE: ALLOWANCE FOR WASTE INCLUDED.**

Tent	8' x 10'	1	
Fly	12' x 14'	1	
TIMBER			
4" x 7" T. & G. (Flooring a Door & Table)	24', 24', 24'	106	C.B.M. 100
8" x 1" Rafters	24'	27	
3" x 2" O.B. Rims	24', 24', 7 1/2', 24'	100	
4" x 1" . . .	24'	10	
3" x 1" . . .	24'	8	
2" x 2" . . .	24'	17	
4" x 2" . . .	24'	11	
IRONWORK ETC.			
Galv. Corr. Iron - 26 Gauge	24', 24'		
Couch Bolts - 1/2" dia. Cup Hd. Sq. Sq.	24', 24', 24', 24'		
Washers	24		
Mild Steel Rod - 3/8" dia. - 3'-0" long			
Fencing Wire	16		
Nails - 2 1/2" (100), 3" (200), 4" (100)			
Lead Hds. (100), Claws (100)			
Scotch T Hinges (10)	2		
Sacks	6		

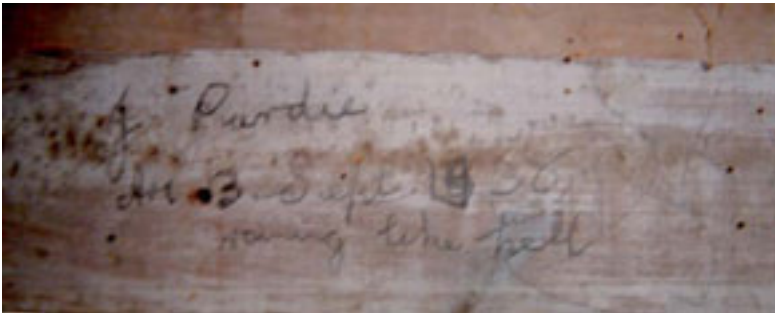


ED TENT : 8' x 10'
Constructed in Sections

GR. 4328

Figure 2: GR 4328 - Plan of a PWD tent frame hut dated 1930. OPUS GREYMOUTH OFFICE MICROFICHE COLLECTION

Photo 9 below: "J.Purdie AM 13 Sept 1938 raining like hell" - detail of graffiti from Haast Road building days on the framing of in the south room, Landsborough Rangers Hut.



Galvanised iron and cement were purchased to build chimneys.

The Rangers Hut became 'base hut' for culling operations in the area, i.e. a central location from which supplies were packed to cullers.³⁶ In a 1945 report on the facilities owned and used by the DIA recorded the hut at northern end of Landsborough Flats as follows:

Dept Huts & horse paddock, Westland Area

No 1 Rangers Camp. Situated between Quarry Cr and Ensign Cr approx 1½ miles south of Strutts Bluff at the foot of the north end Bealey Mts; 10 acre horse paddock approx.³⁷



Photo 10: Charles Broughton outside the Makarora Base camp in May 1946. The Base Camp was made from two tent frame huts joined with a porch like the Landsborough Rangers Hut. HOLDEN 1998.

³⁶ See Field 1991 for a description of the work involved.

³⁷ Note from L.G. Owen to B.A. Vercoe 30/7/45, 48/51/1 v.1.

3.0 Setting

Photo 11: View looking east across to the Rangers Hut and the exotic trees behind it.
J. BREEN, DOC, MAY 2006.



There is a range of exotic trees present on the flats to the east of the Rangers Hut (see site sketch plan on page 23). The most notable of these are three macrocarpa trees near the hut, and the nine alders that occur along the edge of the bush line. The alders probably mark the perimeter of the old horse paddocks.

There are a number of apple trees near the Hut, and a lone rose bush was seen between the two macrocarpa trees NNW of the hut.

Other introduced species include blackberry which has run rampant over much of the Flats, and a small patch of raspberry interspersed with bracken directly behind the hut to the east. Both these species were introduced at some stage in the past.³⁸

Piles of tin, metal drums and bottles are in the vicinity, as well as some flat iron, and a bottle dump in the regenerating bush near the small macrocarpa tree (see site plan). There is also a bottle dump under the south room of the hut. Remains of a small iron drum are situated in a creek running along the bluffs to the north of the site.

A few hand cut posts from an old fence line were also found. Searching in the adjacent area did not discover any more. A wire rope has been strung from the bluff behind the hut that was purportedly for slinging loads of firewood down to the hut.



Photo 12: Bottle dump under the Rangers Hut.
J. BREEN, DOC, MAY 2006.

The remains of the landing strip to the west of the Hut are likely to still be in evidence, although they were not investigated during the field work undertaken for this report.

DOC staff familiar with the area to the north of the Hut at Strutt's Bluff,

³⁸ Species identification confirmed by consulting Belton, T. 2005

³⁹ report a rough overgrown track that can be followed up over the bluff. The low level route has recently been re-cut and re-marked by the Upper Clutha Tramping Club.⁴⁰ It is likely that this is one of the tracks cut during culling days at Landsborough.

