



**May 1991.** Damage caused by a series of fires spreading across the boundary from the neighbour's property. These fires were lit right up to the DoC boundary. (out of sight at right) The newly cut track acted as a firebreak. The area of bush is nearly pure ngaio and naturally regenerated in heavy gorse.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March the whole of Dunedin is watching a huge firework display over the Otago Harbour. This was to celebrate the 150th year of the Province of Otago.

*Otago Daily Times* 24/03/1998

“Tomahawk Fire. Firefighters had to overcome access difficulties to fight a gorse fire in a steep gully in the Dunedin suburb of Tomahawk last night.

The Fire Service was alerted at 7.45pm when about 0.5ha of gorse was alight below Centre Road (head of No. 2 Lagoon) A spokeswoman for the service said it was not known how the fire was started. Units from St Kilda and Dunedin stations attended along with firemen from the Department of Conservation and Dunedin Rural Fire Service.”

The following day Paul Clark meets the DCC Chief Rural Fire officer and his crew while they were damping down hot spots and 'expressed his concerns' over the monies spent and the reluctance of the DCC and ORC to enforce regulations. There were no answers, 'just averted gazes and shuffling of feet.' This was the eighth year of this pathetic saga.

Fortunately things improved from then on. The ORC got its first and long overdue Compliance Officer. The DCC and Rural Fire Service found out where all the protected areas were. The Dunedin Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service co-operated more along the city-rural boundary. DoC became more NGO and community group friendly. The local community now respects and enjoys the No. 2 Lagoon. I was quite chuffed when the Clark family got me to co-sign the QEII Covenant documents. Today I'm able to relax without a climate of fear and continue improving the lagoon's native plant biodiversity, often while mentoring tertiary students.

### *Follow-up to the Tomahawk Restoration Project*

The reason I have not revealed the name of the DOC officer who said, "I'll do everything I can to oppose (you)" and thereby set back the forming of the NZ Ecological Restoration Network (NZERN) is that I thought that he might have the attributes to survive endless restructuring traumas. He was that rare beast, a field officer with actual local knowledge and contacts. Once very fit, he gave up with broken health and resigned to join the many people who had once worked for DOC.

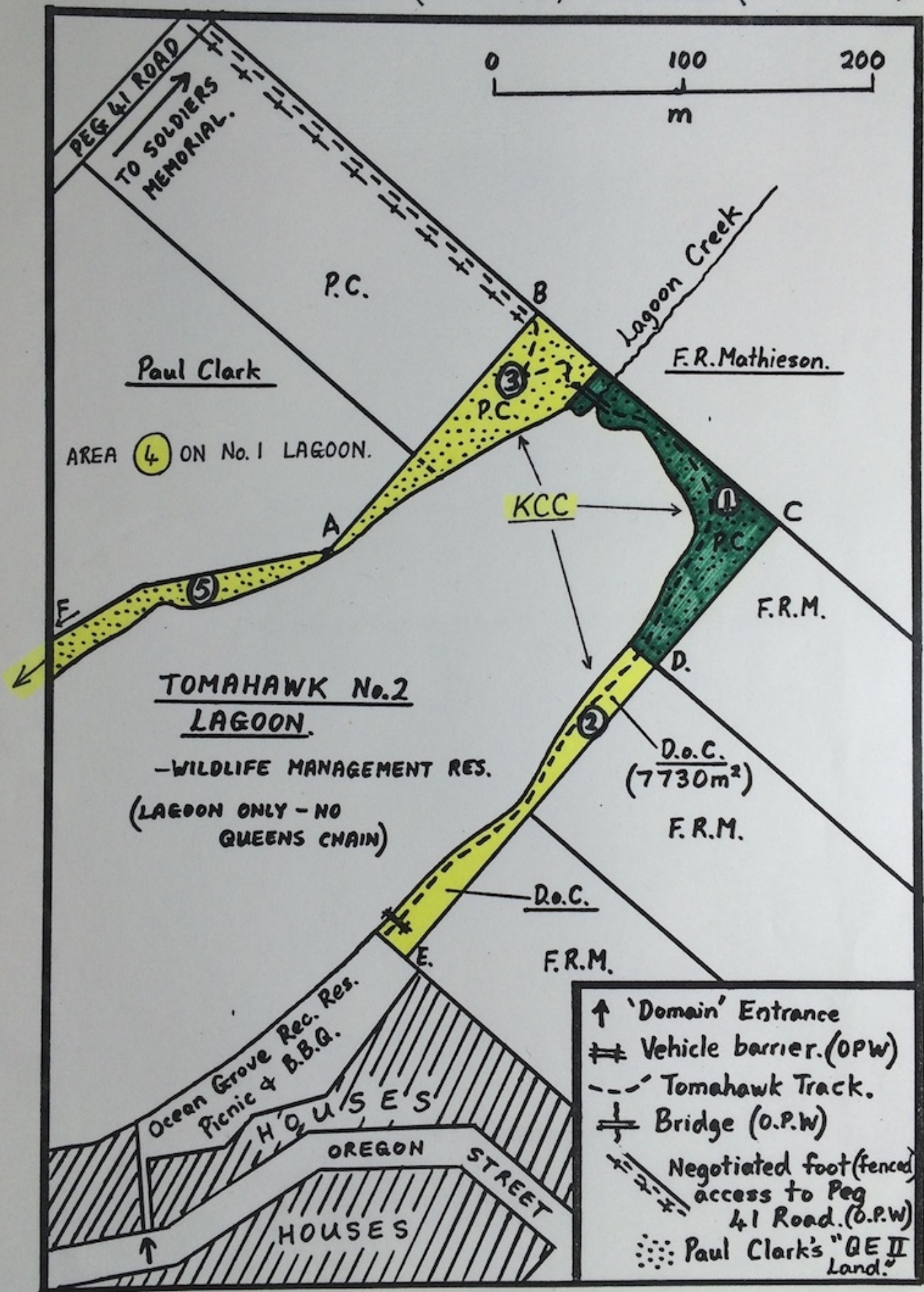
At the gully covenant at the No. 1 lagoon reintroduced bush grasses and ferns put in by Dunedin Teen Conservation are slowly spreading. There has been just a single slip at a spring emergence at an old farm water intake. Unfortunately it took aim at our grove of kahikatea. That is just part of the game in restoration.

