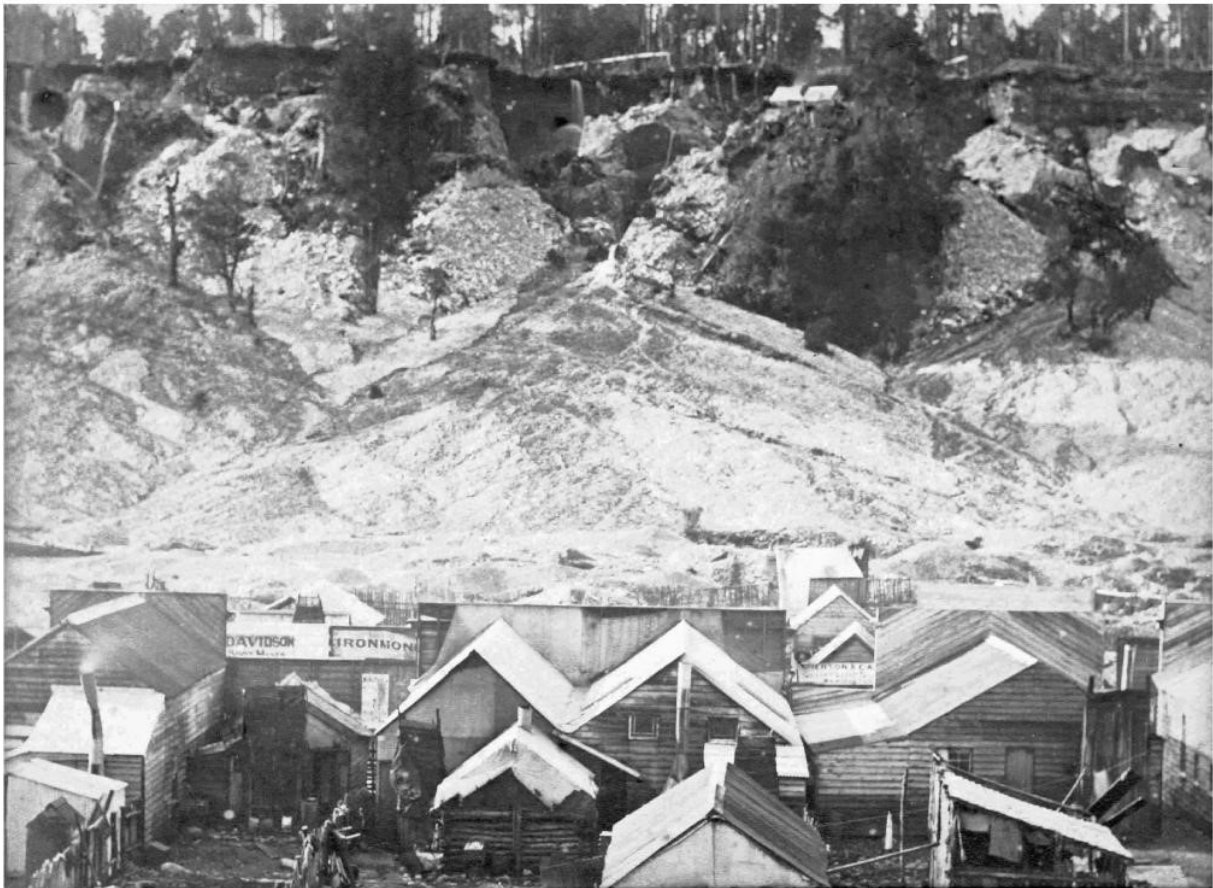


# GHOST TOWNS TRAIL

## West Coast

### PROPOSAL

To create a 'Ghost Town Trail', a journey of exploration around abandoned West Coast mining town sites that are rich in history and ripe for domestic tourism. Adopt an identifying 'ghost town' signpost that can be planted at the entrance to each place, add an interpretation panel – then grab the map, buy the booklet, download the app and hit the road to explore!



