

Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club

# **BEN RUDD'S PROPERTY** *A HISTORY*

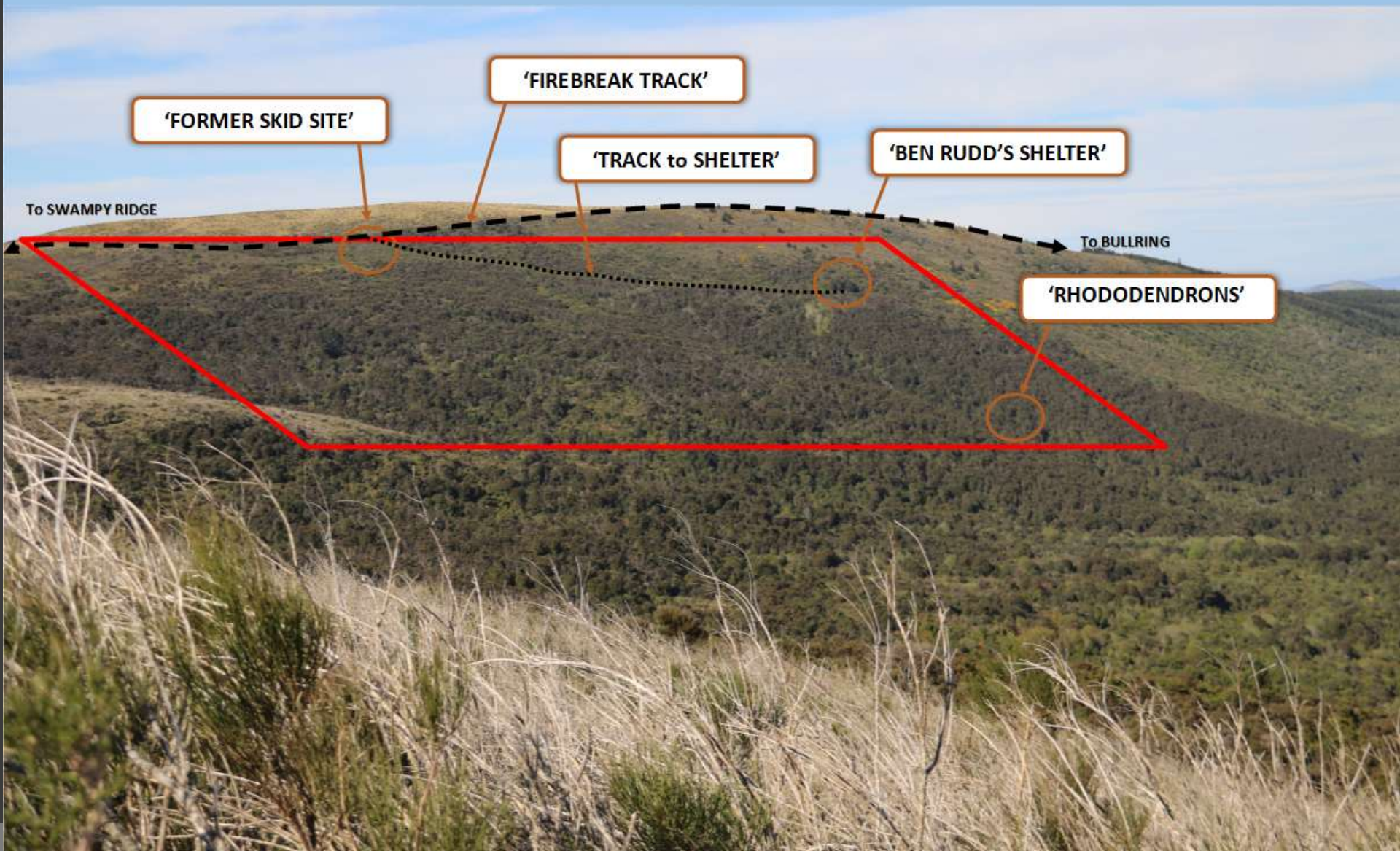
The OTMC own a special piece of land on the northern slopes of Flagstaff – our Ben Rudd's Property – this property was the home of 'the Hermit of Flagstaff' – Mr Benjamin Rudd from 1921 until 1930

The Otago Tramping Club was formed in August 1923, and within a few short weeks had formed a relationship with this remarkable man and his property.

94 years later, we remain proud custodians of Ben Rudd's land – tonight we are sharing the history of property.

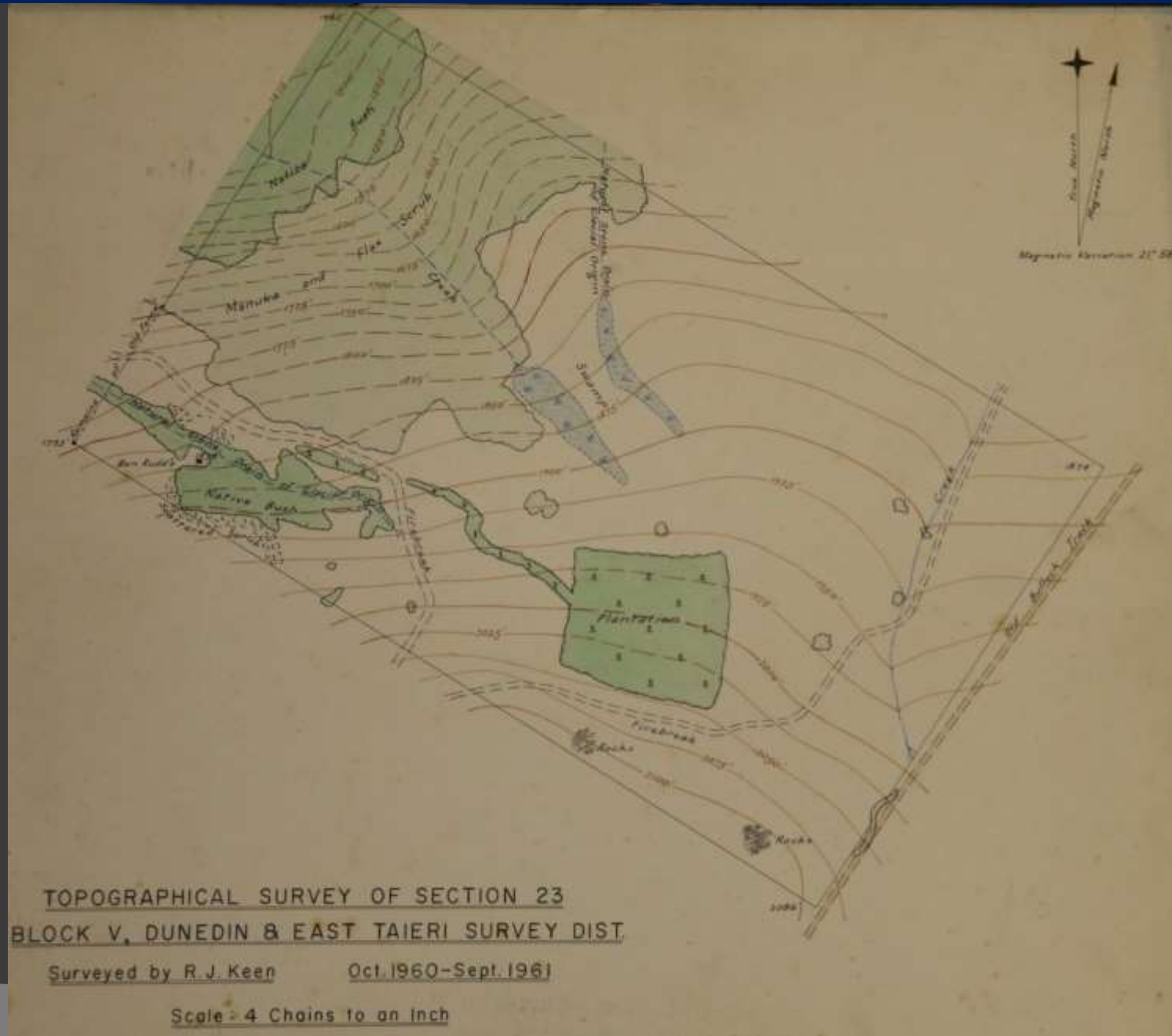
# *Indicative Location of Ben Rudd's Property*