Important elements were found in the setting (archaeological and exotic plantings) which are a product of the history of the hut and its use. These are considered important features in any future conservation work and for public understanding of the hut.



Photo 13: View across the old horse paddock of the large macrocarpa tree to the east of the Hut.
J. BREEN, DOC, MAY 2006



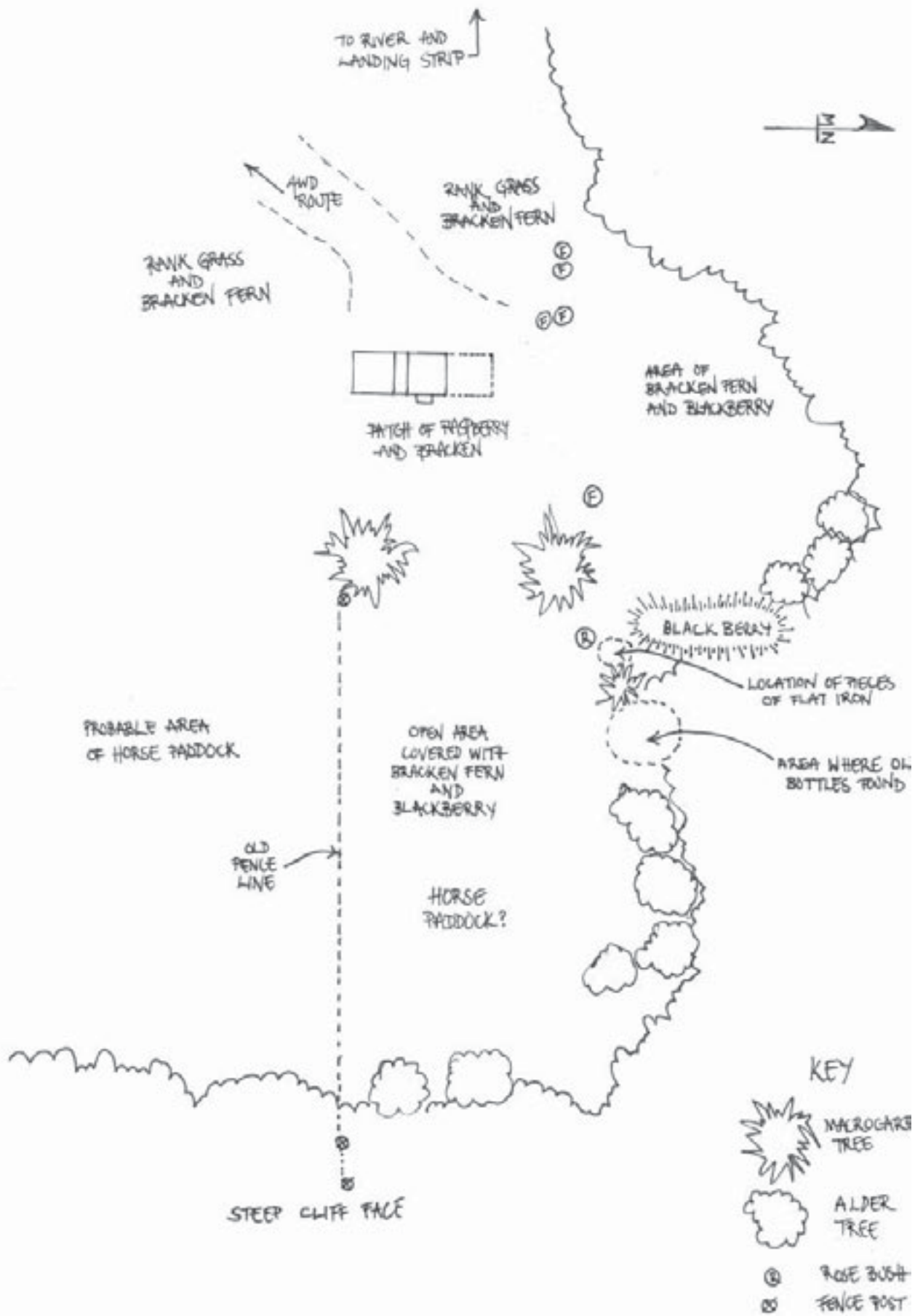
Photo 14: Fence post near the cliff face.



Photo 15: Bottle dump in east of hut.
J. BREEN, DOC, MAY 2006

³⁹ van Klink personal comment June 2006.

⁴⁰ Dymock, Peter 2006. Landsborough Valley access improved. *Wilderness* (July) : 10



SKETCH PLAN OF LANDSBOROUGH RANGERS

HUT AND GENERAL SETTING

NOT TO SCALE

JACKIE BREEN MAY 2006

4.0 Fabric Description

4.1 EXTERIOR



Photo 16: View of the Hut
in the late 1990s.
VAMS IMAGE.

