

(Pre Otago Tramping Club)

Ross Creek - Pineapple Point - Flagstaff

1921

Over The Hill to Whare Flat

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We started from Maori Hill. I promised a visitor from the City of the Plains that I would take him on a walk, which for variety of scenery and an entire absence of dull and uninteresting stretches would be hard to match anywhere in New Zealand, or beyond. What better start than the picturesque golf links, with their velvet tread? It was here that we left the hard roads, and said good-bye to dust churned up by motors – those servants of modern restlessness and masters of physical deterioration. Down we dipped into a bush-clad gully, till recently and for many years the home of a nature-loving 'hermit' and crossed School Creek at its junction with Ross Creek. A few minutes climb brought us to the reservoir, nestling like a miniature lake among the hills. It is gratifying to notice the improvements which have been made here, and which render it an ideal picnic resort, so close to the city, and yet so far removed from it.

Following the road for a short distance we strike a by road, which is still covered in green sward, bringing us to the bottom of the bush, right alongside of Ross's Creek, which tempts us to a long cool drink. Now we have a fairly strenuous climb of 20 minutes up the bush track, rising about 600 feet, but, no matter how hot the sun's rays may be, we are well sheltered from them here. For the botanically inclined there is an endless variety of bush plants and ferns on this track, and further up the hardier species of mountain plants are in evidence. As soon as we emerge from the bush a fine view opens out, but we hold back our admiration till we have circled round to the right, and reached our beloved Pineapple Point.





Here is spread before us what is undoubtedly one of the loveliest views in the vicinity of Dunedin. Looking over a foreground of bush we see nearly the whole of the City of Dunedin lying at our feet, with the wide, blue ocean framing the only part of the picture which the green hills leave bare.

Now the glasses are brought out, as there is much of interest to see, whether it be the traffic along the winding Leith road to Sullivans Dam, the reflections in the deep blue water of the reservoir, the shipping at the wharves, prominent buildings round the city (such as the new hospital at Wakari), or the coastline stretching far away to the south past Taieri Island to the Nuggets, nearly 60 miles away.

Meanwhile, one of the rucksacks has been broached, and a tin of pineapples has been opened. Never did pineapple have a better flavour is the unanimous verdict! Thoroughly refreshed we follow the track along the fence leading up to the saddle, having on our right the wild gully known as Nicol's, and harbouring in its deep recesses some five picturesque waterfalls.

A steady pull brings us ere long to the saddle from which we obtain the first view of the dark and rugged Silver Peaks, and of the snow-clad Rock-and-Pillar range beyond, and now the 'new-chums' of the party feel that now they see something quite apart from everyday scenes! At this point we also strike the historic old trail running over the hills to Waikouaiti – the first 'road' which connected the Otago settlement with the older settlement of whalers at Waikouaiti. It was never used for vehicular traffic, only as a pack and bridle-track to the New Settlement.

Following the old trail towards Flagstaff 'trig,' we are presently attracted by a curious pile of broken rocks running in a dead straight line alongside the track for three or four chains, looking for all the world as if they had been built up at one time by masons working with a line, and yet having no apparent object whatever.

*Then we took a new track which ran over the hill in the direction of Whare Flat, this track has recently been roughly formed by our old friend, "Ben" Rudd, and leads to his new abode. Some 18 months ago "Ben" sold out of the property he held for so long, and was given an easy billet with comfortable quarters and good food by a resident of Maori Hill, but after a while the *Call of the Wild* was too strong for him, so he bought a fresh ranch, of rather more than 100 acres, and is now busy putting up a new 'home' among rocks and scrub on one of the sunniest and picturesque spots on the mountain side. With much toil he has formed the long track, and carried all the material for his hut on his back over the mountain. Now, his great concern is again to keep trespassers off his ground, and he lets you know, without the shadow of a doubt, that nobody has his permission to come on his property, and that he prefers to be entirely left alone.*