**Location photo for Ben Rudd's Property (OTMC) on Flagstaff—as viewed from near Swampy Summit  
OTAGO TRAMPING and MOUNTAINEERING CLUB**



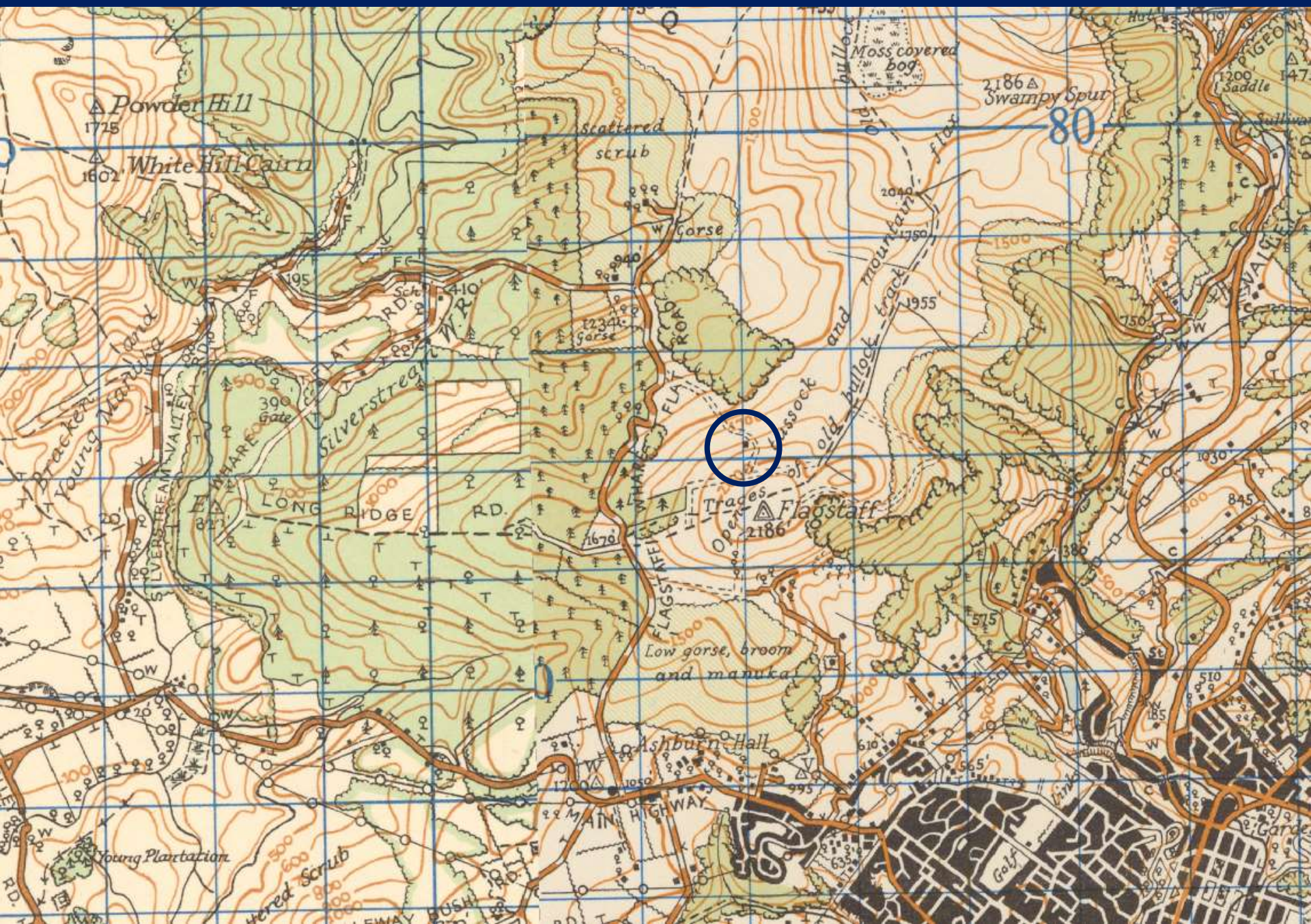


# Ron Keen's 1961 Map



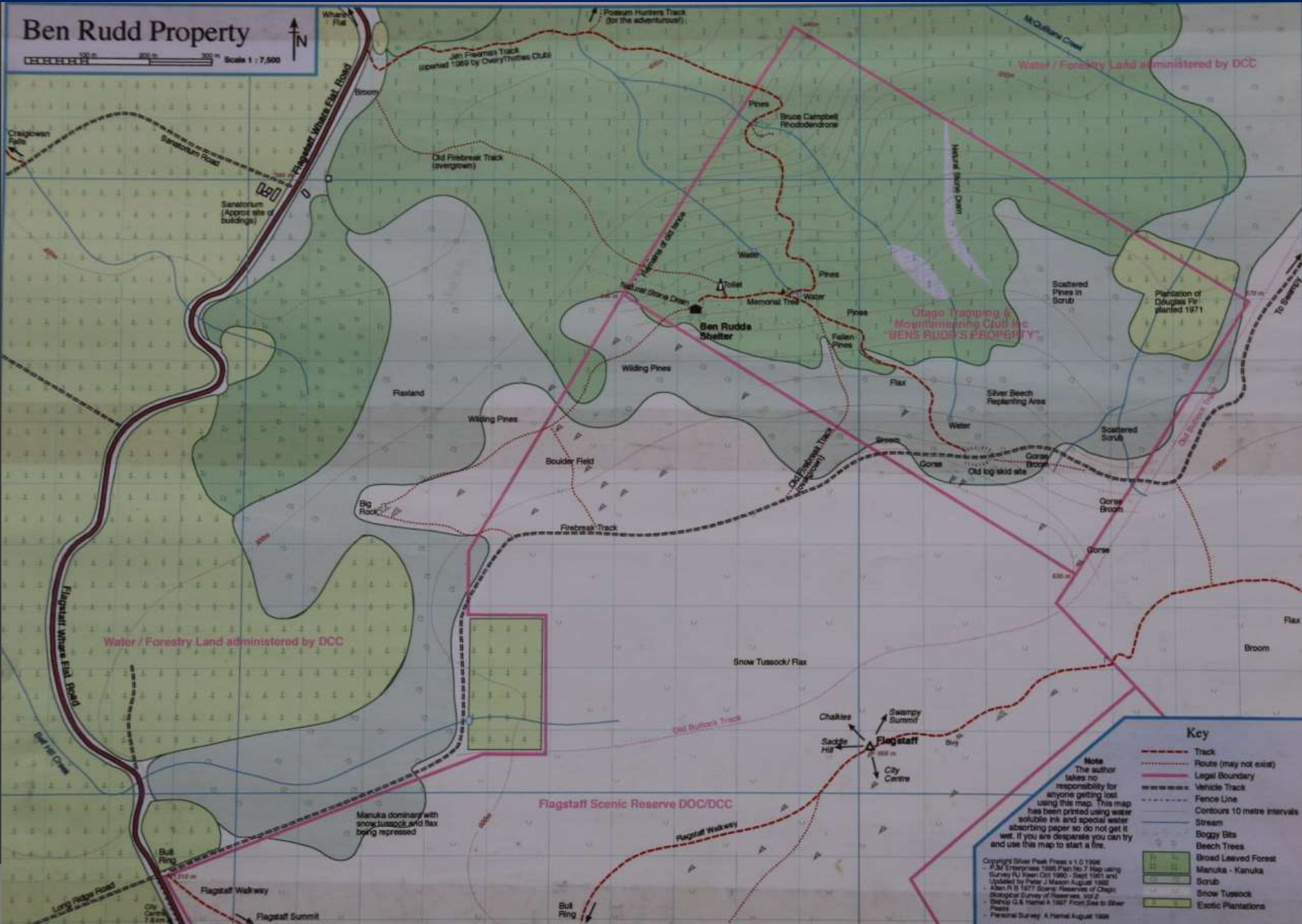


# Flagstaff and Bullock Track (NZMS1 Edition 1, 1959)





## Antony Hamel's Late 1990's Map



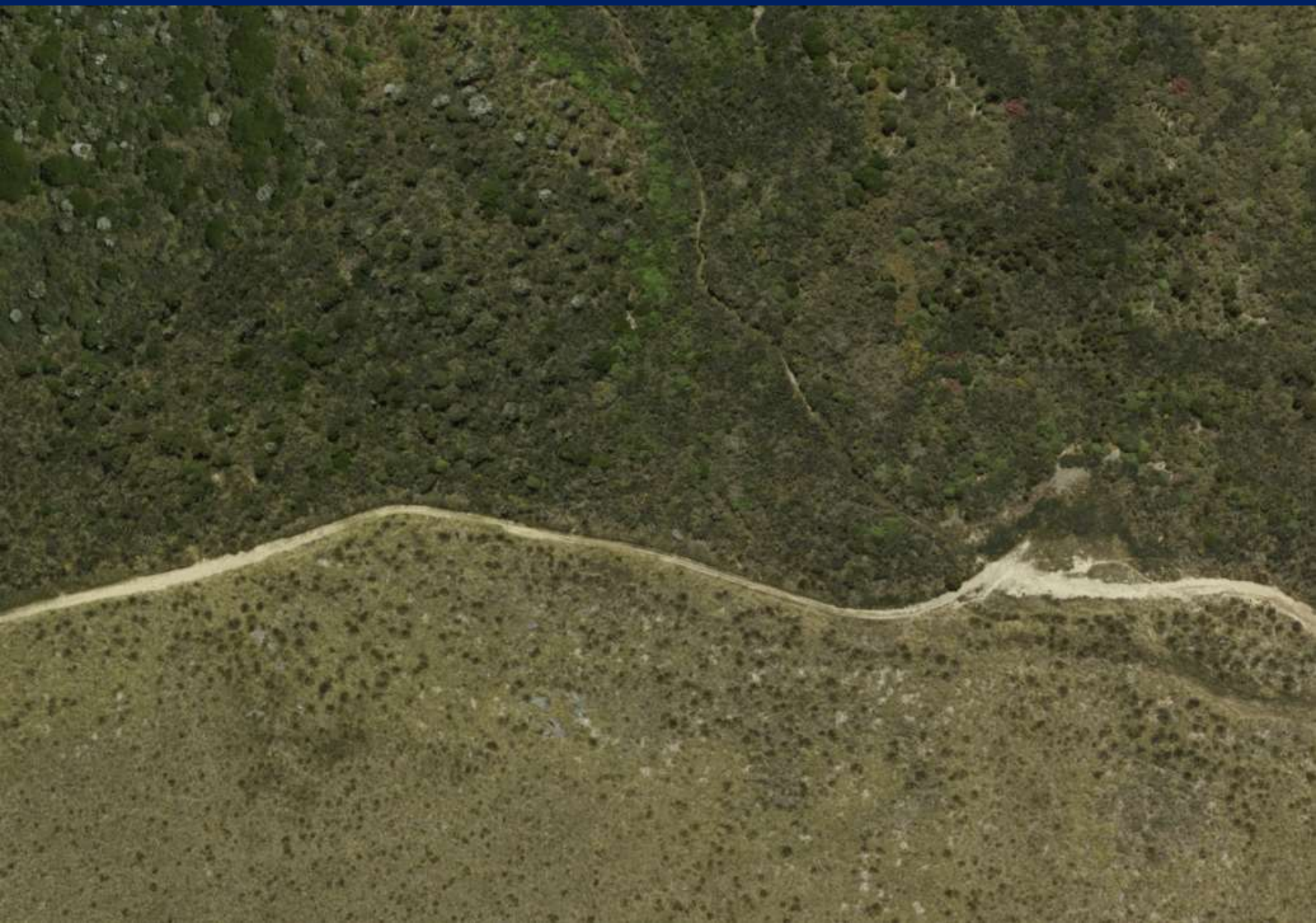


# Flagstaff and Ben Rudd's (Topo50 - Current)





*Ben Rudd's – Former Skid Site Junction (LINZ Airphoto)*





# *Who was Ben Rudd?*

Ben Rudd was a well-known Dunedin farmer and gardener at the turn of the twentieth century. He owned and farmed land at his property “Woodside” at the top of Rudd Road, from 1884 to 1919. In 1919 he sold his farm and retired for a short period to Dunedin city.

Finding urban life unbearable, in 1921 he purchased a 45 ha (112 acre) block of land on the northern flank of Flagstaff and lived on this property until just before his death in 1930, at the age of 76.





# *Who was Ben Rudd?*





## **1886: Attempted Murder Charge**

Benjamin Rudd, a deferred payment settler at Flagstaff, was charged today with attempted murder. A man named 'Waldie' and another were riding past accused's place and saluted him as "Uncle Ben". He allegedly threw stones at them and then rushed away for his gun, which he fired, wounding Waldie in the neck with a bullet.

Accused's solicitor stated that the prisoner had been annoyed for some time by people calling him "Uncle Ben". He only fired the gun with the intention of frightening them.



Ben Rudd eventually pleaded guilty to having fired a gun at John Waldie with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.

The Jury retired for a few minutes, and then returned a verdict of "Not guilty."  
The accused was then discharged.

## UNLAWFULLY WOUNDING.

Benjamin Rudd pleaded Guilty to an indictment charging him with having on the 5th January fired a gun at John Waldie with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.

Mr J. Macgregor defended the prisoner.

