



Alta Reef (M.Sole)

## Flora

The high Dunstan Mountains contain a rich diversity of short tussock grasslands dominated by blue tussock (*Poa colensoi*) and hard tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*) and some snow tussock (*Chionochloa rigida*), as well as cushion vegetation communities at higher altitudes.

Lower down in the scenic reserve area, the stand of kānuka (*Kunzea ericoides*), is one of the few significant remnants of its type in Central Otago. The kānuka has regenerated, as the original stands were used by miners for building materials and firewood. Ground cover vegetation in the Bendigo Scenic Reserve, after more



Briar rose (John Barkla)

than 100 years of burning, mining and rabbit infestation, is sparse. It grows short tussock, scabweed (*Raoulia australis*), and a wide range of introduced weeds – predominately briar rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*).

The conservation area is now bounded on the lower edge by vineyards that are gaining an international reputation. A lack of water has always hindered development in this region. Irrigation has made this new land use possible.

## General

The climate is typically Central Otago. It can swing to either extreme in the course of a day. In winter the ranges are blanketed in snow, a complete contrast to the low humidity and very hot conditions of summer. Prepare for these extremes with suitable clothing and equipment: sun hat, sun screen, water, warm and water- and wind-proof clothing and suitable footwear.

Where vehicle access is possible it is shown on the map.

Hunting is by permit only – from DOC, Alexandra.

## Further information:

- For more information about Bendigo and other recreational opportunities in Central Otago, contact the DOC Alexandra office:

43 Dunstan Road, Alexandra  
PO Box 176, Alexandra  
Ph; (03) 440 2040 Fax: (03) 440 2041

or Central Otago information centres.

- Visit the DOC Website: [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

# Exploring historic Bendigo



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## Introduction

Bendigo's conservation areas consist of three separate blocks on the western side of Central Otago's Dunstan Mountains.

## The Bendigo Scenic and Historic Reserves

The 1085 hectares of Bendigo's adjoining historic and scenic reserves are popular with visitors. They provide easy and interesting opportunities for day trips in the area.

A feature of the historic reserve is the range of relics from Bendigo's hard-rock, quartz mining days. This has made it an important part of the Otago Gold Fields Park, providing plenty of opportunities to explore what's left of that important and colourful part of the region's past.

There was much more than just traces of gold here. As a result there's plenty of evidence of mining activity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the original foundations of the Matilda and Aurora stamper battery sites are where they were abandoned. Mining shafts (vertical) and adits (horizontal) are also a feature. The larger shafts are either fenced off or covered, but many others could present a danger.

***There are old and often very deep mining shafts throughout this area. Extreme care must be taken and children closely supervised.***

The Bendigo Scenic Reserve has a uniquely terraced band of kānuka and unequalled views of the Upper Clutha Basin and the farmland and vineyards in the valley below. The recently formed Kānuka Loop Track circumnavigates the Chinamans Creek catchment and provides a wonderful opportunity to have a longer walk in a shrub land environment – a rare experience in Central Otago.

### ***THIS IS AN HISTORIC RESERVE***

***All the material on this site is protected by law and the removal of any object is illegal.***

***Offenders will be prosecuted***

***Artefacts on this site have been security marked, though this is not visible to the naked eye***

## Bendigo Conservation Area

This is a high and isolated area of 1980 hectares with all the natural features of Otago's alpine tussock land. Spanning the crest of the Dunstan Mountains – highest point Mount Apiti 1509 metres – it has panoramic views west to the Southern Alps and east to the Otago hinterland. There are plenty of good recreational opportunities in this area: mountain biking, hunting, walking, cross-country skiing and 4WD driving along the crest.

## Ardgour Conservation Area

Ardgour's 303 hectares straddles the ridge line of the Dunstan Mountains in the Thomsons Saddle area, giving access to interesting walks along the tops to Mount Kamaka at the northern end of the conservation area. It is remote and isolated, but well worth a visit for a mountain-top walk with great views of Central Otago and its surrounding ranges. Both mountain biking and cross-country skiing are possible up here.

Apart from the Bendigo Historic Reserve, which was private protected land, these conservation areas have become public land following tenure review of Bendigo and Ardgour Stations. The Bendigo Conservation Area is still leased and grazed by Bendigo Station as part of their high country farming operation.

## History

### Māori

There are no records of Māori history or artefacts from Bendigo. Thomsons Saddle was a route for Māori travelling from coastal Otago to Wanaka and the mountain passes that led to the West Coast settlements.

### Farming

This was part of the huge Morven Hills Station taken up by the McLean family in 1858. In 1910 it was broken into a number of smaller stations, Bendigo and Ardgour were two of them. A succession of runholders then battled both the elements and rabbits. Today Bendigo is successfully farmed for high quality fine wool and has established successful vineyards.

## Gold mining

Gold was found here in 1862 which brought an immediate influx of miners and prospectors clambering over the hills in search of the elusive metal. Initially the gold was alluvial and easier to extract but that petered out in 1865. Then gold-bearing quartz reefs were discovered and the focus went underground. Successfully too; in 1875 the Bendigo reef was said to be the richest and best defined in Otago. Mining continued in various forms, with varying degrees of success up to 1943, when a government mining subsidy was withdrawn. Since then there has been some activity in the 1980s and again early this century with renewed prospecting interest.



