

Horsepower on the Coast

IN July, 1951, as miners worked on the last gold-bearing reef in the Blackwater quartz mine at Waitutu, one of the shafts used for ventilation collapsed. Reopening it was thought too expensive, and the mine closed. Of the once numerous quartz mines in the Reefton district it was the last to go.

Looking back 50 or so years R. H. Henderson, now living at Inglewood, can remember stopping at Louie Ourry's Blackwater Hotel after having brought up a wagon-load of gear for a dredge working the Blackwater Creek. While he was on the premises Billy Meats, Tommy Bannon and two others rushed in from the bush with the news that they had found a gold-bearing reef. Another guest at Louie Ourry's that night happened to be an insurance and part-time mining agent named P. N. Gingswell. He returned to Reefton the next morning with an option on the discovery, and forming a syndicate with three other well-known identities quickly closed a deal with the prospectors. Later, after opening up the reef, they in turn sold out to the London Consolidated Goldmining Company.

The job of transporting equipment along the six-mile track was placed in the hands of Jim Billet, for whom, at the time, Bob Henderson was working. In a series of four talks under the general title *Westland Teamster* Mr Henderson gives a vivid step-by-step description of the ensuing struggle. The greatest difficulties and the most serious dangers centred around two very heavy items: a donkey engine weighing about a ton, which had come from an abandoned mine at Merrijiga and was then sitting in a paddock behind the Blackwater Hotel, and a six-ton boiler needed to provide steam for a saw-mill, that had to be brought from another abandoned mine, the Welcome, just under 50 miles away. These two monsters were dragged up to the new mine by ten horses and three men.

The down-hill parts of the journey may have been less exhausting but they were by far the more dangerous. One quotation from Mr Henderson's first talk, shows why. "We were now round the corner and heading straight down

for the drop into Boatman's Creek," he said. "Kicking desperately but vainly at the brake, I did my best to steer the team over to the water table on the offside where the ground was softer and

sloped curb fashion. Rolling and pitching dangerously, downward we clattered, narrowly escaping a capsize into the backyard of one resident. I had to use my whip in order to save the team from being over-run by the wagon."

Westland Teamster: YAs, YZs, Thursday, November 5 at 9.15 p.m.



"Fiddlesticks..."

I said

Whenever I suggested travelling anywhere, some one would say, "But it's so far" or "At your age?" or "Can you stand up to it?" Then finally I said, "Fiddlesticks... I'm going to fly and see Alice and the grandchildren."

And now, of course, I know that flying is simply tailor-made for old people like me. It's all so swift and clean and comfortable. The young N.A.C. people fuss over me and I arrive fresh and fit for anything. I may have been brought up in the horse and buggy days, but when it comes to travel I go the modern way... by air.



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