The Crown Prosecutor, in opening the case, said that Waldie, the prosecutor, was a farmer living at the Half-way Bush, and was also a slaughterman. The prisoner lived somewhere in the neighbourhood of Flagstaff. On the day mentioned in the indictment the prosecutor and one Alfred Jones were riding together along the road towards Flagstaff. They saw the prisoner at work at a stone wall alongside the road, and as they passed him the prosecutor said to him, "Go it, Uncle Ben; you are working hard." Immediately he said this the prisoner took up a stone and threw it at Waldie, who turned back and asked him for an explanation. Prisoner then rushed towards his gun, picked it up, and aimed it at Waldie. Portion of the shot struck him—some in the hand, some went through his clothes into his pocket, but the principal portion struck the horse on its hindquarters. Waldie and Jones then turned back and spoke to the prisoner, but as they saw he was in the act of again loading his gun they rode off and gave information to the police. Prisoner, on being interrogated by Constable M'Laughlin, denied all knowledge of the matter—denied having shot at Waldie or having fired off a gun. Subsequently, however, he admitted having fired the shot, but said it did not strike Waldie, as he was a long distance off at the time, and gave as his reason for discharging the weapon that Waldie had insulted him. Waldie would give evidence that he only knew the prisoner by the name of "Uncle Ben," and that his observation was intended to be of a friendly nature. After evidence for the prosecution had been given in the Police Court, the prisoner said: "Mr Waldie has insulted me times and times. I have been knocked down by his bullocks." That was the only excuse he had to offer for his conduct.

John Waldie and Constable M'Laughlin gave evidence for the prosecution.

Robert Chisholm, called by the accused's counsel, said he had found the prisoner an honest, industrious, and inoffensive man.

William J. Crofts (manager for Butler Bros.), Robert Miller, John Hornby, and Robert Ritchie also gave evidence respecting the character of the accused, who, in their opinion, was a very quiet and respectable man.

This was not the only time that harassment by others put Ben Rudd before the courts.

A statement made by Ben Rudd in the Magistrate's Court stated that picnickers totalled around 100 per week, and he had counted 16,000 people trespassing on his land in one year.

Ben had intended to rear native birds, native trees and game on his property, but trespassers defeated his objects.

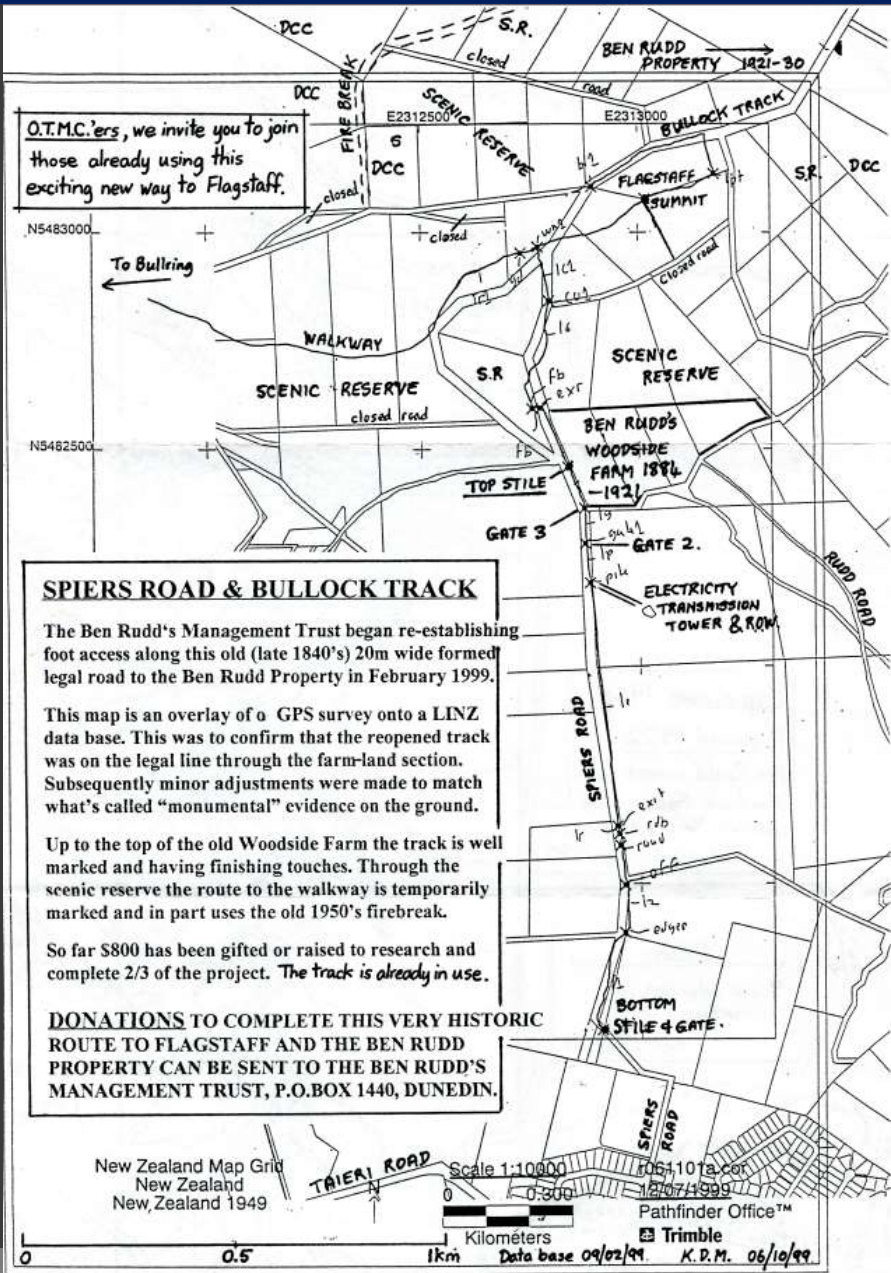


Spiers Road is the start of a historic public road that runs from Halfway Bush and over 'Flagstaff Hill'. From there it follows the tops through Swampy Summit and down to Mountain Track (now road), onto Steep Hill Road and along the tops to behind the old Cherry Farm.

It was used to avoid the swampy coastal & bush areas as early as the 1840's and 1850's.

Following several deaths on the route, cairns or 'Flag Staff's' were installed as a way of marking the route.

# Spiers Road





In 1919, Ben Rudd sold Woodside, and moved to the city. City life did not agree with Ben, so he purchased another property, this time on the northern slopes of Flagstaff – this 112 acre / 45ha property is today the club's Ben Rudd's Property.

Ben chose a sheltered gully in which he hand built his little stone hut – the site is where today's shelter is (the old stone hut was on a small terrace above where the modern shelter is)

*Ben Rudd's Stone Hut*





# *Ben Rudd's Stone Hut*



## *Otago Tramping Club – Inaugural Trip*

The Otago Tramping Club was formed on 23 August 1923, and held the first day trip on Saturday, September 1.

This first trip to the summit of Flagstaff from Ross Creek started the continuous connection this club has had with the wider Flagstaff area.

