

## *GENUINE SOUTH ISLAND SHEPHERDS HUT*

This hut has been owned by the Mackay family since the early 1930's. First owned by John Sutherland Mackay (Jack), son of an Ayrshire Scott born in 1901.

In 1930, Jack obtained a farming block by ballot, he wasn't the first name to be drawn, a South Island alpine guide was technically the ballot winner but forfeited his chance by being absent when his name was drawn because of guiding commitments. As the saying goes "one mans misfortune is another mans gain".

The farm was situated in West Otago and he named the property "Montana" having seen the name in mail from Switzerland and he liked the sound of it.

The farm was untamed, no trees (except one), no fences and a lot of bare tussock. The highest point was 2500 feet above sea level, enduring extremes of weather and with no mains power, telephone or water, locals were sceptical about Jacks ability to take on such a challenging enterprise. As well as the challenge of setting up a farm the country was in economic downturn during the great depression of the 1930's. In common with cash strapped settlers across the region he worked his land as a grazier rather than a farmer. Saving funds by working on other properties. Jacks first car was purchased by shooting rabbits and selling the pelts.

Domestic Accommodation came in the form of a hut which served Jacks needs for five years until he got married and connected up two huts to make a house. As the family expanded so did the living conditions although they remained basic, with recycled huts serving as bedrooms for the children, one for the boys and one for the girls. The hut you are in today was the original hut sited at Montana and was where he welcomed his wife Margaret, ever since it has been known by the family as "the honeymoon hut". Margaret gave birth to two boys and two girls but sadly died in childbirth whilst giving birth to their fifth child. Jack remarried his second wife, Muriel, in 1944. Muriel had spent many years nursing her ailing parents and at 40 years old didn't have children of her own but caring for her step children in such a harsh environment was challenge enough.

Jack and his family went on to become prosperous farmers earning great respect in the local community. The farm went from one Willow tree to 500 acres of trees. He was sought out for his knowledge of growing farm forestry blocks and shelter belts which were planted to protect the sheep from the harsh Otago winters. At its peak the farm was 4000 acres and carried 10000 stock units. Jacks children carried on the farming and tree planting tradition with John Mackay, Jacks eldest son, becoming president of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association. However, overseas opportunities saw the dispersal of the third generation and the farm was eventually sold up in the 90's.

The original "honey moon hut" remained at Montana in West Otago up until 2018 when David and Angela had it transported some 1500 kilometres to its current site at Tarawera.

Amongst the original articles in the hut is the tin on the shelf that Muriel would save pennies and threepenny bits to donate to the children's collection at the church on Sundays. Also, on the wall, is the stock from his original gun that he used to shoot all the rabbits to pay for his first car. The wooden cutlery tray is also an original piece.