Greenstone

### BACKGROUND

Ghost town tourism is well known and has a big following in America's Wild West and on the goldfields of Australia, in particular

Victoria and Western Australia. Instead of learning history from museums, a ghost town trail gives people the freedom to poke around places they would otherwise drive straight through or past, and become immersed in the fascinating history of each area when they bulged with people. Visitors can follow the entire trail or pick it up as it suits, taking in other visitor attractions along the way, the idea being that they have even more reason to stay an extra night or two on the Coast, and the spread of ghost towns means the entire Coast benefits. From exploring ghost towns visitors can also stay in our living gold towns and soak up even more of the goldrush atmosphere – e.g. Ross, Kumara, Reefton, Charleston, or the living relic hotels such as Woodstock, Kaniere, Ahaura and others, or the Goldfields Capital itself!

The trail could be as simple as mapping key ghost towns and compiling a brochure as a travel guide from 'town' to 'town'. Each site could have an identifying sign at the entrance points, and perhaps an interpretation panel to tell more of the story and imagery. A booklet with more detailed stories could also be brought together relatively easily.

Together, or alternatively, this could also be expressed through technology, by developing an app that brings each 'town' back to life as the explorers arrive, with great storytelling and lots of imagery.

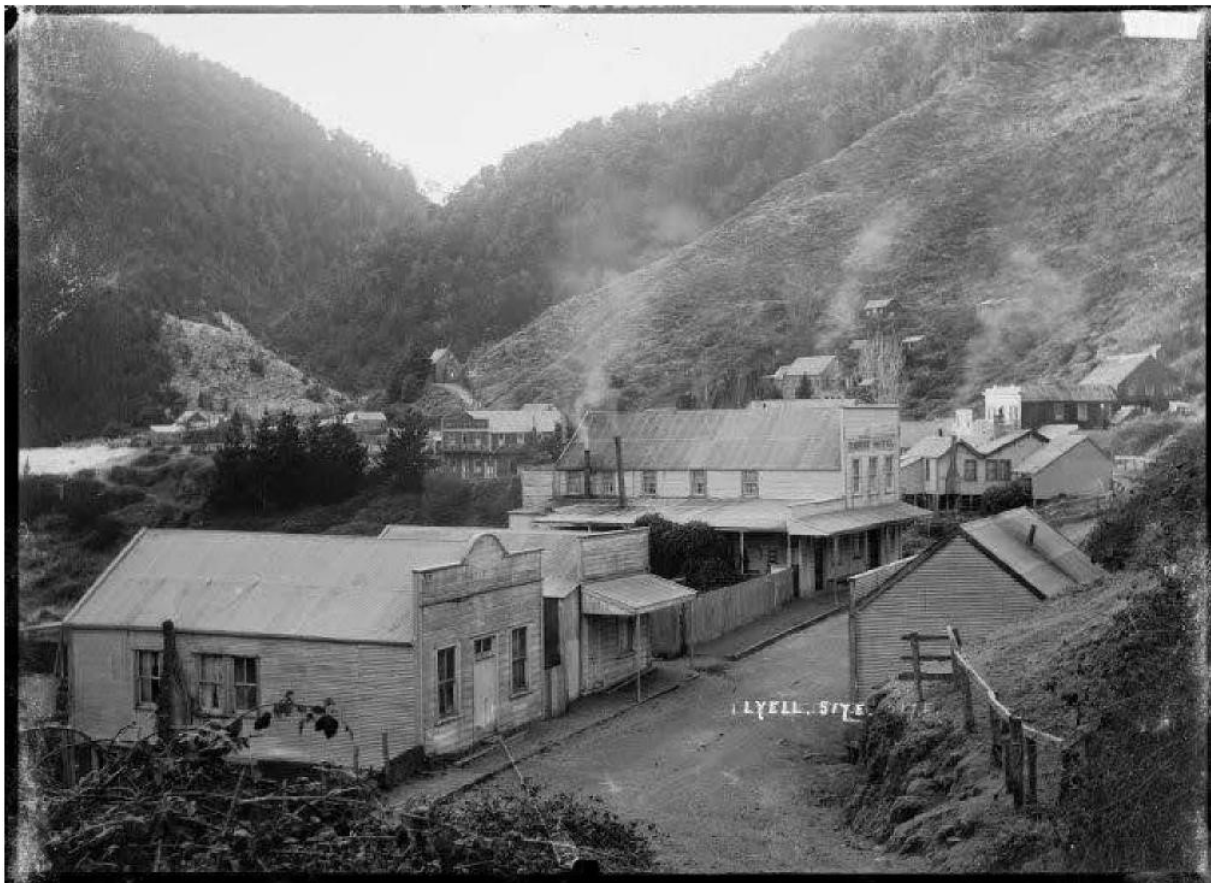
Some of our West Coast ghost towns supported up to 4000 or 5000 people at their peak, and are now completely abandoned to the wilderness from which they came. In some, all that is left is an old cemetery, others have a few rusting relics or the remains of fireplaces where hotels and houses once stood, but even in the silence each of them has a fascinating story to tell of a time when these were bustling centres of population.