Until the last few years, the Rangers Hut had three rooms - a central room with a large fireplace flanked by what were presumably bunk rooms (see image left and the plan drawing on the following page).

While file notes only record two tent frame huts being re-built at Rangers Flat, it could have been that the third hut was one of the two remaining huts in storage in 1941 that were to be built the following year. Alternatively the third room could have been the ex-Civil Aviation PWD hut from the Landsborough Aerodrome.⁴¹

In the following description of fabric, the rooms are referred to as:

North room — room that no longer exists

Middle room — room with the fire place and three west facing windows

South room — room with two west facing windows

Material considered to be original or of historic value to the hut is listed as (hf) historic fabric. This material should be conserved and used as the basis for any new or replacement elements. Material listed as (nhf) non-historic fabric is either recent or considered to detract from the historic value of the hut.



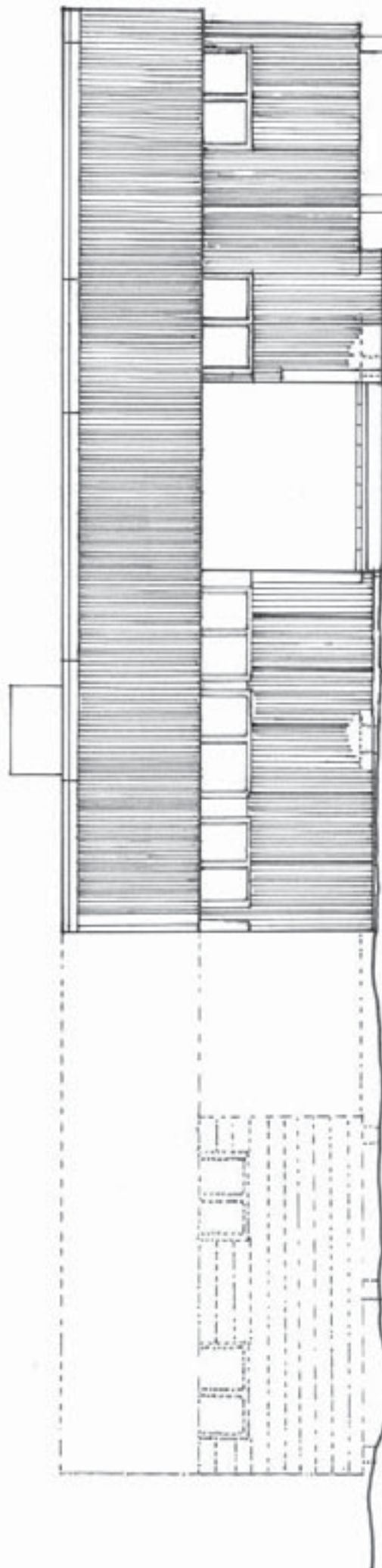
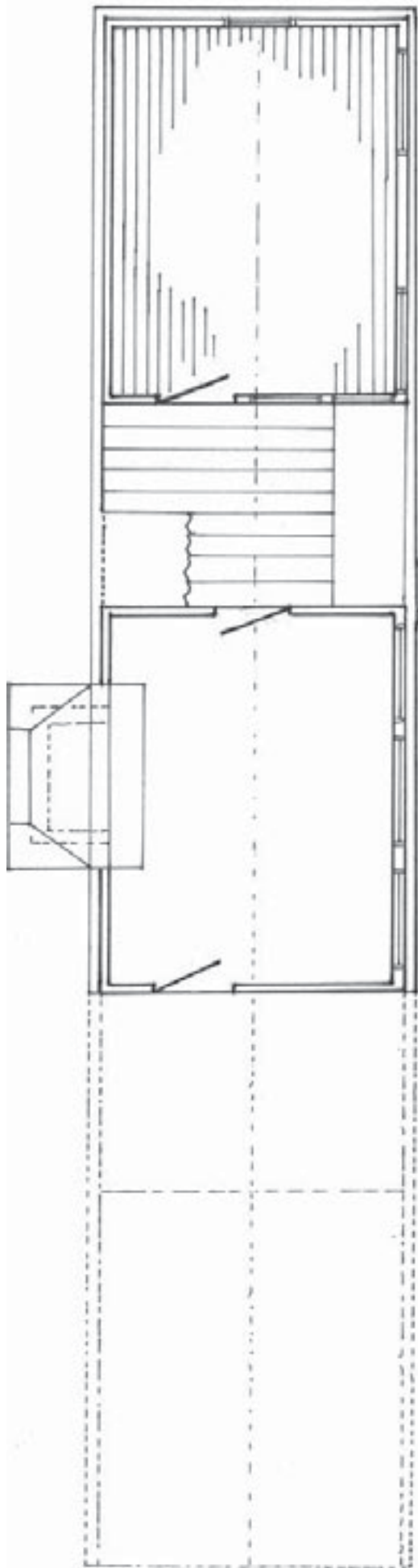
Photo 17: Ranger Hut view
looking east.
J. BREEN, DOC, 2005.