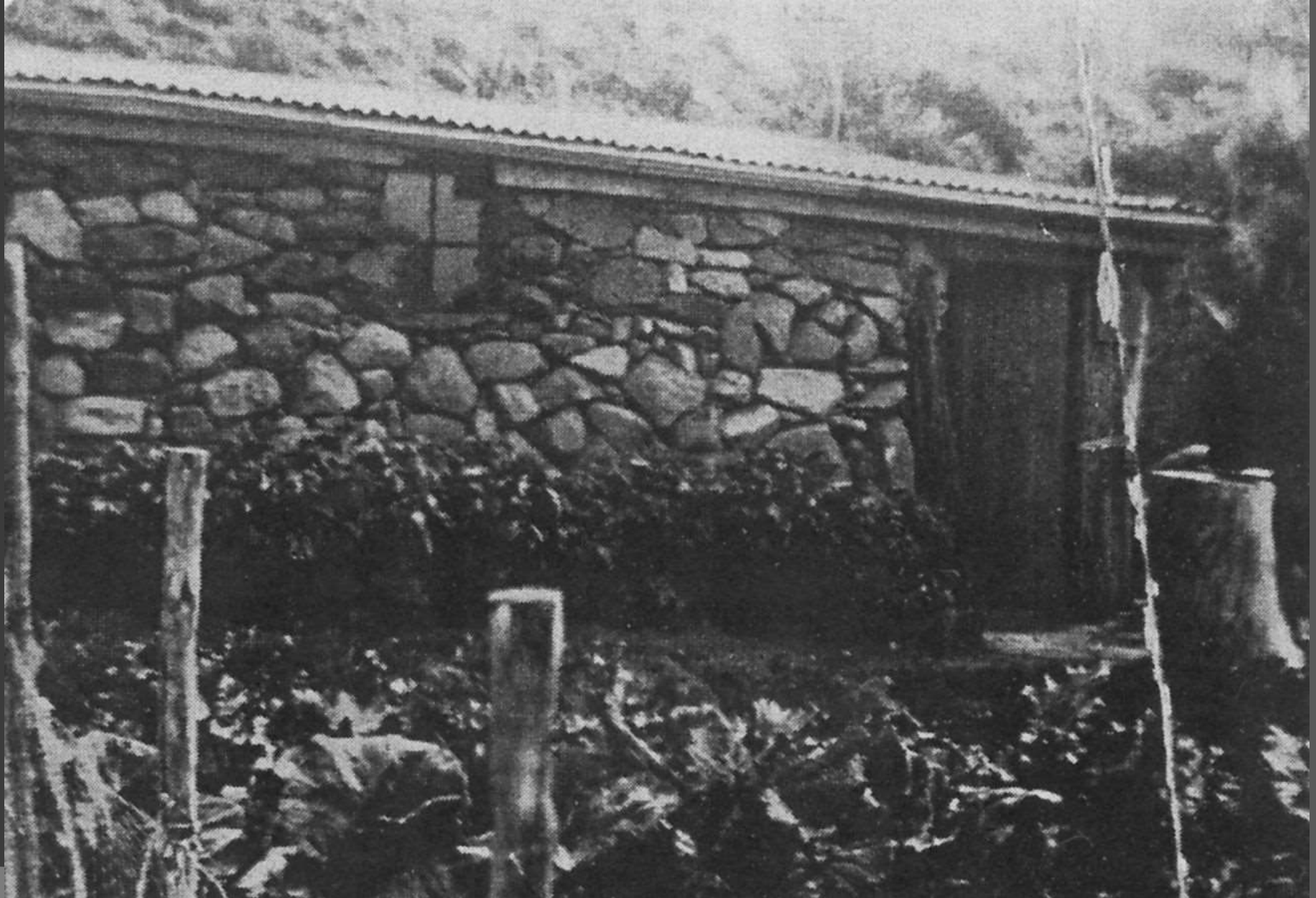
To some, Flagstaff & the interlinked Silver Peaks is the spiritual home of the OTMC – Ben Rudd's remains a very special place for a lot of our older members.



# *Otago Tramping Club – Flagstaff Trip*



# *Ben Rudd's Stone Hut*





# *Ben Rudd's Stone Hut*



## *Whare Flat via Ben Rudd's*



OTC Party at Whare Flat – probably crossed from Ross Creek Reservoir via Ben Rudd's – Oscar Balk (1<sup>st</sup> President) third from left.



It was on the second OTC Sunday trip just a couple weeks after the inaugural trip that OTC members met Ben Rudd.

On Sept 16, 1923, two parties set off from Dunedin (one from Ross Creek, and one from Kaikorai Tram Terminus) heading to spring flowers in bloom at Whare Flat.

The Ross Creek party traversed the area okay, but the second party were confronted by Ben Rudd...

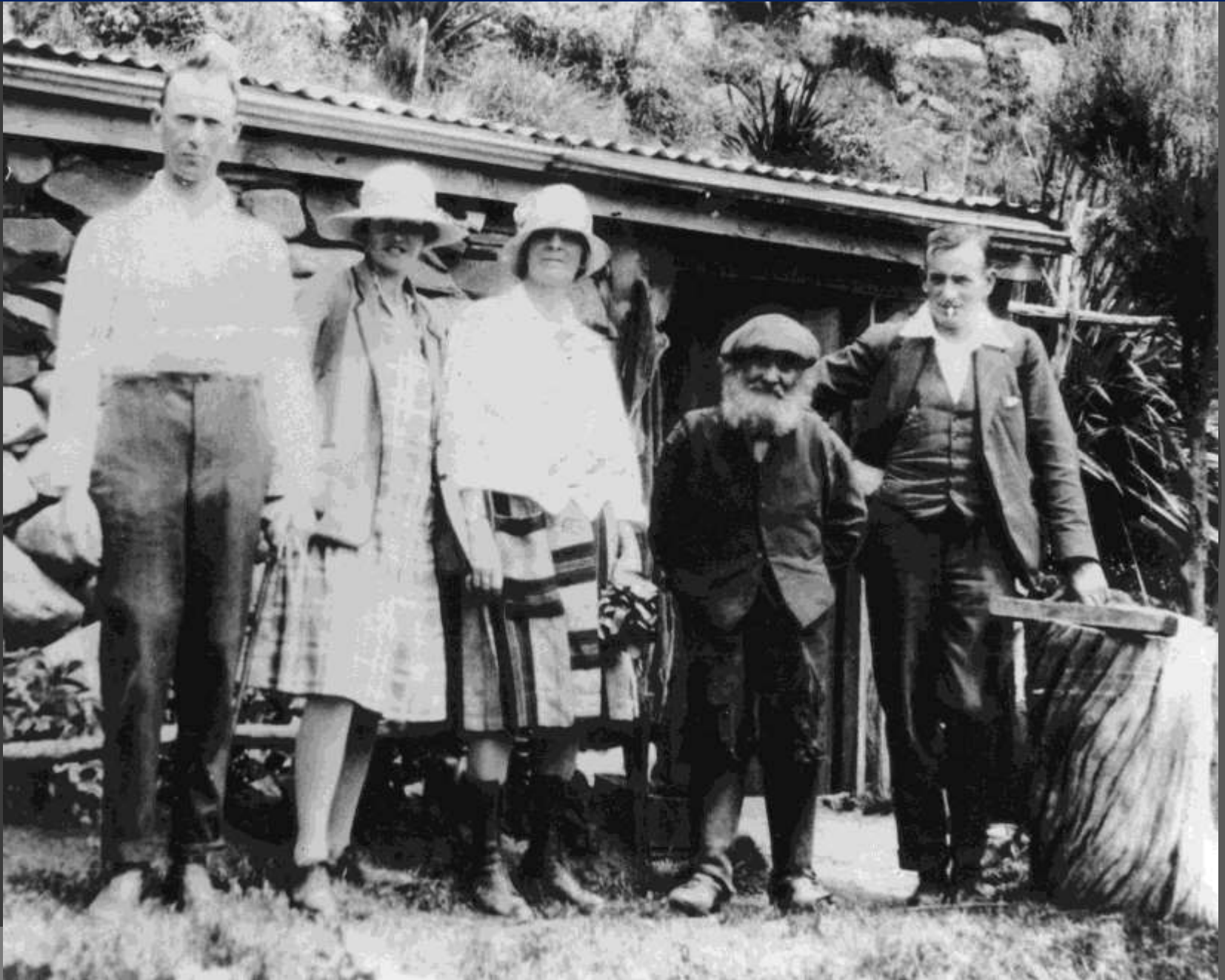
A young Scott Gilkison (a very active tramp and climber and later, author & Life Member) recalled the feelings of alarm as they encountered the 'stocky, bearded little man with the shot-gun'.