Solway Hotel and bakery on far left, Bendigo.

The historic reserve preserves the gold mining relics of the hard rock quartz mining that took place here – a fascinating legacy that's easily seen today. There are numerous mine shafts, tunnels and plenty of other remains: stone huts, stamper batteries, heavy machinery, water races, dams and pipelines. Extreme care should be taken here due to both the nature of the country and the possibility of unexpectedly coming across a shaft . . . children need to be well supervised.

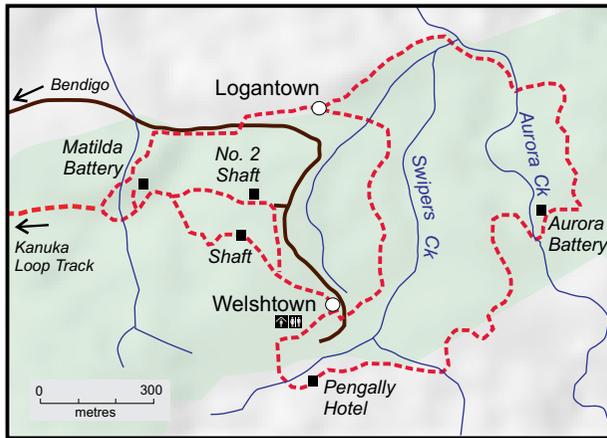


William Goodhall's hotel and store (M. Sole)

## Access

The main entrance to Bendigo is off SH8 at Crippletown, just north of Lake Dunstan and the picnic and boat ramp area at Rocky Point. Here, Loop Road goes up the hill, passes through the old Bendigo Township and the schoolhouse ruins at Schoolhouse Flat to the main historic sites of Logantown, Welshtown, and the mining remnants that are scattered throughout. At Welshtown there is parking, toilets and informative interpretation panels. Exploring on foot or bicycle is recommended from this point on as this is the heart of this entire historic area.

**Please note that motor vehicles of any kind are not permitted past the car park.**



Alternative access to Bendigo is via Thomson Gorge Road, up and over the Dunstan Range from the Manuherikia Valley at Matakanaui. There are spectacular views from this road, as it passes several historic sites on the way, including the delightfully named Rise and Shine and Come in Time batteries. This is a four-wheel-drive road that shouldn't be attempted in either winter or adverse conditions. The western end of this road provides access to Bendigo Township, via Bendigo Creek or out via Ardgour Road and back on to SH8 at the Lindis River Bridge.

There is also walking access to the scenic reserve off SH8 just south of the Rocky Point picnic area. This is the Mount Koinga Track and it leads up to the spur that the Kanuka Loop Track follows. It can be used as a link to the eastern end of the scenic reserve.

At the top of Thomson Gorge Road there's a signposted track leading to Mt Moka and the Bendigo Conservation Area. This is the start of a 4WD track that traverses the Dunstan Mountains south to Leaning Rock. Landowner permission is necessary for the route beyond the conservation area, where conditions are unpredictable.

Alternative walking access to the Bendigo Conservation Area can be found via Devils Creek, off SH8, five kilometres south of Bendigo Loop Road. This walking route follows a ridge on the true left of Devils Creek for six kilometres before it reaches the Bendigo Conservation Area.

Access to the Ardgour Conservation Area is signposted off Thomson Gorge Road at the top gate, where the road comes up from the east side of the Dunstan Range. From here access is only possible on foot or mountain bike. A track leads off to Mount Kamaka in the north-eastern corner of the DOC managed area.

## Walks

Most of this area is 'wander at will', though carefully! There are numerous tracks in and around the historic remains; starting from the Welshtown car park. From there you can view the Matilda and Aurora batteries, numerous mining shafts and the remains of several stone dwellings. Interpretation panels at the car park both suggest and describe several routes.

### Kānuka Loop Track – five hours (10km)

*This is a five-hour tramp on a marked track that shouldn't be attempted without being prepared for all conditions, including suitable clothing and food and water.*

Parking – 200 metres up the road at Logantown.

This is the only bush walk in the Central Otago heartland administered by DOC. The track is clearly marked and starts 200 metres from the entry to the historic reserve. The track's first 100 or so metres is shared with the shorter Matilda Battery Track, it then branches off to the right at the crest of Spec Gully.

After traversing some open country and a stile the track winds (clockwise) through the Kānuka Scenic Reserve in the Chinamans Creek catchment. The track climbs to a typical Lower Dunstan Mountains landscape and passes through re-generated kānuka forest and impressive rocky

craggs, with magnificent views over Lake Dunstan and the Upper Clutha Valley.

It then runs around the back of Chinamans Creek's gully before traversing a ridge and following the front ridge line that faces the Upper Clutha Valley. Deep in Chinamans Creek, where the track crosses back, there's a biv for shelter near some stone hut ruins and other relics of the past.