There are the remains of a few rock slabs running to the north from a patch of concrete at the north-west corner of the middle room. These slabs are probably the remains of a step up to the porch between the middle room and the north room. The patch of concrete has a 1947 penny set into it but it is unclear if this has any correlation to the date the third room was added (hf).

Cladding: The hut is currently clad in corrugated iron (nhf). This is a recent addition added to the hut to weather-proof it.⁴²

⁴¹ 9th May 1941. Letter from B. Vercoe (as acting director of Deer Operations) to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs re: purchase of the PWD huts. IAD HO 48/51/1 Pt 1; Memo from A. G. Harper, Under Secretary for Internal Affairs to the Commissioner of Works, Ministry of Works, 8th August 1950, 48/10/2 part 2

⁴² Dave Robinson personal comment 2005. Dave (former station manager of Landsborough) reported that he had pulled down the dilapidated north room and used the salvaged galvanised iron to re-clad the remaining two rooms in an effort to slow any further deterioration.



NORTH ROOM

MIDDLE ROOM

SOUTH ROOM

LANDSBOROUGH RANGERS HUT

J. GREEN 2006

SCALE 2:1



Photo 18: Detail of a pile cut from the bush.
J. BREEN, DOC, 2005.

Originally cladding was rusticated weather boards. The remains of these can still be seen on the interior of the hut (hf - see 1996 photos 20 & 21).

Windows: The windows on the west facing walls of the remaining rooms of the hut are all roughly the same size - 900 mm x 450 mm. The windows on the north wall of the south room are both different, one a 900 mm x 450 mm, and 560 x 415 mm - top hung single pane (all hf).

Roof: The roof is clad in corrugated iron. This is consistent with the original specifications (hf).

Chimney: The chimney consists of a large concrete base, with a tapered flat iron flue (hf). This was added to the Hut in 1941 when re-built at Rangers Flat.

Porch: The porch is an addition, put in when the huts were re-built at Rangers Flat in 1941 (hf).

Sub-floor framing and piles: The sub floor consists of both joists and bearers (hf) that sit on piles that

have been cut from bush timber and shaped by hand adzing (hf). The sub-floor framing and piles in the middle room are in relatively poor condition when compared to that of the south room. This is largely due to the rooms' respective height from the ground. The joists have slots cut out of them that rest in tongues of wood on the bearers. No nails are used (hf). A couple of lengths of zinc coated metal strapping have been nailed in a criss-crossed manner between the piles on the western side of the south room (see photo 12 p.21 - nhf).



Photo 19: Detail of sub floor framing, south room. J. BREEN, DOC, 2005.



Photo 20: Porch looking north. J. BREEN, DOC, 2005.



Photo 21: Porch looking south. J. BREEN, DOC, 2005.



Photo 22: Rangers Hut
looking south.
J. BREEN DOC 2005.



Photo 23: Rangers Hut
looking north east.
J. BREEN DOC 2005.



Photo 24: Rangers Hut, rear
view, looking south west.
J. BREEN DOC 2005.

4.2 INTERIOR

Framing and lining: Framing consists of sawn timbers of various dimensions. Other pieces have been added for structural integrity, some of it sawn timbers, some pole timber cut from the surrounding bush (mostly hf). The framing in the south room is one of the most important aspects of the hut as it is covered in over 40 years of graffiti, dating from the 1938 road builders, cullers in the 1940s and 1950s, through to use by private individuals in the 1960s. The 1938 graffiti gives certainty to the assertion that most of the framing dates from its original use as a PWD road worker accommodation (hf).

The length of the studs is 152 cm, or 5 feet. This is longer than 4'6" in the specifications of the 1930 plan, but is consistent with specifications of other later 1930s depression huts. The dimensions of the timbers used for the framing is also greater than the 1930s specifications, but again is



Photo 25 (left): Detail of corner joins.
N FREER, DOC, MAY 2006.

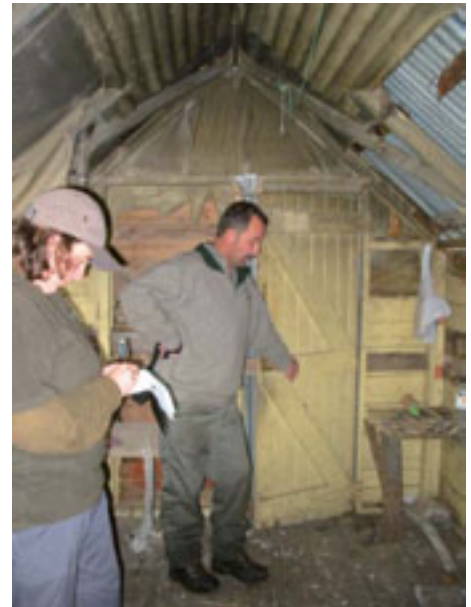


Photo 26 (right): General view in the south room looking north. Note the tent still present in patches, and the weatherboard cladding underneath.
N FREER, DOC, MAY 2006.



