

New Zealand Railway Blog

3 - 31 December 2016

For more photos, the [New Zealand Trains Album](#) on Flickr.

North Island - Auckland Area

On North Island our railway activities were limited to a trip to the Glenbrook Vintage Railway south of Auckland and the jerry tramway on Tiritiri Matangi conservation island.

Glenbrook Vintage Railway - Sunday 4 December

<http://www.gvr.co.nz>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenbrook_Vintage_Railway



Glenbrook was operating Ww 644 on the passenger trains. In the shed at Pukeoware, Ja1250 Diana was decorated for Santa Trains and was expected to be in use over Christmas - New Year prior to joining the queue for overhaul. With little mainline work these days, the two Ww tanks (one more under repair) are more suitable for operating the Glenbrook trains. The railway has been extended since my last visit around 2002 and now stops within walking distance of Waiuku township.

Tiritiri Matangi Open Sanctuary

<http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz>

This conservation island has been cleared of all of the exotic pests and is now a sanctuary for native birds. The jetty for the island has a short hand-worked 2ft gauge tram with one wagon which is used for moving luggage between the boats and the shore. This appears unchanged from 2002 when I last visited although the track is now a bit rough in one place.



South Island

Springfield

We took a look at the station here as we were staying in town. There is an embryonic preservation scheme Midland Rail Heritage Trust here with diesel shunters and parts of a steam loco rescued from one of the many flood protection schemes that used old steam locos to protect river banks.

<http://www.mrht.org.nz>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midland_Rail_Heritage_Trust





Cass

We called in at Cass, made famous by a classic New Zealand painting. There are also old boilers here rescued from rivers.

<http://www.railheritage.org.nz/Register/Listing.aspx?c=21&r=4&l=18>

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/christchurch-life/9602445/Cass-wins-high-praise>



Arthurs Pass

On our way here, we passed a coal train heading east. Arthurs Pass itself offers very limited access to the station and tunnel mouth and no photographic opportunities. The daily Tranz Alpine passenger train stops here.

<http://www.kiwirailscenic.co.nz/tranzalpine/?servicename=TranzAlpine>



Otira

Is now the stabling point for the tunnel locos with nothing being kept at Arthurs Pass. The hotel has a new owner who has made it even more quirky but otherwise the settlement is still in decline while Arthurs Pass has the tourism boom to itself.

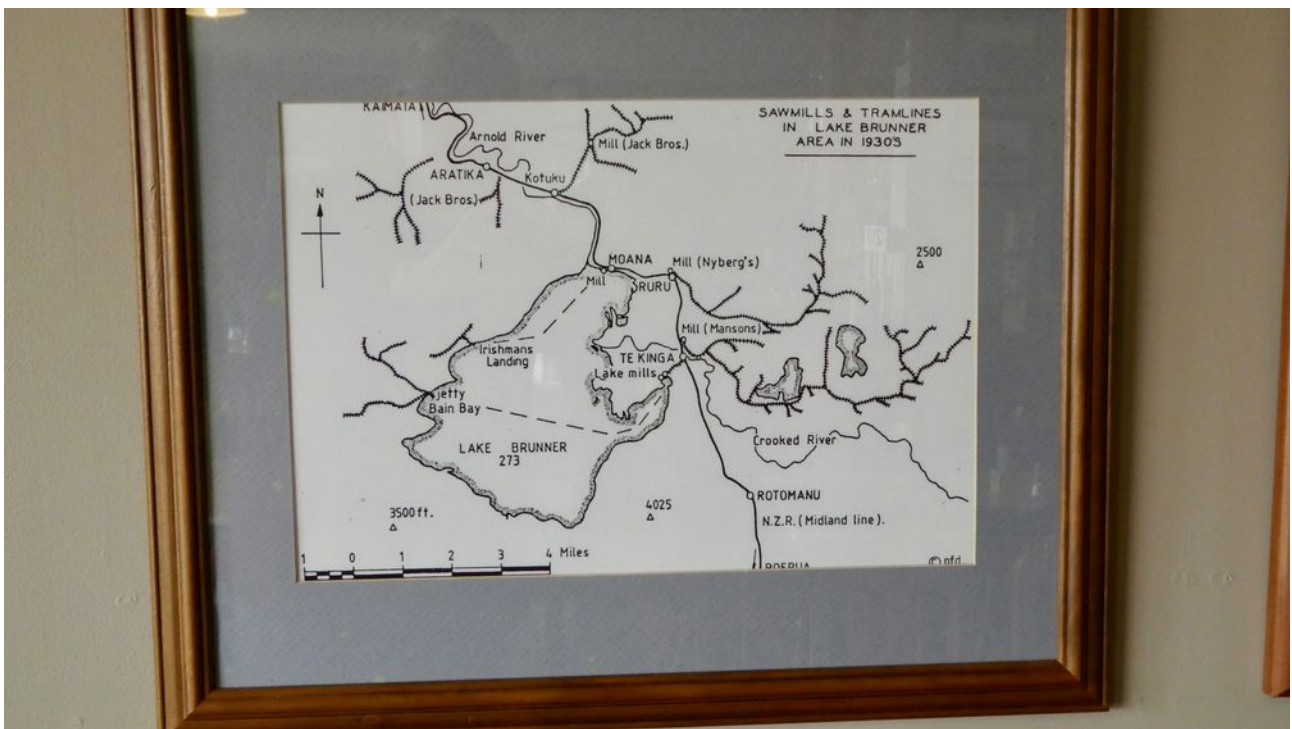
<http://www.otirahotel.co.nz>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otira>