16/9/23 Met at Reservoir at 10 am. Six members set off over Flagstaff for Whare Flat. Very strenuous walking. Arrived there about 12.30 pm. Boiled the billy and had lunch. By this time many other members of OTC had arrived. Our party left about 2 pm and walked around to Blackbridge (2 hours) and home along North Taieri road, taking car at Kaikora at 6.50 pm. Glorious day for walking but very muddy.

Leaders: Mr Ritchie and Mr Pearson



# *Ben Rudd and OTC Members*



As a result of this encounter, the club arranged with Ben Rudd that he would cut a track through the manuka scrub, thus providing a route to Whare Flat. For this he was paid £5 – this became known as ‘the Club Track’ and was well used until it was blocked by extensive fires in 1935





# *First mention of Club Track?*

2/3/24

Left Dundas St steps at 8.50 am and walked up to Reservoir, then through Bush Track and over Flagstaff through Ben Rudds Track coming out on to Whare Flat Road. Had a chat with Mr McTwilkam and then had lunch by the side of the stream.

At 1.30 4 of our party left for Powder Creek, we had a stunner tramp and followed the Powder Creek track as far as it was cleared. Arrived back to our camping place at 5.30 pm and then Mr Clayton and 2 visitors left for train. We lit a fire and had a meal and left in about an hours time for Dunedin, coming home through bush track and got the car from Kaikorai about 8.30 pm.

5 members

Leader: Mr F W Clayton. A real good days tramp

Official trips were to Morrisons Creek and Black Head.

The OTC became good friends with Ben Rudd, and would often visit him whilst on trips in the area.





In late February, 1930 Ben Rudd was found in a critical condition in his stone hut by Mr and Mrs Stratton, of Mornington.

Mrs Stratton stayed with Ben, while help was sought. The ambulance could only get to a paddock about a mile and half from his hut (maybe top of Rudd Road?) Several constables and civilians assisted the ambulance driver to stretch Ben Rudd through the bush to the ambulance and on to the hospital.

## A DUNEDIN HERMIT. FOUND IN CRITICAL CONDITION.

[THE PRESS Special Service.]

DUNEDIN, February 24.

For many years the hut of Mr Ben Rudd, popularly known as the "Hermit of Flagstaff," has been well known to residents of Dunedin. On Sunday a visit was paid to the hut, which is near the sanatorium on the Whare Flat road, by Mr and Mrs Alex G. Stratton, of Mornington, who found the hermit in a critical condition. He was very ill and had been unable for some time to fend for himself, and had consequently been without attention of any sort.

Mrs Stratton stayed at the hut while her husband went to Ashburn Hall to telephone to the police. Several constables, the ambulance, and Dr. R. F. Wilson, of the hospital staff, were dispatched, but it was found that the ambulance could not make its way to the hut, and it had to be left in a paddock about a mile and a half away. With the aid of the ambulance driver and several civilians, the constables finally succeeded in carrying the sufferer through the bush to the ambulance, and he was conveyed to the hospital where he lay all night in a critical condition, but was reported this afternoon to be a little easier.

Mr Rudd, who is 87 years of age, is suffering from the effects of old age.

## *Ben Rudd's Death*

A few days later, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Ben Rudd died at Dunedin Hospital, aged 76.

For nearly 50 years, Ben Rudd had lived on Flagstaff. The Ben Rudd's property is his legacy.





## *Ben's property – 1930 to 1946*

There appears to be a gap in the history of Ben Rudd's property between his death in 1930, and the OTC acquiring the property in 1946

There is the odd photographic evidence that indicates that Ben's old stone hut was visited, but possible reduced to a pile of stone?

There were certainly many Flagstaff trips (and trips that mention the 'club track' up to 1935). The raspberries and gooseberries at the hut site were popular...

By mid 1933, the Club Hut became a bigger focus for the club.

*Ben's property – 1930 to 1946*





## *OTC obtains the Ben Rudd's Property*

In 1946, the club committee became aware that Ben Rudd's old property was available to purchase. Aside from the historical link to the formative OTC, the land was important as it was the only property not spoken for by the DCC *(there is talk that the DCC tried to deny the club of the land by one of the avenues available to the Corporation).*

Due to time constraints, the Committee completed the transaction without reference to a general meeting – the subsequent AGM fully supported the purchase.

One of the first use's of the newly acquired property was the construction of a small hut to serve as a base for ski trips over Flagstaff.

Unfortunately the ski-run prepared in conjunction with the hut was never used, as the big snows of 1939 and 1946 seemed to stop with the building of the hut.

At the time of purchase there was considerable interest in establishing a park where the public could enjoy a day's outing.

This idea stopped when it was realised the amount of work required.



# Flagstaff Skiing





# *First OTC Hut at Ben Rudd's*





# *First OTC Hut at Ben Rudd's*



*First OTC Hut at Ben Rudd's*





# *First OTC Hut at Ben Rudd's*



# *First OTC Hut at Ben Rudd's*





## *Bruce Campbell Rhododendron Dell*

The 1950's saw a dell of Rhododendrons planted at the lower end of the property by Life Member Bruce Campbell – although protected by the QEII Covenant further planting will not happen.

Bruce also planted the significant beech trees behind the shelter, towering over the Linda Mercier Memorial Seat.





# *Bruce Campbell Rhododendron Dell*



In 1950 it was decided to make the area a paying proposition, and several thousand trees were planted. At the time, club members speculated how they would spend the great sums of money that would be realised.

Tree planting and the associated maintenance continued until 1973, when the committee decided to cease the afforestation project.





