



MURRELL'S GRAND VIEW HOUSE

A BRIEF HISTORY

Compiled By

Philippa Murrell



The Murrell family came to Manapouri in the late 1880s. The first of the Murrells to live in the area was Robert Murrell



referred to as Old Bob (pictured) who came from Kent in England, via Australia. He travelled to Tasmania around 1860 and worked in the household of the then Governor General Sir John Franklin. When Franklin returned to England Robert

Murrell went to the goldfields at Ballarat to try his luck at prospecting. After a while, with no wife or money or any prospect of either, Robert took a ship to New Zealand and arrived in Southland and secured work building homesteads for sheep stations. In those days one could buy the right to run sheep on vast areas from the government but you had to erect a proper home within two years to retain the title. Murrell, together with his friend James Scott, milled timber from the bush at Caroline south of Lumsden and with a horse, cart and some building tools, they were in business!

Manapouri Station was the third and last that they built. It was built for Rainey Freeman-Jackson and was the first house in the Te Anau basin. They made some money in this venture but not enough

and Scott went back to milling at Caroline and later had a pub at the Castlerock Corner. Murrell stayed on to manage Manapouri station and lived in the homestead. Having accumulated some money he decided to take a wife. He wrote to an old flame in the UK who agreed to come out to marry him. Her name was Maggie and she was originally from Dublin. They married on the steps of the wharf in Melbourne and returned soon after to New Zealand to live at the Station. After some years, the owner of the Station sold out and moved north, the new owners cut off some land and contracted Old Bob to establish a pub there to prevent the departure of shepherds seeking a bar in which to drink their pay, as sometimes they did not return. This became Bob's Corner and was a staging post for traffic still drawn by horse. This was around 1867 and was the beginning of the Murrell's hospitality business in Fiordland.

Old Bob collected mail once a week from Castlerock (50 miles away) and delivered it to the stations along the way. Later he was postmaster for Manapouri at Bob's Corner and was succeeded in this duty by his daughter-in-law Margaret at Grand View House, then her daughter Eva and following that her nephew Jack Murrell. In 1960 Jack and his brother built the general store in Manapouri and put the post office there. This was sold in 1994, ending over 120 years of hereditary postal service in the district.

Old Bob and Margaret had two children, Alex and Robert, known as Young Bob (pictured below) but Margaret died in her early thirties leaving Old Bob to care for the family. They went to school in Invercargill where they boarded with a German family. Eventually Alex was apprenticed to a blacksmith near Winton and married the daughter of the smith.



Young Bob helped with mustering on the local stations, worked in the woolsheds and freelanced at bird catching around Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau working with Richard Henry who became famous for conservation work. Young Bob frequently volunteered to make the long journey to collect mail and to visit a young girl

named Margaret Scott (daughter of his father's old friend James Scott) who he subsequently married. Young Bob would bring visitors to the lake and row them across to the peninsula in a boat belonging to the Station.

In 1885 the Government established a steamer called the Titiroa on Manapouri and contracted Old Jim Dore and his nephew Jack (JBC) Dore to operate it. As a result of the volume of business they asked the Government to establish an accommodation house at Manapouri.

Thus, in 1889, Young Bob, his wife Margaret and their new baby Jack arrived with two bullock wagons of timber. Margaret chose the site and they erected a room first to keep the gun powder and other dry provisions in. After that the rest was built to make 14 rooms, large dining and sitting rooms. Margaret ran the House for visitors to the area whilst Young Bob went off contracting. Young Bob (Robert Murrell) is credited with discovering what is now known as Wilmot Pass. In 1888 Young Bob was involved in a search for Professor Mainwaring Brown and during the course of this search discovered a way through to Doubtful Sound. A few years later Mr. E.H. Wilmot, chief surveyor, confirmed Murrell's discovery but gave his own name to the pass since there was already a Murrell Pass.

In 1901 the Government issued a contract to cut a track from West Arm of the lake to Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound. Dore and Young Bob took part with four men. Also in 1901 Young Bob helped Dore release Red Deer at Hope Arm. In 1903 he was appointed Chief Guide on the Milford Track for four seasons and around 1904 took over from Dore to skipper the steamer Manurere on Lake Manapouri and take visitors to Doubtful Sound.

Young Bob and Margaret had 8 children; Jack (killed in action in 1st WW), Graham, Eva, Leslie, Burton, Norman, Stanley and Raymond (Guy). Eva, Les and Burton all stayed with the House. In 1921 Les

(Uncle Les) re-opened the Doubtful Sound track, bought 2 launches and began guiding people into Doubtful Sound. He died about 1954 and the Doubtful business was sold to Les Hutchins (nephew of Jack Dore) who built it into Real Journeys, a success for which he is held in much admiration.

Eva retired in 1960. Burton married Alice Martin of London and they built themselves a cottage where they lived until Eva's retirement. Then they returned to live here. Burton washed all the dishes, cut the lawns, hedges and did the laundry, shot a deer a week for meat and speared enough trout and salmon at night for breakfast for the House. Alice did everything else and managed to make breakfast, lunch and dinner for guests on a small range with no refrigeration. Those mod cons came much later on. They had four children, Jack, Burton, Bina and Margaret. They were schooled at home by correspondence and then each went to secondary school in Invercargill. Jack married Barbara McKechnie in 1959 and they had 4 children, Gillian, Robert, Ruth and Alice. Barbara now resides in Christchurch. Jack ran the house alone before remarrying Klaske 20 years ago. They retired in 2006 to a cottage next door.

Robert Murrell (3rd) married his English wife Philippa in 1997. They now run the house with Zoe (b.1999) and Will (b. 2002) who represent the 6th generation of Murrells in Manapouri, and the 5th generation at the House.