Photo 27: Fire place in the middle room. N. Freer, DOC 2006.



Photo 28: Interior view of the middle room, looking south.
J. Breen, DOC, 2005..

consistent with later plans.⁴³ A significant proportion of the framing on the east wall of the middle room is in poor condition. This room has been partially lined with T&G lining, as well as with silver sisalisation/building paper (hf). The middle room has also been painted.

The corner studs are bolted together as per the original tent frame hut specification (see photo 25).

The original tent lining is still apparent in some places, but it is in poor condition (hf).

Floor: The floor boards are 85 mm tongue and groove (hf).

Fireplace: There is one fire place in the middle room of the hut. The fire place consists of a large concrete hearth, with a mantle (hf).

4.3 CHATTELS

There are no chattels remaining in the hut. There is a grate and a kettle in the fire place but it is unclear if these are original.

4.4 SUMMARY OF FABRIC VALUES

The majority of the fabric of the hut is original fabric with significant historic value. I estimate that around 80% of the remaining fabric is original. The main non-historic fabric component is the corrugated iron cladding on the walls of the hut that was added during the last few years. There are a few small pieces of tanalised timbers that have been added to the framing.

⁴³ See 1930 plan GR 4387 for tent frame hut for 4 workers and 1936 'Framed tent for Labour Department gold prospecting scheme'. Both plans from Opus Greymouth, microfiche collection. Copies in West Coast Conservancy Historic Archives.

5.0 Assessment of Historic Heritage Values

Most historic places in New Zealand are assessed using a recognised heritage values system. It is proposed to assess the significance of this place using the criteria contained within the Historic Places Act 1993. The Historic Places Trust is the national authority on the assessment of the significance of historic places. The current Trust assessment criteria are used in its Registration Proposal form.

These criteria are:

Historical, cultural, aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, scientific, social, spiritual, technological and traditional significance or value.

For the purposes of this plan these criteria have been amalgamated under three headings: Historical (historical, social); Physical (archaeological, architectural, scientific, technological); and Cultural (aesthetic, spiritual, traditional).⁴⁴

5.1 HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Deer stalking:

Landsborough Flats was a favourite area used by deer stalking parties for a short time between 1920 and 1933 as to set up base camp, so much so that it was the site chosen to build the first Rangers Hut in 1928. There are no other places on the West Coast that were managed for their association with deer stalking.

1930s depression road building:

The association of the hut with the 1930s depression relief work schemes is significant, especially the building of the Haast Pass Road. The nature of this work was hard, and often in remote places. As stated elsewhere, the design of huts used was '*practicable, portable and cheap*'.⁴⁵ These huts were used extensively on the West Coast and in Southland with the building of the Milford Road.⁴⁶

The construction of the Haast Pass Road stands alongside the building of the Milford Road as one of the last great road projects that opened

⁴⁴ Copied from Egerton, R. 1998. *Dumpling Hut, Milford Track, Fiordland National Park: Assessment of effects on heritage values of future management actions*. Department of Conservation, Southland Conservancy.

⁴⁵ Bradley K. and Egerton R. 1995. Marian Corner Road Construction Camp Conservation Plan. Unpublished report, Department of Conservation, Southland Conservancy.

⁴⁶ For images from the Southland examples see *Men of the Milford Road*, Anderson, H.J. 1985. Craig Printing Company, Invercargill. Numerous examples of these types of camps used in the building of the road south of Fox Glacier, West Coast CO Archive.

up remote parts of New Zealand. Noonan in her history of the Public Works Department/Ministry of Works states:

[t]hey stand as monuments to both the old and new methods of construction. Begun because of the availability of cheap labour [during the Depression], they were completed with the most modern contemporary machinery.⁴⁷

The Haast Road was not completed until the 1960s but its importance to the South Westland area cannot be overstated. As the Commissioner of Works commented in 1965:

It will form an important part of the national state highway system, and is vital to the economic welfare of the West Coast of the South Island.⁴⁸

Government Deer Culling:

Only a few years after the initiation of government deer control, it became clear effective 'control' depended on more than on just cullers spending time in the hills. More remote areas were not being shot effectively because cullers were spending a considerable amount of time getting to and from base camp, establishing camp, and packing goods to camps. The development of infrastructure to support culling operations (huts, tracks and river crossings) became a common topic of discussion at DIA staff conferences. The Director of Deer Control, Major Yerex supported the idea of such developments, and in 1939 stated:

We do not want to make pack horses of our men. They will work better if they have less carrying to do.

Also in 1939 was the establishment of what were called 'permanent stations' where a field officer and a ranger/deer hunter were stationed all year round, the winter season was spent on track work, hut building, equipment overhaul etc. The first 'permanent stations' were set up on Stewart Island and in the Te Urewera/Waikaremoana area, with future bases planned for in Fiordland National Park and the Tararua ranges.⁴⁹ While a base was not planned for the Landsborough, all notes on file point to it being used as more of a permanent base type facility, with Bill Chisholm (field officer) and Jack McNair stationed there over winter in 1940.

