

Chapter Two

Richard Henry and other parrots

In 1968 our party descended narrow ledges into the cirque head of the Esperance Valley from the Grave-Talbot Pass. This route fell into disuse when the Homer Tunnel opened in 1954.



At the time I was wishing that I was in the nearby Tutoko Valley where the Wildlife Service had just found a handful of male kakapo. Little did we know that a lonely kakapo probably saw us camping in the remains of McPherson Hut. In 1975 Richard Henry Kakapo was captured near here.



The Esperance 'ledges' are hairy even with a fixed hand-line.
Photos Miss CM Lucas Collection 1929



Spot, if you can, the traverse to the right. *Miss CM Lucas Collection 1929*

From the northern extent of the ledges.
BJM

1968. Richard Henry Kakapo was hanging out somewhere near McPherson Hut (centre). *BJM*



Having Fiordland genes RH Kakapo later became the most important kakapo in the bird's recovery programme. He was named after the man who transferred many kakapo in the 1890s to Resolution Island to save them. Tragically stoats swam to the island and destroyed his life's work.

On Maude Island hope had faded for old Richard Henry showing interest in the young female Flossie. To everyone's surprise three chicks were produced.

In 2002 I was nest-minding for the impressively dedicated kakapo recovery team on Codfish Island. Flossie's nest was one I cared for. Richard Henry was not on the island.

In 2009 I was back on Codfish doing supplementary kakapo feeding including a menu for an ancient now one-eyed Richard Henry. I was taking him food, and I found one of his feathers, but sadly never met the old fella before his death. I wondered if he was watching me back in 1968. However his son Gulliver insisted on chasing and playing with me.

- **Richard Henry** – first captured: 1975; father of Gulliver, Kuia, Sinbad '98; found dead: 24 December 2010^{[22][23]} (The last bird from the South Island, he was captured by [Don Merton](#), John Cheyne, and Mandy dog in 1975 in Fiordland National Park/Gulliver Valley/Esperance River, named after [Richard Treacy Henry](#))
- **Gulliver** – hatched: 1998; mother: Flossie; father: Richard Henry



Gulliver had me on my knees to play. *KDM*