# *OTC Tree Planting at Ben Rudd's – 1950's*



# *OTC Tree Planting at Ben Rudd's – 1950's*







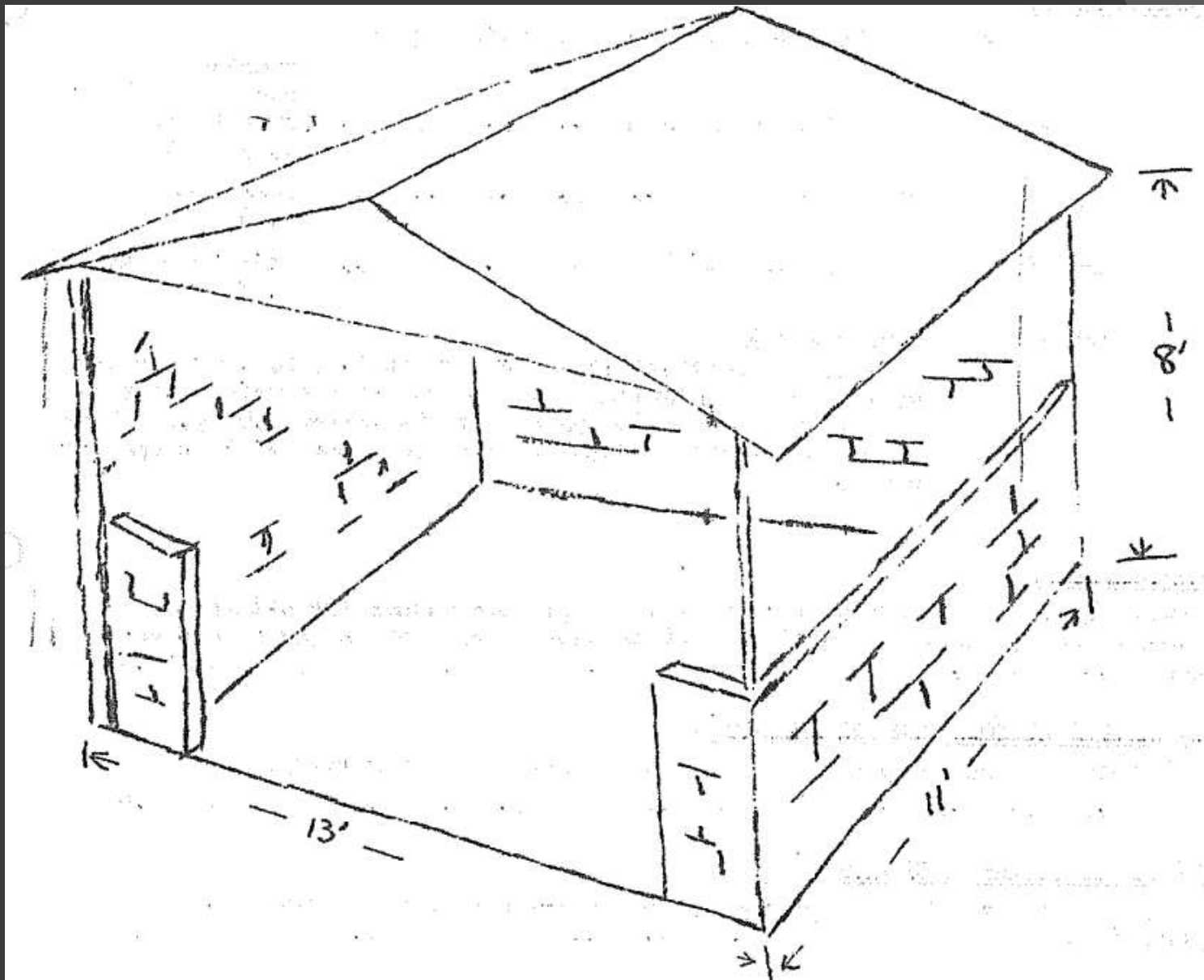
Another decision reached in 1973 was that although no further long-term development was planned, the club should reject any suggestion that the property be disposed with.



Similar to other huts situated close to roads, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ben Rudd's hut suffered from extensive vandalism to the point the club could not keep it safe.

In the early 1970's the hut was removed, and the present day concrete block shelter built (the construction was designed to be more or less vandal proof)

# March 1971 Sketch of Proposed Replacement for Ben Rudd's Hut



Rough Sketch of proposed Shelter at Ben Rudds



During the 1970's and 1980's a visit to Ben Rudd's was an annual trip for the successful Family Tramping Group – this was always the third Sunday in August.



## *Ben Rudd's Maintenance and Decisions*

Work parties also continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's – focussing on the ever present broom and gorse.

At the same time, the subject of Ben Rudd's featured at most AGM's (and normally well discussed)

The monthly Bulletin was also used to present views.

Another fire in 1976 destroyed half of the final plantings from 1971, with more damage caused by the hastily bulldozed firebreak track.



# From OTC Bulletin 290 (March 1972)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BEN RUDDS PROPERTY

We do not think Ben Rudd's property, (or part of it) should be sold, or that the Club should attempt on a voluntary basis to plant and maintain a plantation. We feel that for the Club to undertake this project on a contract basis, is beyond the present finances of the Club; but has the Club thought of raising a debenture loan of perhaps a minimum subscription of 10 dollars from interested people to finance a contract scheme of some sort?

The idea of leasing the forestry rights to a private company or a local body would be satisfactory if the Club also receives royalties on all timber sales.

Could not a sub-committee of members (not necessarily from the Committee) look into the pros and cons of the matter, and report their findings back, as this property could be a definite asset to the Club in the future.

Jan and Brian O'Callaghan.

I would like to express my opinion concerning the article in the December issue of OTC "What should be done with Ben Budd's

I agree that Ben Budd's is a liability to the Club the way it is. If the interest is not there, in as far as maintaining the existing trees, it would seem pointless to me to go ahead with further development if that was to suffer the same fate.

As I see it, if the property was kept and forestry rights leased to a development company, the Club has the property as security if needed and would have an income as well, which would pay for it's keep.

However if this Forestry Development Company is not floated I think the other alternative, as stated, would be to sell 100 acres, keeping 20 acres around the shelter. This I feel would still retain the Club members in the area by still having the Ben Rudd's shelter site. To sell the whole property would be an extreme measure to go to at this stage, as there appears to be quite a few older members, and younger, also families who use Ben Rudd's as a day or half days outing.

Bob Maunsell.

## *Removal of Plantation Trees*

Initially the focus was to get the trees logged and sold. It wasn't until 1988 that the committee were able to commence negotiations with the Ministry of Forestry – at a special committee meeting in December 1988 it was agreed a contract be prepared and the trees removed



# Removal of Plantation Trees

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the OTHC Committee  
held at the Clubrooms at 7.30pm on Thursday 15 December, 1988

Present David Peacock (Chair), David Barnes, Jane Bruce, Mike Floate, Mark Hanger, Mary Hewinson, Peter Mason, Antony Lettinger, Ian Sime, Spen Walker, Debbie Williams, Michelle Williams.

In attendance Antony Hamel (Honorary Solicitor), Bruce Mason

Apologies Arthur Blondell, Doug Forrester, Sue Harding, Doug Fagel, Heather Robertson, Simon Thomas.

## Ben Rudd's trees

The meeting was held to finalise arrangements for the removal of the trees. Bruce Mason had met the contractor (Charlie Jopson), Tony Livingstone and Dave Pearson (Ministry of Forestry), Ross Hamilton (DCC Parks and Reserves), and a Telecom representative on the Flogstaff site at 11am on Friday 9 December. They discussed the project and decided the skid site could be situated completely between the track and the plantation.

A letter dated 13 December from the DCC had since been received, listing conditions which seemed satisfactory.

It was agreed that Antony Hamel be given authority to complete a contract with the Ministry of Forestry, and that the President and Secretary be given power to act on behalf of the Committee.

(Spen Walker/Mark Hanger)

Bruce Mason and Antony Hamel were thanked for the great work they were doing on behalf of the Club.

## *Removal of Plantation Trees*

Anyone who has walked up the firebreak track to the property will know it is not best suited to large logging trucks. Although a lot of saleable timber was removed, a lot of the revenue was lost to the logging costs.

Unfortunately the contract was not finished to the committee's satisfaction with many trees left standing, and the skid site area not restored as agreed.

Despite the clubs best efforts, we were unable to rectify this completely.



## *Revegetation and Improvements*

Following the removal of the trees, the income was ring-fenced for restoration of the property, and an intensive native revegetation programme started.

In the early days \$3000 was spent on spraying – everyone who has been to Ben Rudd's will know what a job this is – ***we are winning***, and in time native species have to prevail and smother the gorse and broom.

## *Formation of Management Trust*

A motion presented to a September 1995 EGM proposed the committee investigate disposal of the Ben Rudd's property. A covenant or other measure was suggested to ensure the property continued to be managed in a manner compatible with the OTMC's recreational and environmental philosophies.

