

Canvastown Gold Trail

Signs

- 1. Welcome sign
- 2. Matts Bridge/Matts Creek.
- 3. Mountain Camp Creek
- 4. Deep Creek
- 5. Pear Tree Flat, (Big Beach)
- 6. Butchers Flat

Old Timber and Swing Bridges

- 1. Rush swing bridge
- 2. C. Smart and Lodge Bridge
- 3. Rasmussen swing bridge
- 4. Fisk swing bridge
- 5. All Nations Bridge

Historic Timber Mills

- 1. Ward/Taylor Mill
- 2. F. Smart Mill
- 3. Robertson Mill
- 4. Corbett Mill
- 5. Nees/McLean Mill



1. Canvastown Township: Start of the Trail.

Some quirky "nuggets" of interest:

Gold was first found accidentally in the river, in 1860, by Mrs Catherine Pope whilst rinsing clothes. Her husband George and his brothers, Robert, Roger and John operated a saw mill on the bank of the river close to where the Hotel now stands. The discovery aroused some interest (the local Iwi were aware of "yellow" stones) and the quantity was very small. It is remarkable that no more gold has been found in this area.

When the first Anglican Church was built in 1872, tradition was waived and the church was named St Paul's. St Paul the disciple, was the canvas tent and sail maker in the Bible.