At the third covenant at the No.1 Lagoon most of our plantings have been regularly cleaned out by mobs of cattle pushing through 100 metres of DOC administered raupo wetland. We should have gone very public on this one. This may have given the department the will to sort the problem out with their neighbour. It was alleged that his farmer had earlier, without authority, diverted a stream, digging a 3 metre deep trench through Paul and Sue Clark's best bush and diverted the flow on to their property.

Today the late Fergus Mathieson's farm is a well run, tidy unit managed by a good, co-operative neighbour, his son. Gone is the district's noxious weed embarrassment.

If you can't be got at through your employer (or worse), the well paid officials you upset as a consequence of them not doing or refusing to do their job, can resort to concocting a setting to indulge in childish payback. At the 2000 Otago Regional Council Environmental Awards I had entered a different ecological restoration project. Prior to the presentation a number of Council Staff unexpectedly congratulated and fussed over me. There was no award forth coming. I felt honoured to be worthy of the same childish treatment in Wellington at another presentation when, in the presence of the Governor General, I was directed to sit on the end of the main isle. I could have sat anywhere because there was no award forthcoming. The person behind this was on the stage squirming and avoiding eye contact.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED (GREEN ●) AND GREW (YELLOW □)



## Tomahawk Lagoons in the 1850's

I often think it was a great pity the Government did not reserve the lands round the Tomahawk Lagoons. What a lovely spot it was! The native bush came down to and overhung the water's edge, so that in many places one could go right underneath in a flattie. From behind the tall flax on the flat, 10ft high, and the wi-wi along the water's edge, one could watch the numerous wild fowl that frequented the place. There were Paradise, grey, and teal ducks, the pied shags and water hens, the grey bittern and pukeko, water-rails, plovers, and redbills, the white crane that used to be seen wading in the shallow water or sitting up on the dead limb of an old totara tree, and the kingfishers darting about, their bright plumage flashing in the sunlight. In the adjacent bush were heard the whistle of the kaka and the sound of the pigeons' wings as they flitted from tree to tree, the organ-like tones of the tui and the sweet chiming of the bell-birds, the lovely little fantails and grey warblers chasing the moths, the beautiful song of the robin, who with the tom-tit was always interested in any work it saw you engaged in and ever ready to make friends with you. There were also the yellow-headed canary and little brown creepers, which would come around twittering merrily when one chirped to them - how I watched them all and knew their nests and their habits! I have often pitied some of those people who have written about our native birds, even in the school books. If I told them that I have known a grey duck make her nest high up in an old broadleaf tree a quarter of a mile away from the water and lead her young ones safely down to it, they would probably say that it was against the nature of a duck to climb a tree. All the same, it takes to the trees and to the rocks, and high up the mountain amongst the snow tussock the female bird is found hatching her young. Alas! most of our native birds have gone, never to return. The clearing of the bush, the importation of British birds, and of stoats and weasels, have driven them out.

FROM: The Early History of Andersons Bay and Tomahawk.

Henry Duckworth 1923

There were also plenty of weka, parakeets and native quail.



The suburb of Ocean Grove from above the No. 2 Lagoon *KDM*



No. 1 Lagoon

Where did the New Zealand Ecological Restoration Network vanish to? The NZERN was a knowledge-sharing network of conservation groups and community led conservation projects. Mike Peters, a welder and artist, was the key visionary and driving force. Mike found it amusing when, as a guest speaker at conferences, people shuffled away when they discovered he had no scientific training. Mike and I fed off one another in energy and ideas. Ecologist Dr Colin Meurk was our main scientific advisor. Colin often was to be found in the rain, under a parka, releasing plantings. Such was the calibre of the man.

The knock-on effects of the 2008 global economic crisis and then the 2010-11 Christchurch earthquakes finished NZERN. The considerable sponsorship monies that were needed dried up. Suitable, affordable accommodation needed for the large electronic data base and film studios vanished. The Christchurch volunteers had to rebuild shattered lives.

Despite its demise the NZERN had brought forward both NGO and non-NGO ecological restoration thinking by many years.

The 'Thin Green Line'. Our handiwork weaving through Killer Gorse up the Peg 41 Road. *Spy Camera*



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