Moana

This old station by the lake with a station cafe for coffee mid-morning on the rail route to Greymouth is idyllic. You could do a day-trip from Christchurch on the TranzAlpine and hop on again for the train back. This area once had lots of logging lines.



Kamaka Rest Area, Grey Valley

There is a recently restored Davidson (No. 25 of the 26 they built) plinthed along the road between Greymouth and Reefton. It's the only one largely complete although there is another one in bits on North Island.



Reefton

I photographed the station at Reefton but missed the preserved single Fairlie plinthed in town.



Westport

The port line hasn't seen a train for a while and the rail connected cement silos are not used at present. Coal traffic from Granity by-passes the port line. There is a preservation group here: [Westport Railway Preservation Society](#).



Granity

We stayed at Miners on Sea, Granity. Coal trains still run past the front door.



We used this base to visit the following sites:

Charming Creek

This 19km return walk follows the old tram route and makes a great day hike;

There are two points of access to the walkway. The southern end is clearly signposted from SH67 at Ngakawau, 35 km northeast of

Westport.

The northern end is through Seddonville, 50 km northeast of Westport on SH67, and 10 km along a gravel road to the walkway entrance at the abandoned Charming Creek mine site.

The track is easily walked in either direction if transport arrangements can be made. Otherwise a return walk from either end is a great way to spend a day.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/west-coast/places/charming-creek-area/things-to-do/tracks/charming-creek-walkway/>

There are plenty of railway artefacts to see along the route. (See the Flickr album for many more photos.)



At the Ngakawau end are the current coal loading bins fed by a working aerial ropeway.



Denniston

Access is possible at both the bottom of the lower incline and at the top of the upper incline. Access to the rest of the incline is not currently possible. There's plenty to see and good interpretation panels especially at the top. The Denniston Experience runs subject to bookings - it wasn't working the day we were there but has run subsequently. It incorporates a 2ft gauge train ride.

<http://www.denniston.co.nz>



Millerton

The third coal mine area is a drive above Granity towards to current open cast operation. There is not a lot left to see. Most of the items are near the remains

of the workers' bathhouse.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millerton,_New_Zealand



Hokitika shunt

Departs Greymouth around 9 am and returns from the Milk Products factory at Hokitika around 6 pm after marshalling the train from around 5 pm. This long branch is treated as a shunt operation. It crosses the last active road/rail bridge in New Zealand which is due to be replaced with a separate road bridge shortly. The over-girder bridge is not photogenic but the train going onto or off the bridge would be interesting. I believe Rob Dickinson and I saw this in action around 2002. The times didn't suit us this time so we passed it by.