It is in this context, in 1941, that a purpose built base was established at Rangers Flat 'up the Landsborough'. While other huts had been built in a piecemeal fashion in other parts of the country, Ngatamatea (1940) in Te Urewera, and Clarkes Hut (1941), Fiordland National Park, the establishment of Rangers Hut was part of the first hut building scheme in New Zealand where a network of huts (10 huts in 1941) were established aimed specifically at facilitating more effective deer control.

The early deer control work done in South Westland was some of the

⁴⁷ Noonan 1975, p160

⁴⁸ Quoted in Pascoe, J. D. 1966. *The Haast is in South Westland*. A.W. & A. H. Reed, Wellington. p. 102

⁴⁹ 1939 Conference of Field Staff, IAD 48/26 Part 1

earliest government-led conservation management carried out on the West Coast. The Rangers Hut is an important link to the institutional history of the Department of Conservation.

The use of the hut as a base for government deer culling operations in the 1940s and 1950s is also significant. Landsborough Rangers Hut is the only hut on the West Coast that survives from the 'golden era' period (pre-air transport) of government deer culling (the only other remains of the tent frame huts built in 1941 was the door and chimney base of Rough Creek Hut - see appendix 1) and is one of three huts built for deer culling during this era left in the country.⁵⁰

Many legendary figures from early Internal Affairs culling days spent time in the Landsborough — Bert Barra, Ken Francis (the first Internal Affairs Deer Operations field officer), Les Owen, Bert Vercoe (later Conservator for Southern Lakes District), Fred Stratford, Bill Chisholm, Jack McNair — all these men later rose through the ranks to become field officers or hunter trainers in other parts of the country. Shooting in South Westland became legendary among these men and was often remembered fondly.⁵¹

Another great name associated with Rangers Hut is the legendary Frank Erceg, touted by some as the 'greatest hunter of them all', who shot a record 2,225 deer up the Matukituki in the 1957/58 six month season.⁵² His name and a list of the blocks he shot appear on the framing of the hut. It is quite poignant that both Erceg and P.R. Smith, another government hunter, both scrawled their names on the framing, and both died in the course of deer hunting work.⁵³



Photo 29: Frank Erceg's record of service as a government deer shooter in the Landsborough Rangers Hut. J. BREEN 2005.



Photo 30: P.R. Smith's name in the Landsborough Rangers Hut. J. BREEN 2005.

⁵⁰ The others are Clarks Hut (actively managed) and Rodger's Hut (both Southland CO). It is interesting to note that all of these were under the management of Southern Lakes District from the 1930s to the 1950s.

⁵¹ Thomson, Joff 1965: chapter 2; McNair 1971;

⁵² Holden 1985:163 and Holden 1998:87.

⁵³ Smith's death remembered in Galbreath 1993:v. He died crossing the Haast/Burke River in 1945 along with fellow culler James Radcliffe. Erceg was killed during a venison recovery operation in the late 1960s.

5.2 PHYSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Setting

The maturity of the plantings suggests an age of around 70 years⁵⁴ and as such it is likely that they are associated with the building of the first Rangers Hut, either during its use by deer stalkers, or in the early days of government deer culling.

The remains of horse paddocks (old fence line), the abandoned air strip on the flats to the west, and the remains of an over-grown track over Strutt's Bluff are an important assemblage of related infrastructure that enhance the importance of the setting.

Hut

Public Works Department road making camps were designed to be temporary and utilitarian.⁵⁵ They were never designed to last for any length of time. The fact that the Landsborough Rangers Hut still remains, albeit in a slightly modified form, is highly significant. The rooms of Rangers Hut are sole survivors of a once common form of temporary worker accommodation. There are no other known examples of this type of hut associated with 1930s depression road building in the country.⁵⁶ Apart from the Haast Road itself, the Rangers Hut is one of the few physical links to the men who endured hardships during depression years to build the road.

While the condition of the hut is variable (from very deteriorated in the south east corner of the middle room to moderate in the south room) the fact that the building retains a surprising amount of original fabric increases its physical significance markedly. All the aspects of the original design of a 8'x10' PWD tent frame hut are still evident, from the remains of the tent, rusticated boards present as cladding, to the use of bolts as fastenings in the corner joints.

The presence of historic graffiti on the framing in the south room dating from the 1930s depression to the 1940s and 1950s government culling days, adds to the physical value of the hut, providing a tangible link to those men who used it.

⁵⁴ Belton, T. TSO Weeds personal comment, June 2006.

⁵⁵ See Bradley, K. and Egerton, R. 1995. *Marian Corner Road Construction Camp Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report, Department of Conservation, Southland Conservancy for discussion of temporary nature of 1930s depression road camps in the context of the Milford Road construction.