Some were a mere flash in the pan, classic boom towns that were gone within a few short years. Others suffered a slow, lingering death, but that leaves behind more to show. By linking together

these towns of yesteryear, we can create a journey that leaves the tourist wanting to see more, i.e. longer stays. The beauty is that on the West Coast the southernmost ghost town is less than a day's drive from the northernmost one, which makes them so much more accessible than those in Australia and the United States, which are hundreds or even thousands of kilometres apart. You can drive right to most of our ghost towns, although a couple may require a little hike.

Each ghost town has a unique story, most of which are little heard of. Here's a quick list (by no means all of them) and some of the stories that could be told:

Lyell: Originally a Maori goldfield and famed for its large gold nuggets, including one rumoured to be bigger than NZ's biggest, the 99oz Roddy Nugget from Ross!



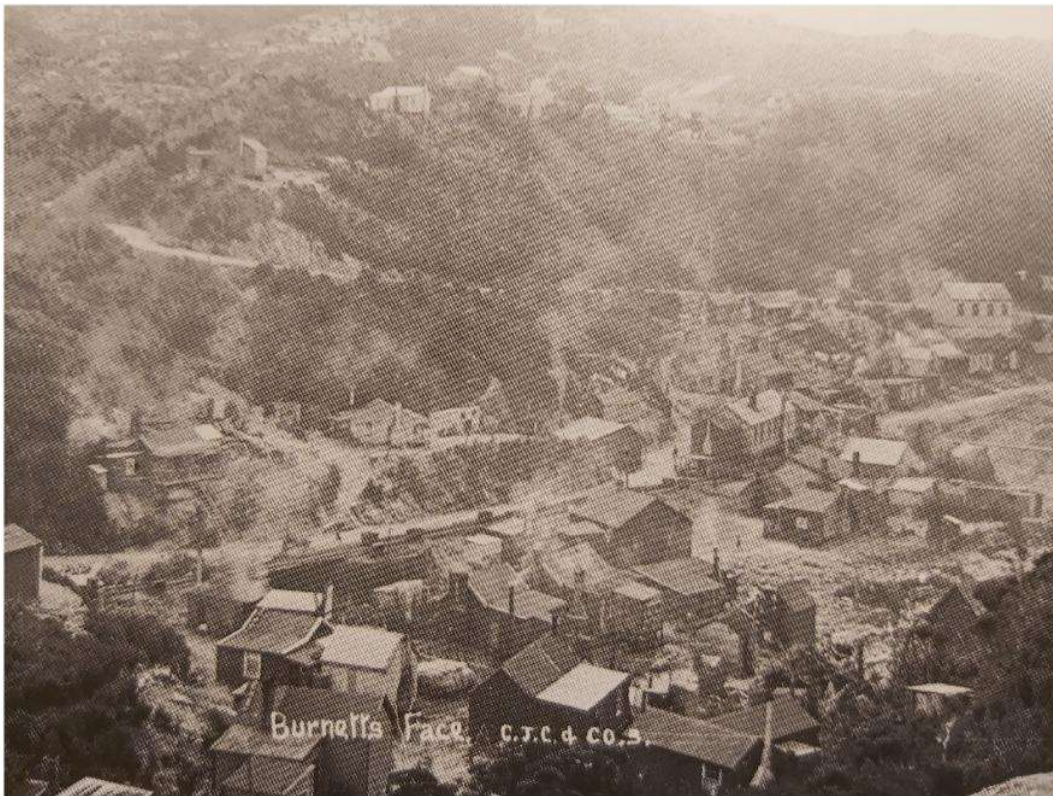
Lyell