*(the motion was lost, but paved the way for the Ben Rudd's Management Trust to be established three years later)*

## *Formation of Management Trust*

The 1997 AGM directed that a special meeting was need to decide the future of the property.

A full supplement to the club Bulletin included arguments from both sides, as well as outlining the required vegetation management.

The first of two EGM's held on 3 November directed that a formal application from the proposed Trust be presented to members at a general meeting in 1998.

**Motion 1:** 'That the committee in consultation with interested members and parties prepare for the next general meeting a detailed proposal for the formation of a trust for the management of the Ben Rudds property. This proposal is to include a draft trust deed and a list of people interested in acting as trustees'.



# *Formation of Management Trust*

The final Extraordinary General Meeting was held on July 16, 1998 and after almost two and half hours the Ben Rudd's Management Trust was officially formed.

Three options to be proposed as follows:

1. To leave the property with the Club as at present.
2. To transfer responsibility for the property to the Ben Rudd Trust, together with money held for the revegetation of the property to enable them to carry out their work.
3. To negotiate to transfer the property to the DCC Water Dept., which would pay all reasonable costs.

*Motion one was lost, motion two passed, motion three not needed*

A month later the OTMC celebrated it's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – the timing was deliberate!

## Management Agreement for the Ben Rudds property

This deed is made the 16 day Sept 1998

**Between** Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc (“OTMC”) and Ben Rudds Management Trust (“the Trust”)

**Whereas**

The parties wish to agree on the payment by OTMC and the management by the Trust of the Ben Rudds property (the property).

It is agreed

- 1 **Term** The term of this agreement is from 16 September 1998 to 1 August 2018
- 2 **Funds** OTMC will pay the Trust the current proceeds of the Ben Rudds Account (the funds) in one sum on the commencement of this agreement. The Trust undertakes to use the funds to meet the objects of the trust in accordance with a written management plan.
- 3 **Title** The title of the land will remain in the name of OTMC for the term of this agreement.
- 4 **Management of the Property**
  - The trust will and have the exclusive right to manage all aspects of the property.
  - A management plan will be finalised in consultation with OTMC and will provide for regular periods of review.
  - The Trust will provide a written biannual reports to OTMC giving details of the Trusts activities and full accounts of the trusts finances.
- 5 **End of Agreement** At the end of the term of the management agreement the Trust will repay the balance (if any) of the funds to OTMC. Without creating any rights to have a further agreement the parties will atleast three months prior to the end of this agreement consult with each other as to the possibility of a further agreement.
- 6 **Assignment** Neither party can assign or subcontract the responsibilities in this agreement.

**Signed**

## The Trust

1) R. Pitt  
S. Salton

OTMC

W. L. Thomas  
C. H. Nelson

# *Ben Rudd's Shelter (1998)*





Today, the Flagstaff area is still well visited by the club, with trips from Nicol's Creek, Ross Creek and the Bullring.

The area has also proved a successful location for the annual Bushcraft Course Navigation Day, Anniversary's and other OTMC events.



[www.otmc.co.nz](http://www.otmc.co.nz)

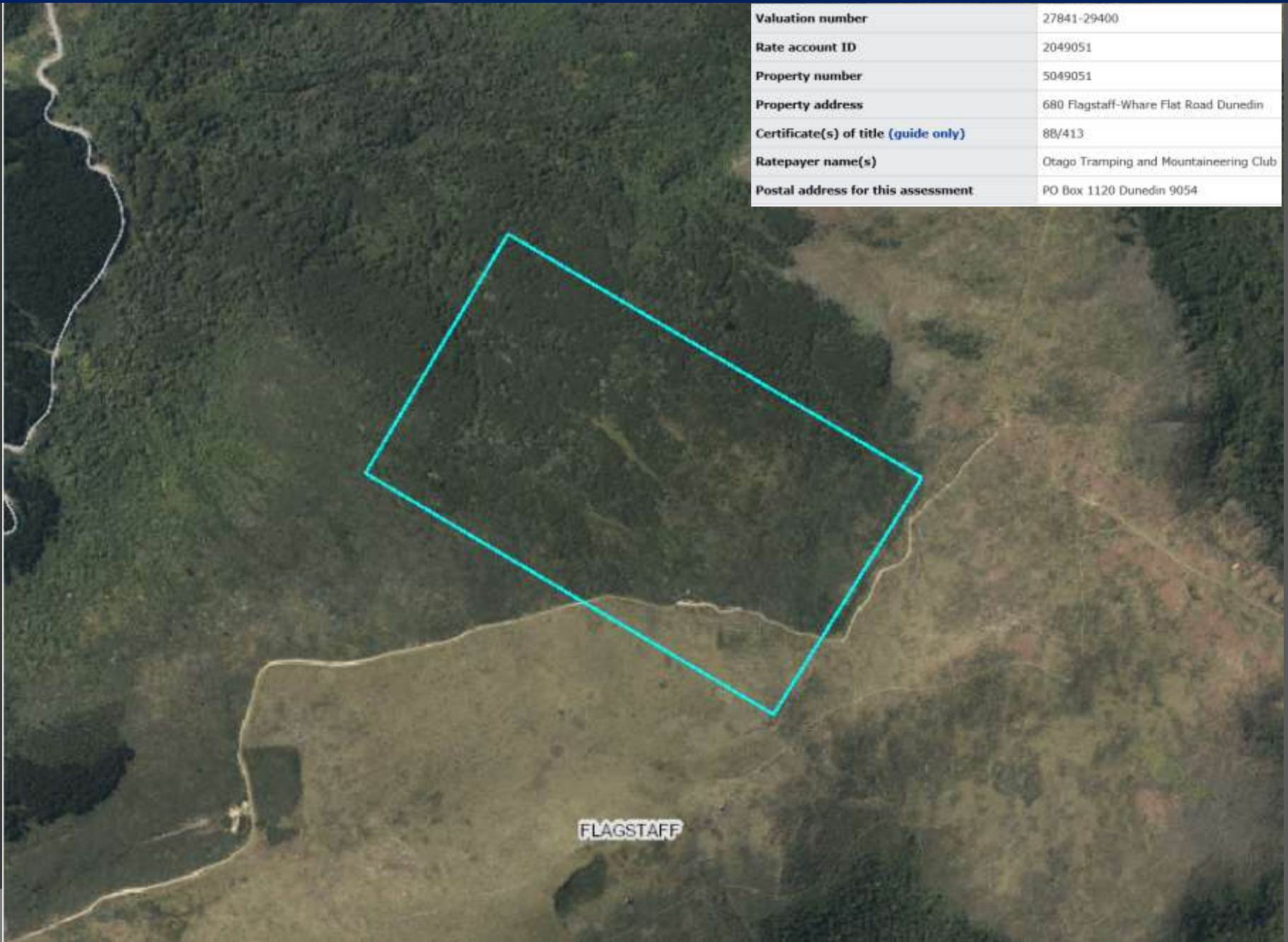






# Ben Rudd's Property Location

Valuation number	27841-29400
Rate account ID	2049051
Property number	5049051
Property address	680 Flagstaff-Whare Flat Road Dunedin
Certificate(s) of title <a href="#">(guide only)</a>	88/413
Ratepayer name(s)	Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club
Postal address for this assessment	PO Box 1120 Dunedin 9054





# *Ben Rudd's – Boundaries and Paper Roads*



Aerial photography DCC, Jan/Feb 20



# *Paper Roads – Spiers Road and Flagstaff*