⁵⁶ The West Coast CO does actively manage Garden Gully Hut, a 1930s depression gold scheme hut - built in the mid-1930s. This hut is highly modified having had a significant amount of upgrade work carried out on in over the last 30 years.

5.3 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As commented elsewhere, for other huts built for deer control,⁵⁷ the cultural significance of Landsborough Rangers Hut is its strong association with the early days of deer culling in New Zealand. These days of the DIA deer culling are firmly a part of the New Zealand cultural mythology. A useful précis of this idea is articulated in the draft of Michael Kelly's draft *Wild Animal Control Huts: a heritage identification study* (2004):

Few pastimes or occupations in New Zealand have given rise to the level of literary output that hunting has. Since Joff Thomson's book Deer Hunter, nearly 50 years ago, hundreds of books have been written by professional and amateur hunters in New Zealand, many of them mythologizing the pastime and all of them adding to an iconic image of a man alone, or with his mates, hunting the four-legged pest.

The reasons for this are two fold. One was the life of the hunter. It was essentially solitary, with the only company a dog or the occasional hunting partner, and it was very hard, especially in the days before air drops. So hunting was really only suitable for a certain type of man (there were of course no women) who enjoyed his own company and was very resourceful. This ultimately encouraged the development of a stereotype who could be eulogised, parodied and iconicised.

The second reason was the most famous and influential of all hunter/writers, Barry Crump (1935-1996), who embellished real events or took the largely fictitious stories other hunters told him and turned them into A Good Keen Man (1960). It sold in the tens of thousands, as did the follow-up Hang on a Minute Mate (1961). They were very appealing to a post-war urban society that had some how lost touch with its rural frontier past, and of course, the humour and the nostalgia evoked were key components in their success.⁵⁸

The hut is currently not used for accommodation. It has been part of an area covered by a grazing lease for a number of years and has not been readily accessible to the public. While this is the case, groups of visitors do make pilgrimages to the hut, for example, two years ago a group of ex-Government Deer Cullers revisited the site as part of one of their regular meetings. They still speak fondly of the times spent there during the culling days.⁵⁹

Currently the site is not a visitor site; visitation is very low. With this being said, even within the short period of time public access has been in place on Landsborough Flats, there has been an increased interest

⁵⁷ Breen, J. 2004a. *Old Cedar Flat Hut Historic Assessment*; Breen, J. 2004b. *Slaty Creek Hut and Tutaekuri Junction Hut Historic Assessment*.

⁵⁸ Kelly, M. 2004. DRAFT. *Wild Animal Control Huts: a heritage identification study*. Department of Conservation, Wellington. pp 19-20. ISBN 978-0-478-14190-0 online.

⁵⁹ Dave Robinson personal comment.

in the area since the re-cutting of the old low level route over Strutt's Bluff.⁶⁰ There are no other places on the West Coast that provide the potential for a significant number of visitors to come into contact with infrastructure relating to the early days of deer culling and it has a significant interpretative potential.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE RANGERS HUT'S SIGNIFICANCE

Historic significance

Landsborough Rangers Hut was built during the earliest period government deer culling in New Zealand when culling was typified by long hard hours spent in the back country, in the days before the extensive use of air transport and infrastructure development. The Hut is an important part of the history of government conservation management. There are also strong associations with 1930s depression road building on the Haast to Makarora Road, where the hut was originally used.

Physical significance

The fabric of the hut is unique. It is probably the only 1930s depression road builders tent frame hut still in existence, and it is one of the earliest huts built for government deer culling on the West Coast and in New Zealand. The associated infrastructure of the site, the plantings, horse paddocks, airstrip and track over Strutt's bluff make it a good representative of its type. The setting with its connections to deer culling days is also important.

Cultural significance

There are strong associations of the hut with the government deer culler mythology, with old cullers still visiting the site.

⁶⁰ Dymock, Peter 2006. Landsborough Valley access improved. *Wilderness* (July) : 10

6.0 Threats

Loss of purpose

Loss of purpose is a significant threat to the hut as it is to all historic buildings. While the building remains on site in its current condition the purpose will be retained.

Natural

The main natural threats are those associated with fabric deterioration (rust and rot).

Management actions

Lack of planning or poor planning, including inappropriate restoration work or maintenance are a threat to the building. Removal of the building will result in the loss of historic, cultural and physical values at the site. A conservation plan will be needed to guide future management.

Information loss

While there is a certain amount of information on file there seems to be a dearth of images of the hut itself during its period of use. There are a number of published accounts of government deer culling in the Landsborough in the time it was in use but little on the actual hut. To expand our knowledge it would be worthwhile tracking down some of the former deer cullers who used the hut and record oral histories of their experiences culling in the area.⁶¹

⁶¹ Unfortunately many key figures are deceased or too infirm to be interviewed.