**Denniston**: The 'Eighth Wonder of the World' (the famous Denniston incline) and much more.



Denniston

**Burnetts Face**: Denniston's twin town – and even more remote!



## Burnetts Face

Addisons Flat: Discovered by an African American gold digger, 5000 people once lived here. Now the State Highway runs straight through the middle of what was such a busy town. Scene of 'The Addison Flat Riots' when the Westport Protestants rode out to confront the local Catholic majority in a standoff across Mary's Creek with pitchforks and waddies! The Protestants arrived provocatively singing the Blue, White and Red in full throat, only to be pelted by the Doolans.



Addisons Flat.

Brighton: Had its own brewery, casino and even a newspaper. Sailing ships sailed directly to here (Fox River) to drop off gold diggers – but it was gone quicker than it arrived and is now just



Brighton

Merrijigs: Once a thriving Inangahua gold town.

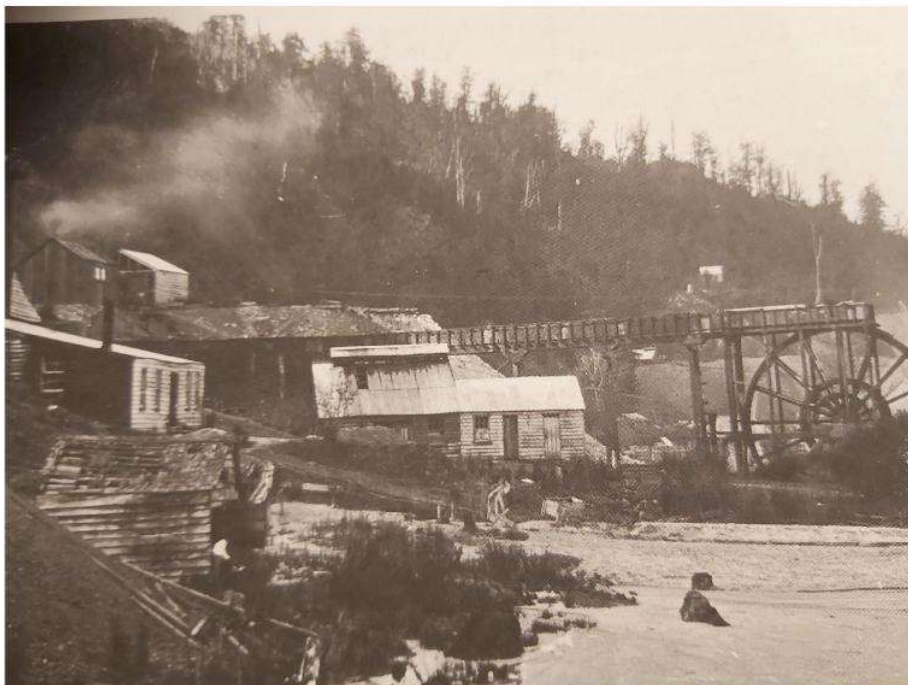
Boatmans/Capleston: Ditto.



Capleston, Boatmans Creek

Kynnersley: The original gold town of the Inangahua, before Reefton was Reefton.