There is also a shorter loop walk that takes between an hour and ninety minutes. Follow the Kānuka Track but instead of crossing Burma Road – the only one you come to – follow it down to the gate and turn right to come back along the marked fence line and to the stile.

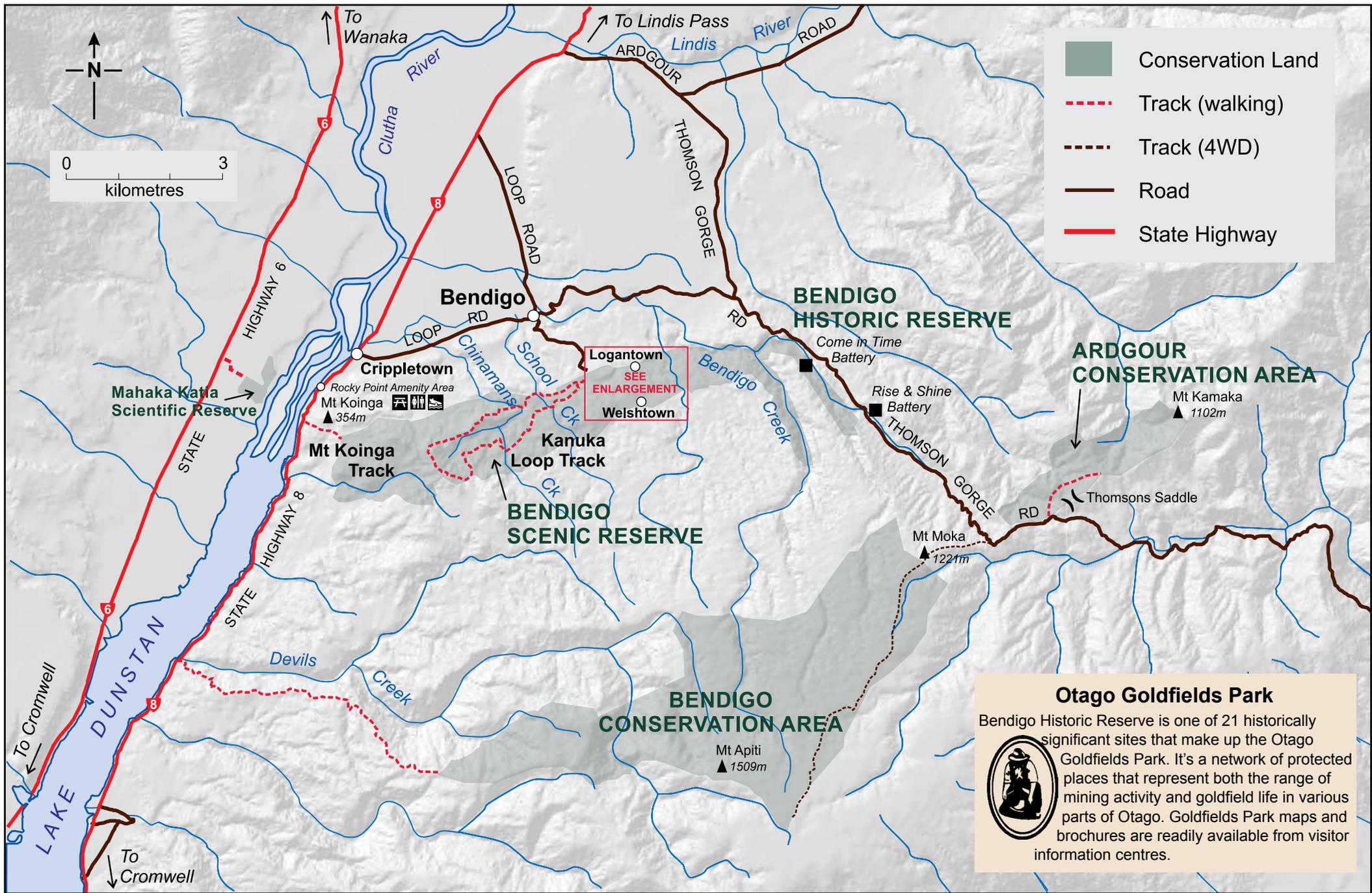
### Come in Time Battery

Further up Thomson Gorge Road there is a signposted walk down to the mine entrances and battery that were all part of the Come in Time claim. This has recently been restored and is now a virtually complete example of this type of heavy gold mining equipment. It's just a short walk to the battery, and there are other interesting artefacts in the area, making it a good place to both explore and picnic. Other areas within the conservation area are 'explore as you wish' but due to the harsh nature of the country and the hazards old diggings can present, care must be taken.

The freehold land from the historic reserve to the top of Thomson Gorge Road is also available to look at the historic sites within the Rise and Shine area. Please ensure that you have a map and compass. The relevant 260 series topographic map for this area is G41 Cromwell, available from DOC's Central Otago Area Office in Alexandra.



Bendigo (A. Hamel)



**Otago Goldfields Park**

Bendigo Historic Reserve is one of 21 historically significant sites that make up the Otago Goldfields Park. It's a network of protected places that represent both the range of mining activity and goldfield life in various parts of Otago. Goldfields Park maps and brochures are readily available from visitor information centres.