7.0 Management recommendations

This hut is nationally unique as possibly the last original tent frame hut on public land associated with PWD road building. It is an important physical remnant of the 1930s depression relief work building of the Haast Pass Road. It is regionally important as the oldest purpose built deer cullers hut on the West Coast and representative of an important era of government wild animal control.

In a wider context, the history of government deer culling in the Landsborough was the beginning of government conservation work on the West Coast. Some of the descriptions of the landscape when the culling started stand in stark contrast to the state of the forest and ecosystems today. While priorities and management techniques may have changed in the Landsborough, the Rangers Hut stands testament to the initial stages in the history of government conservation management and is an important part of DOC's institutional history.

While current visitor use of the hut is low, it is positioned close to a major highway (compared to other deer culling huts), allowing considerable interpretative/heritage appreciation. The hut provides a unique front country opportunity for visitors to see significant aspects of the West Coast's and New Zealand's history:

- 1) to understand early government conservation management via early government deer culling and the hard life of the deer culler; and
- 2) to experience a type of accommodation used extensively in 1930s depression work relief camps.

It is therefore recommended that the hut and its wider setting be retained and managed as an Actively Managed Historic Place.

7.1 FUTURE WORK REQUIRED

- More detailed recording of the fabric needs to be carried out to ensure all physical information about the hut is captured.
- A programme of oral history recording should be undertaken to capture stories from government cullers who used the hut. This will provide a useful context for ongoing management of the site and provide information to enhance any visitor information produced about the hut.
- All future work at the site should be guided by a conservation plan which should include a plan for managing the setting.
- Any future visitor use of the site must be accommodated with as little disruption as possible to the hut's historic fabric. This should be articulated clearly in the conservation plan.
- It is proposed that the hut be nominated for registration under the Historic Places Act (1993). Conversations with Historic Places Trust

staff indicate that there are no huts like this currently registered with them. The nationally important aspects of the historic and physical significance mean that it would potentially be given a Category 1 registration (the highest level of significance).

- Consider the hut and its values in any appraisal of future management options for the Landsborough Valley.

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 APPENDIX 1 — REMAINS OF ROUGH CREEK HUT



Door from Rough Creek Hut - cullers named include F. Erceg, Farley Hoy (?), P. Thompson, Mike Parker, Ben Buckley.
MARK MARTINI DOC, DECEMBER 1996.



Chimney base from Rough Creek Hut.
MARK MARTINI DOC, DECEMBER 1996.

9.2 APPENDIX 2 — LIST OF NAMES RECORDED ON LANDSBOROUGH RANGERS HUT FRAMING

W.H. Richards, 11(?) July, 1938.

Mr. E. Joyce 1938

J. Purdie, AM 13 Sept 1938, raining like hell

G. Stevenson, 1944

Patrick R. Smith, 450 Avonside Drive, Christchurch, Government deer shooter, drowned Burke, 1945

M. Bond (?), 1954

Ben Buckley, Govt Shooter, 1956-57, Waimate & Haast

J. Enright, Govt Shooter, 1951-52, 1952, 1952-53, 1953, 1953-54

Frank Erceg. GDS, King Country, North Island

Burke Block, 1st Season summer, 1956, Haast 1956 winter, 1956-57

Dingle, Hunter, 1957-58 Matukituki — NZ Record 2255 deer 6 months,
10 chamois, 1958-59 Dobson, 1959-60 Wilkin, 1960-61 Haast, Makarora
1961-, Eyre Mountains Haast

Vic Erceg 1951-52, Stewart Island & Clarke
1957-58 Shotover & Wilkin
1958-59 Hopkins & Shotover
1959-60 Hopkins, Dobson & ...
1960-61 Hopkins & Dobson ...
1962 Rangers - Clarke
1963 Rangers - Clarke

A.N. Gilmore (19)49 - (19)50 Nth Canterbury
1950-51 Murchison and Bruce Bay
1951-52. Nth Westland
1952-53 (as above)
1953-54 Nth Westland - Hawkes Bay
1954-55 Hawea - Wanaka
1955-56 To be continued
1956-57 SACKED TO NI

Gerald Goodger, I.A.D., 1956-57, Burke Block

Rex Haywood, Hastings, Hawkes Bay, 1956 Clarke Block
(An unflattering drawing of Rex with a large pot belly
accompanies the name along with the added words '10 day
wonder' and 'couldn't take it').

Neil Kennedy, Queens Birthday 1958, Dunedin

F. S. McCraw 1958

Doug Reeves 1961

Rob McElven 1961

Les Russell 1961

Lindsay G. Taylor (& others) 1961?

N.W. Mathews, 1963

Barb ... Chris Herbert, Dunedin, 25.3.67

P. Swale (?) 1977

Names with no dates

K.W. Findlay, Govt Shooter, Christchurch

Alfred J. Freed, Govt Shooter, Dunedin, 12 Kilgour Street

W.S. Hardwicke, Waimate.

W. Jack I.A.D 7 St Albans S, St Albans, Christchurch

Alex Jocelyn (?)

Len McConnell, Govt Shooter