Crushington: Also the birthplace of Olympian Jack Lovelock.



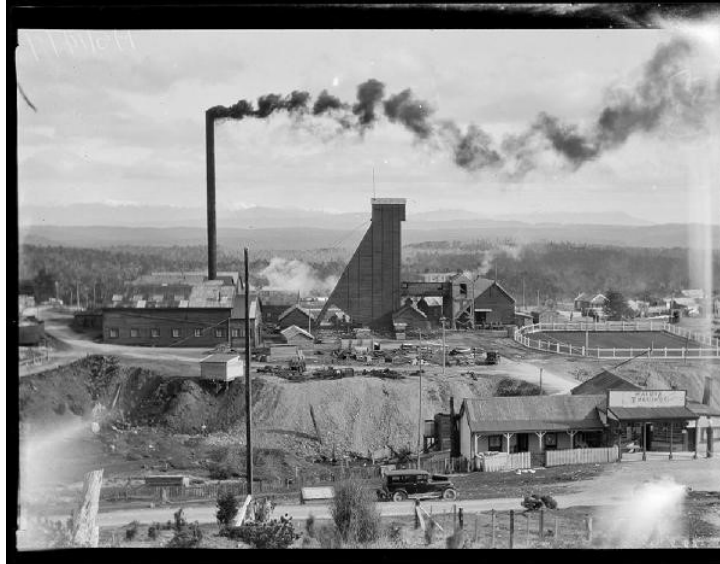
Crushington

Globe Hill: Thriving gold centre, re-mined by Oceana. Now reverted to wilderness it's hard to believe this is where Dellaca's had their first store (now Postie Plus).



Globe Hill

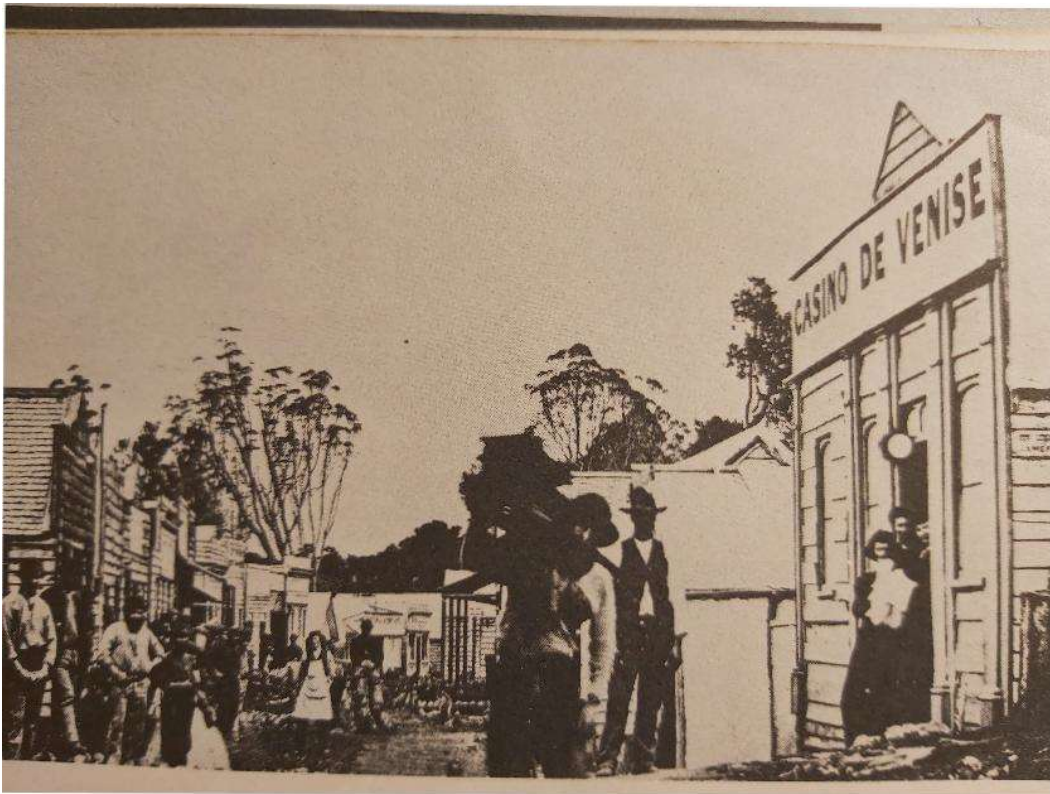
Waiuta: What can I possibly add? A dream ghost town that is ripe for exploring!



