



MOST PEOPLE see Fairlie from the windows of a Mount Cook bus.

In summer they see it usually as a dusty sun-baked main street—the near replica of a dozen or more main streets one might pass along in a day's motoring through Canterbury. The railway-station, the post-office, the pubs, the petrol-pumps, the stores that sell everything from sheep-dip to razor blades—all seem to have been cut from a pattern that has served country townships from Auckland to the Bluff. Fairlie's main street looked much the same ten years ago as it does to-day, and will probably look much the same ten years hence. Here, you might conclude, is a place whose currents of life are undisturbed by wars, revolutions, or general elections, a place where one might go to forget for a while that there is such a thing as war.

That is how it might seem from the Mount Cook bus. The truth is that the war has made much more of a disturbance in the life of Fairlie than it has in the life of Wellington or Auckland, even though most of the school-children have never seen a Marine. To know what the war has done to Fairlie you have got to know the township and its people, and something of their history.

As New Zealand country townships go, Fairlie is old because it depends on

one of the country's oldest industries—the pasturing of sheep on the high tussock country of the South Island. For more than eighty years there has been a regular migration of sheep from the high country of the Mackenzie basin to the coastal lowlands as winter approaches, and back again to the Mackenzie country in late spring. In its beginnings Fairlie was a place where drovers camped and watered and fed their flocks. According to the Jubilee History of South Canterbury it was first called Fairlie Creek, after Fairlie in Scotland. As the district was first settled by Highland shepherds, this sounds probable enough. Nevertheless, one school of thought holds that the name was originally Fairlie's Creek, after a shepherd of that name who built himself a hut there. There was a regular rail service to Tekapo by way of Fairlie in 1862, and in 1870 Cobb and Co.'s coaches were taking freight and passengers. Then, in 1883, Fairlie's predominance in the area between the Mackenzie and the sea was settled by its becoming the railhead of a branch line from Timaru.

When the attractions of Lake Tekapo and Mount Cook was known, Fairlie became the half-way house for another sort of traffic. First the coaches, and then, after the last war, the Mount Cook Co.'s buses brought a steady and growing