Near Franz Josef

Off the road to Okarito (at a walking trail signed as Pakihi Walk) off the Franz Josef Highway, a Union Fordson logging loco has been displayed. (Union Foundry, Stratford, Taranaki. Restored at Westland Heritage Park, Hokitika)



Bruce Bay

Near to Bruce Bay is a Davenport steam loco that formerly worked on the logging railway there. It is reported to be covered by the bush and in danger of falling into the stream. The local river needs to be crossed by boat to view the remains. We didn't pursue this. If you ever want to see it, the owners of the nearby Mahitaki Lodge could probably arrange this if you stay with them.

<http://www.mahitakilodge.co.nz/>

Towards Oamara

We followed the track of the old railway line in from Kurow towards Oamaru. Various stations survive in other usage including the one at Kurow.



Oamaru

We were here from 23 - 27 December. In that period, apart from the Taieri Gorge Railway trains using the tracks around Dunedin, I don't think another train moved south of the junction for the Midland line south of Christchurch. I realise that this is currently a freight only line but apart from the fact it was over Christmas, you would think that it wasn't even worth keeping the long line from Christchurch to Dunedin and Invercargill open. I don't know if the closure due to earthquake damage north of Christchurch is a factor at the moment.

Oamaru Steam & Rail

This operation wasn't due to run trains until after we left. The operation is push-pull with the guard in charge of the air brake valve for the return run. The line has modern automated crossing warnings. The loco used would have been one of the diesels as despite being newly restored, the new tubes on the steam loco have corroded very quickly and need replacing. The shed was open with volunteers at work and they showed me round.

<http://www.oamaru-steam.org.nz/index.php>



This small Fowler is a long-term restoration project and will need a new boiler.

Steam Punk

At this quirky 'museum' you can see a former NZR diesel shunter suitably converted as well as an NZR carriage made into a Mad Max Battle Bus.

<http://steampunkoamaru.co.nz>



Dunedin

On our day trip to Dunedin we passed the Ocean Beach Railway which worryingly was showing a Next Open sign which was blank! The website still says 'closed for the 2016 Winter season!'

<http://oceanbeachrailway.co.nz/>

Two Taieri Gorge trains towards Waitati were observed passing Port Chalmers most likely in conjunction with the visit of 2 cruise ships.

<http://www.dunedinrailways.co.nz/>

There is a plan to re-instate trams in Dunedin for tourists. Locals gave us the impression that this idea had stalled despite several trams being restored for operations.

<http://dunedintrams.co.nz/index.htm>

On to Christchurch

Pleasant Point Museum & Railway

A very interesting operation which was working both steam and the replica railcar on the day of our visit. Very friendly and we couldn't refuse the cab ride offered! Again the steam train is operated push-pull with the guard in charge of the brake. There are several road crossings and all have modern automated warnings.

<http://www.pleasantpointrail.org.nz>



The Plains Museum, Tinwald near Asburton

This wasn't a steam day but we paid a quick visit. The Vulcan railcar was in use. I believe their signature steam loco - Rogers K88 is currently in Invercargill.

<http://www.plainsrailway.co.nz/>



Ferrymead

The new NZ National Railway Museum will be sited here. A large, new turntable was visible to display the exhibits but opening must be some years off.

Otherwise, the trams were not operating due to a burst water main and the Health and Safety request not to run while there was a danger of shocking the repair workers.

<http://ferrymead.org.nz>



Christchurch Trams

I counted at least 3 heritage trams in use on the figure of 8 circuit around the city centre with earthquake damage not just in evidence but dominating the

city.

<http://welcomeaboard.co.nz/christchurch-tram/>



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All comments gratefully received. This is a companion to a Kyoto, Japan train blog as well as a (forthcoming) Tasmania, Australia train blog.

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