Waiuta

Napoleons Hill: Scene of one of the most iconic photos of the West Coast goldrushes, with the Casino de Venice in the rough. Now nothing but bush and a lonely cemetery.





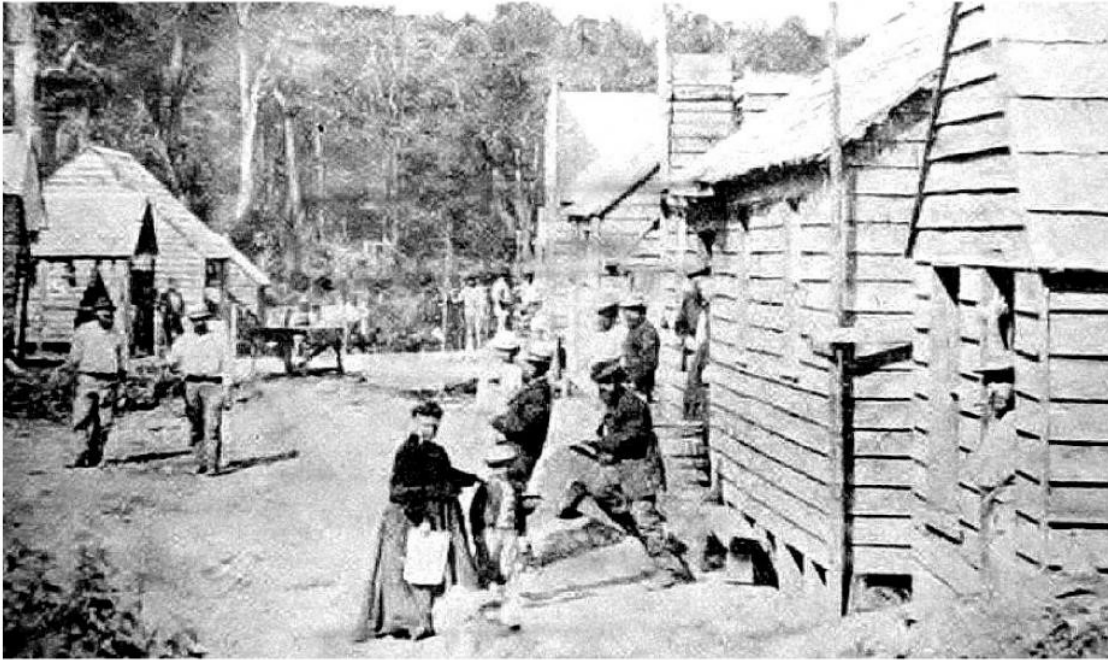
Napoleons Hill

**Half Ounce:** Flash in the pan gold town, halfway between Ahaura and Reefton.



## Half Ounce

Nobles: Another Grey Valley town, long gone.



Nobles

Moonlight: Gold nugget country, including the 87oz Victory nugget.



Moonlight dredge

**Notown:** A pioneer cemetery is all that remains of this gold town that eventually lived up to its name as being 'No Town At All'!