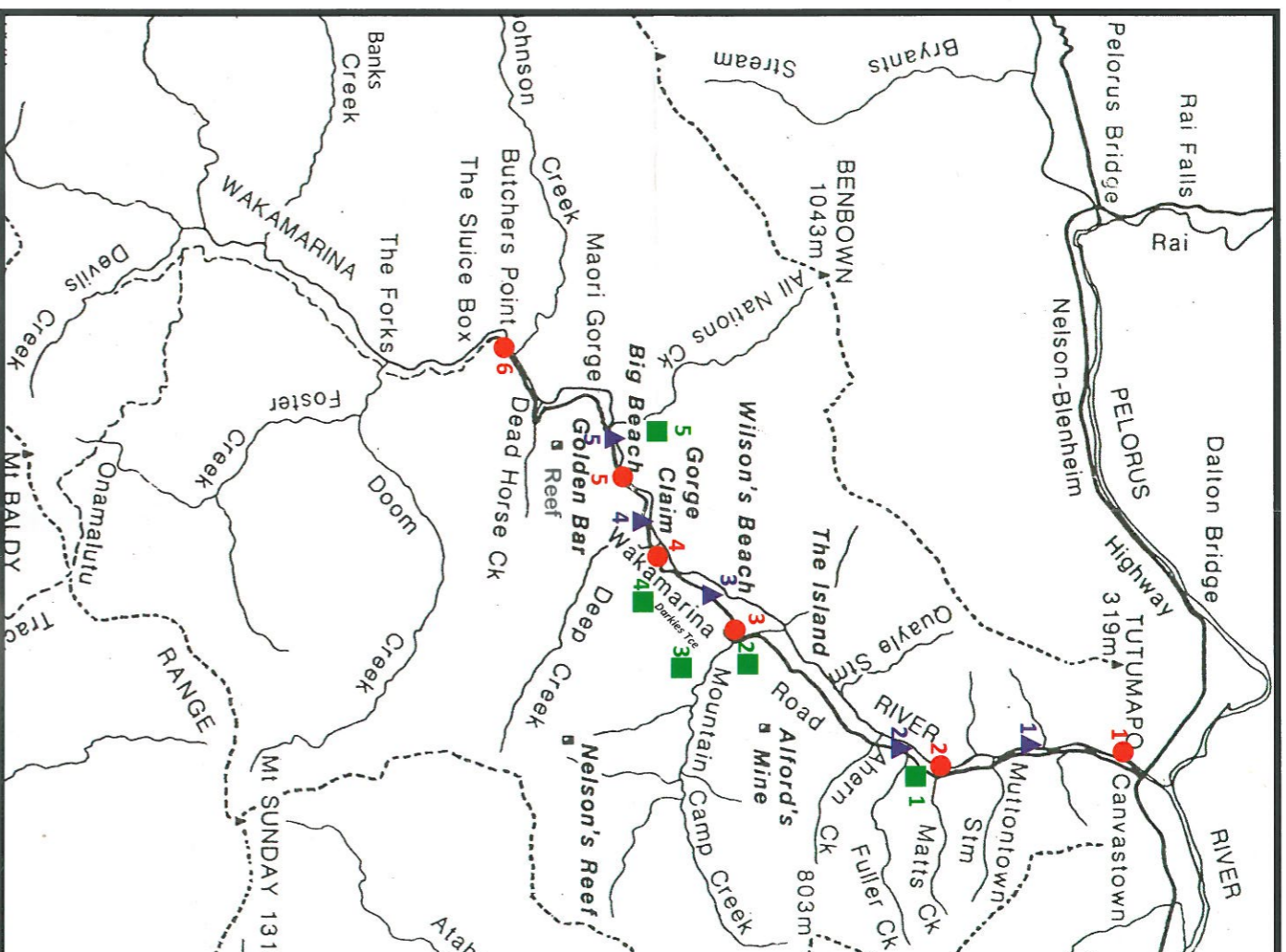


Old Hut at Sunnyside near the mouth of the Devils Stream

2. Matts Bridge/Matts Creek 3.2km

Matts Creek is named after a butcher, Thomas Matthews, who plied his trade in this area. 1901 was a sad year for the dredges on the Wakamarina. Herman (Norman) Poll, who helped build the Golden Point Dredge, drowned when trying to secure it during one of the Wakamarina's huge floods. Also fatally injured was Martin Elliot, who got caught in the machinery when doing dredge maintenance. Their headstones can be found in the old part of the Havelock cemetery.

Front page photo Cleynes Flat Claim
Marlborough Museum Archives: 0000, 900, 1415



3. Mountain Camp Creek 7.8km

Mountain Camp Creek is the site of the Rutland claim. It's colloquial name stuck. Prior to 1900 there is very little mention of women on the gold fields. In the picture on the relevant gold trail sign (top right), a line of white washing can be seen. Surely a woman's touch and quite possibly a utilisation of Flour bags:

"Two 100lb flour bags could be turned into a single sheet, while four made a double. One 100lb bag made a pillow slip and half a bag made two tea towels. One folded into a square and embroidered could make a tea cloth. All this fabric was bleached by being laid out in the frost.
From "Petticoat Pioneers" by Miriam McGregor.

4. Deep Creek 8.4km

Here at Deep Creek is a hillside known as "Grummetty Hill", miners vernacular for poor mining results. An early miner of Cornish origin, when asked how much gold he had won, answered "about a grummett's worth". A grummett was an old Cornish coin of little worth. Other vernacular examples follow:

A worthless claim was a *Schicer* or a *Duffer*; one yielding a man three pounds per week was a *Tucker* claim; one yielding a man eight pounds a week was a *Wages* claim and over eight pounds a week was a *Piler*. The best of all were *Homeward Bounders*.

5. Pear Tree Flat (Big Beach) 11.2km

Located here is Fisk's Boarding House. Alice and Walter (Wattie) Fisk had six children. Alice, who had been one of the early school teachers, cooked for up to 40 men, who lived nearby in their whares. Their daughters delivered the meals piping hot, on two plates tied up in a tea towel. The "Boarding" house was more like a modern Take-Away, the early meaning of the word "board" was *table* as in meals/food.

The Golden Bar battery worked 24 hours a day extracting the gold from the mined quartz. It could be heard up to 8 miles away and employed nearly 100 men by 1915



Fisk's Boarding House at the Golden Bar about 1911.

6. Butchers Flat 15.3km

Upstream of Butchers Flat the Wakamarina is generally rock-bound and flows through an almost continuous gorge. Nevertheless there are some very deep pools, such as Riley's Pothole at the upstream end of the Sluice Box.

The upper part of the river and its eastern tributaries, the Doom, Foster, and Devils Creek, were prospected soon after the rush began in the early 1880's. The huge boulders within the creek beds, the difficulties with access and the ever present threat of flooding caused many to abandon their claims. Those who stayed generally made wages. Some good returns were achieved but only after long periods of back breaking work.

In 1864 Marlborough official exports were 24,838 ounces of gold valued at nearly £100,000.

In 1865 about 8,000 ounces valued at over £30,000 were exported. (Pages from the Pasig-A-Macdonald)

Many miners left via Nelson. Many also kept their gold, to avoid paying duty, so the ounces recovered were much higher.