

five feet in diameter, for use on the poppet head, were unloaded on a frosty night. One of them was stood up against a corrugated iron shed and the other lay flat. In the morning the upright one was split in two, but the other one, because it was lying on the ground and therefore subject to a uniform temperature, contracted evenly and was intact.

1878 Flood Disaster

Andrew Southberg lived at Bullendale until 1878 when he lost everything in the great flood that year, and came to Queenstown to live. During those torrential rains a slip came down miles away in the hills, blocking up Branch Creek. Water began to flow through the houses and at five o'clock in the morning the children were awakened from their beds and sent on to the high ground. By this time the whole countryside seemed to be on the move with water loosening the very foundations of the soil, trees relinquishing their grip and logs rolling madly along on the flood-waters. Miss Mary Southberg, of Frankton, a daughter of Andrew Southberg, still remembers vividly that awful night. "We stumbled along in the dark, hanging on to tussocks, fighting every foot of the way," she said. "It was about eight o'clock that the slip came down — a mad surge of muddy water in which the debris was tossed about like corks. The noise was terrific. We saw the roof of the stable floating down the creek with my tortoiseshell cat mewing on top. Had the flood come down two hours earlier we would all have been drowned. As it was, it shifted rocks the size of houses, a bridge above the battery was washed away and the whole contour of the country was changed. Trees and pipes came down and struck the house broadside on, sheared the verandah off the front and the lean-to from the back and took the roof away as well. The three walls of the house were left standing, enclosing the three rooms which were filled with gravel."

But experiences such as this were all part of the life of the children of the pioneer diggers. The infants who were taken to these wild parts of the Wakatipu were generally transported in gin cases slung over the backs of the packhorses, one child swinging in a gin case on each side. Many hundreds of children saw the goldfields for the first time as they swung in their improvised cradles from the back of a sure-footed horse picking its way over the precipitous mountain tracks.

James Edwards was another pioneer of the Wakatipu

goldfields who has left behind him his memories of the Bullendale. Born in England in 1837, he went first to the Australian diggings and later took part in the rush to Gabriel's Gully in Otago. He took his mine manager's ticket in Australia in 1887, a fact which qualified him for, and earned him, a responsible executive position under Mr Evans at Bullendale, where he went in 1873. Two years later he married Margaret Buckham, an English girl who came out to Victoria with her parents in 1862 and in 1874 left for Arrowtown, landing in Bluff in November of that year and travelling from Lumsden, or the Elbow as it was then known, to Kingston by coach. She sailed up the lake with the party of American astronomers who had come to observe the transit of Venus, but because of the primitive means of communication in those days she lived out her life without ever hearing any more about the astronomers, although it was a well known fact that their Queenstown observations were the only successful ones in New Zealand.

Some time after she arrived in Arrowtown a member of the family with whom she was living called her outside to see the bride fresh from Ireland walking across the beach on her way to her new home in Macetown. This was Mrs. John Jenkins, whose husband later took up land on the Crown Terrace. The young wife, this time with a baby, walked from Macetown to the Arrow and, after a cup of tea and a rest walked on to the Crown Terrace, carrying the baby a few months old with her.

James Edwards and Margaret Buckham were married in the Arrowtown Anglican Church on June 14, 1875, and later in the day the young couple left on horseback for Bullendale. This was about the third time the bride had ridden a horse, and her honeymoon trip proved a real test of horsemanship, involving a journey over a mountainous bridle track and no fewer than 86 crossings of Skippers Creek before they reached their home. They lived there until the 1878 flood. The weather preceding the flood had been very mild for September, then a heavy fall of rain was followed by twelve inches of snow which disappeared in a few days. The younger folk were pleased to see the last of the snow but the older residents shook their heads dubiously, puzzled at the small quantity of water in the creek. Shortly afterwards the Edwards family were out on the hillside when they saw an immense volume of water rushing down Casper's Flat.