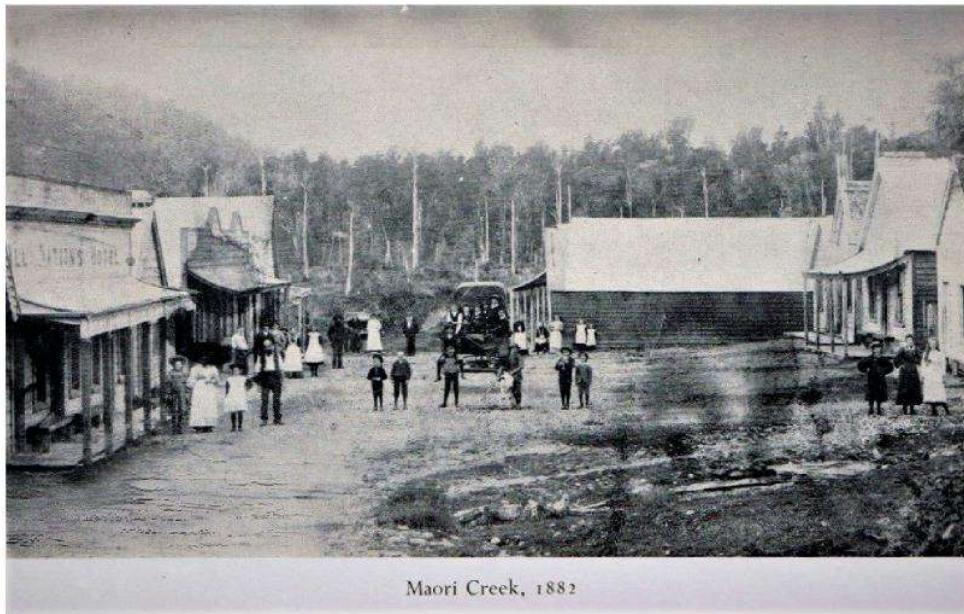


Notown

**Rewanui and Siberia:** Coal towns that once clung the mountainside beyond Runanga township, formerly accessed by a steep railway line that climbed up the mountain. The Liverpool State Mine closed in the early 1980s and part of the site was wiped out by a landslip a few years later, but the area is still accessible by a biking/walking track that follows the old rail line from Dunollie.



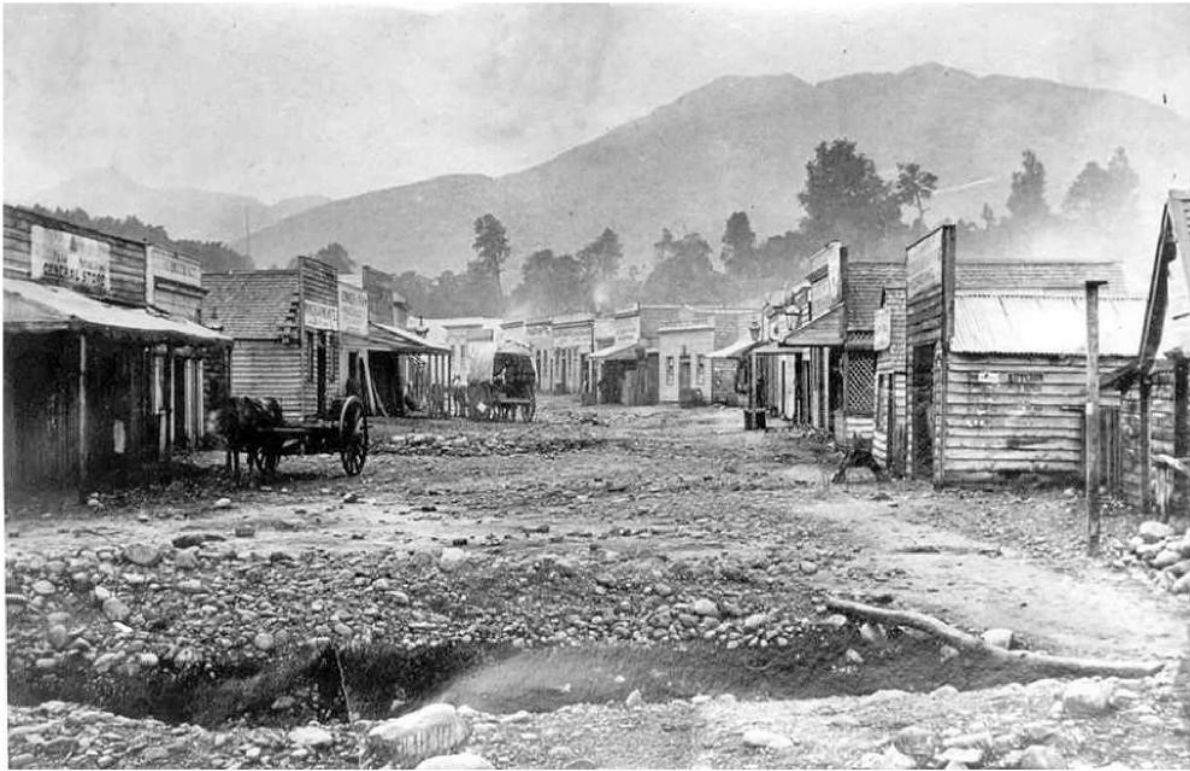
**Dunganville: Now modern mining pits on the way to the excellent Woods Creek Historic Track.**



## Maori Creek/Dunganville

Greenstone: Where it all started in 1864. Great story of another stoush between the Irish Catholics and the Protestants, broken up by the priest who was found guilty of sedition in similar Hokitika sectarian riots! Greenstone fits in perfectly with the Pounamu Pathway as this was the scene of the first gold discovery that sparked the great West Coast rush – and discovered by Maori diggers!





Greenstone

Goldsborough: Town of 4000 or so, now completely overgrown but with a popular gold panning area and historic walks. The early Waimea as it was originally known was gripped with news of murder and missing gold. Goldsborough is joined at the hip with its twin town of Stafford, and its fine old cemetery, including the resting place of Dick Seddon's children.



Waimea, Goldsborough

Auckland Beach: Immediately westward of Awatuna township and just south of Waimea Creek, this had some of the richest claims known on the New Zealand goldfields.



Pipers Flat, Stafford/awatuna



**Donoghues:** The forgotten gold town just south of Ross, now being re-mined by Birchfields but once bristled with great deep-lead mines. Just one house and a road remain – and a popular mussel bed!



Donoghues

**Five Mile:** A gold town that failed to heed the Biblical warning against building your house on sand ... hotels, stores and bakeries were built just above the high tide mark on the beach around the corner from Okarito township. For a while, Five Mile was the far bigger town of the two. The beaches were literally yellow with gold, leaving great stories of fierce rivalries among the Irish and English miners. And then the gold was exhausted, the buildings abandoned

and fell down, and the place reverted to sand dunes. Today linked to Okarito by a great coastal walk. Also scene of a daring bank robbery.



Five Mile, Okarito

Gillespies Beach: Another lonely blacksanding town, seaward of Fox Glacier. Marked today by a pioneer cemetery, gold dredge relics, DOC tracks and some of the very best mountain views of Aoraki-Mt Cook to be had.



Gillespies Beach

Hunts Beach: Named after the scoundrel Albert Hunt, who stole the credit from Maori for discovering the Greenstone goldfield that started it all, only to be ejected from Greenstone for his fraud. He got his revenge at Bruce Bay, leading 2000 men on a merry chase into thick bush for gold that never existed – before he vanished into the bush before the miners could string him up. Known in history as 'Hunt's Duffer', it ended with drunken rioting and looting of stores and shanties on the beach!

## SUMMARY

The Ghost Town Trail could easily be promoted as a journey of discovery of West Coast history, dovetailing perfectly into the storytelling that we propose for the Pounamu Pathway.

The outlay should be relatively small: A map/brochure, perhaps a small booklet with teasers about each place, signposting, interpretation panels, and an app that could bring these ghost towns to life again in an exciting and educational way – that brings visitors to the Coast specially to explore, and to stay.

Carpe diem!

Paul Madgwick

July 2020