Their first thought was for the Southbergs who lived round the bend of the hill close to the creek, but it seemed

that they had already received warning for they saw the Southberg family reach high ground just before the flood came roaring down, smothering everything in its wake. Many homes were destroyed but afterwards some of them were rebuilt, and a new hotel was built on the spot where the Southberg home had stood. The Edwards home was built on the hillside on sandy ground, but after the heavy and continuous rain the foundations became loose and the house began to shift gradually down hill. Some days later James Edwards happened to notice that the whole homestead was in a most precarious position and was slowly moving. Running inside he called to his wife to pick up the baby and run, and as the family fled out of doors they turned in time to see their home slide down the hill into the creek. Kind neighbours gave them shelter, but the whole settlement was isolated by the flood and the many slips that prevented people from either leaving or entering Bullendale. Some of the inhabitants were reduced to the last pound of flour before stores were finally sent up from Arrowtown and Skippers. As soon as it was possible to ride down the creek in safety James Edwards took his family to Queenstown and then to Nelson where they remained for three years. But the Wakatipu was where Edwards always wanted to be and so at the end of the three years he returned once more to the Bullendale mine.

Miss E. Edwards, a daughter of James Edwards, went to school in Arrowtown, but when school days were over she went up to Bullendale to keep house for her father and brother, travelling from Arrowtown to Skippers in Cotter Brothers' wagonette. Bullendale was then a picturesque village, with its tiny houses built into the steep hillside, and the bush growing right to the water's edge. To those living nearer or in the townships Bullendale was spoken of as "the back of beyond", but as in Macetown there was a strong community spirit and the people were never lacking for entertainment. Goat hunting was a popular sport among the young men and the boys, but occasionally an old billy would turn the tables and the hunters would fly helter-skelter downhill with the infuriated billy kettle-drumming after them, until such time as they were able to find shelter behind a rock.

The Packers

Few of these large-scale mining ventures could have been established and maintained without the aid of the packers on whom miners and others throughout the goldfields

depended for their supplies and their gear. Hardy though the miners themselves were, their work was child's play compared with the tasks that confronted the packers in the Wakatipu diggings, and some of them performed feats that seemed almost superhuman. Commenting on the work of these men the Shotover correspondent of the *Wakatipu Mail* writing in 1863 said that the almost famine prices the digger had to pay for the necessities of life would tempt him to the belief that the packers were reaping a rich harvest from their calling, but a journey to Skippers would quickly dispel such an illusion. The jaded appearance of both man and beast as they were seen descending with cautious steps the precipitous and rugged paths, slippery from frost or rain, as they tracked out the beds of creeks or wound along the narrow mountain ridges with gorges and ravines on either side where one false step would precipitate both into the frightful abyss beneath, proclaimed the life one of severest toil and smallest comfort. The horse, be it ever so good, was within three months rendered unfit for further service, and the number of horses dead along the way spoke plainly of the perils of the journey.

John Edgar was a packer in a big way in the Queenstown-Shotover district and his feat in packing in the thirty-stamper plant for the Phoenix Company is spoken of to this day. The work began on the first day of May and lasted all the winter. A few of the pack-loads weighed 480 pounds — 240 pounds on each side of the horse; and he had a blacksmith stationed at Maori Point to sharpen the shoes. A crossing was made at Maori Point and the shady side of Stony Creek was ice from top to bottom and had to be chipped by men working full time on the job.

Edgar had come to Queenstown from the Dunstan, arriving at the lakeside camp on New Year's Day, 1863, when it was just a calico town. He started for the Skippers rush by way of the Ben Lomond saddle and across the Moke and Moonlight Creeks and was amazed to meet a woman on her way from Skippers to Queenstown for provisions. They chatted pleasantly for a while before continuing their respective journeys. Later he learned that this woman was known as "Jolly Tommie's wife". Edgar worked a good claim on the Twelve Mile (Few's) Creek before he turned his activities to packing goods to the back country.

Another notable packer in the sixties and later was Jules Bordeau, a French-Canadian of powerful physique. Indeed, no man could be a packer unless he was a powerful