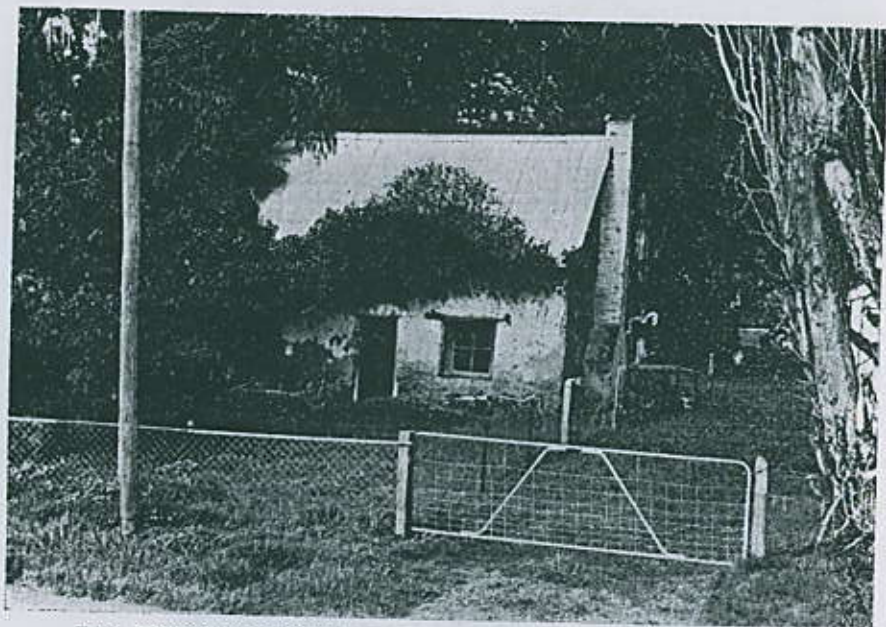


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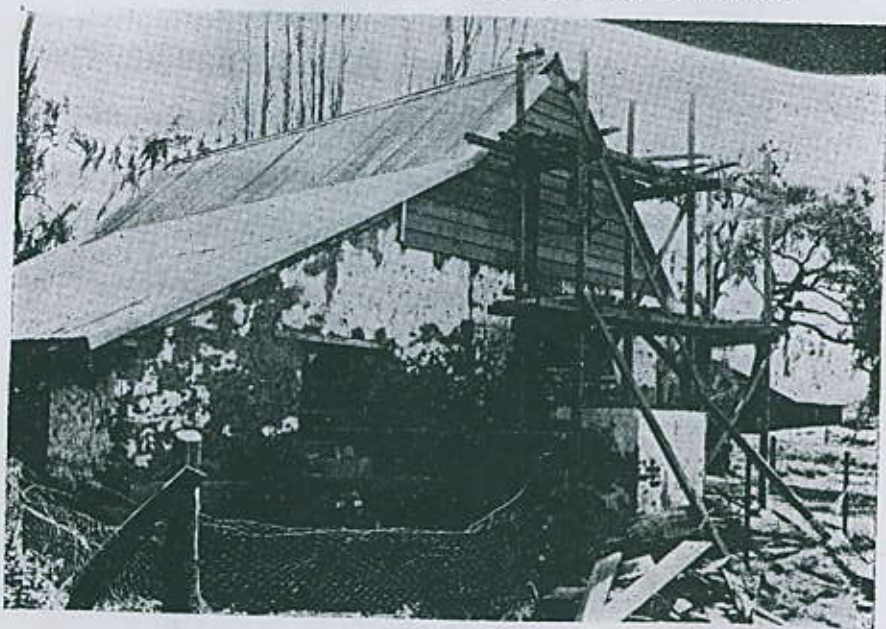
Riverlands
Cob
Cottage





Top: BEFORE WORK STARTED IN 1961 — FENCED TO KEEP OUT STOCK.

Bottom: A STAGE IN RESTORATION — REBUILDING CHIMNEY.



Historic links with early settlement
of lower plains of the Wairau...

RESTORATION OF RIVERLANDS COB COTTAGE

The early settlement of the Wairau Plain was not an organised affair. Whalers had established themselves in Port Underwood in the 1830s and Unwin & Co. sought to carve a cattle station out of the lower part of the Plain in 1840.

By the time the Nelson colony started in late 1841 the cattle station had disappeared and whaling was on the decline.

Events in the Nelson Colony demanded more land and efforts to acquire this resulted in the Wairau Incident at Tua Marina. The deterioration in the colony drove farmers to seek independence and land...both of these they found in the Wairau Plain.

Research into the early survey of the Wairau Plain by William Budge shows that no provision was made for any townships, in fact, the flat land of the plain was cut into 150 acre (approximately) blocks for farms which the New Zealand Company expected to be entirely dependent on the Nelson Colony.

Budge completed his survey in 1848 and among his surveyors were Joseph Ward, Cyrus Goulter, Nathaniel Edwards, Charles Watts and many others who returned to the Wairau and established themselves on the land of their choice. These men were also responsible for encouraging other farmers to venture out on to the Wairau Plain. Vast unsurveyed areas on each side of the plain were available on pastoral licence and this was taken up in large blocks by those skilled in pastoral farming, and the surveyed flat land was left to the agriculturists and speculators.

ON LOWER WAIRAU

Among those who established themselves on the southern side of the lower Wairau Plain were C. B. Wither, G. Empson, W. H. Eyes, H. Redwood, E. Dashwood and others.

Charles Wither came to New Zealand in 1843 and he took up a block in the Taylor Valley. His holding was 11,000 acres and comprised the Wither Hills as we know them. Eyes and Empson took up 13,000 acres from the Oldham Brothers which had been named Meadowbank Run.



Top: FIREPLACE WITH OVEN BEHIND COLONIAL OVEN.

Bottom: IN THE KITCHEN LOOKING THROUGH TO LARDER OR
STOREROOM.



Toward the sea, Dashwood and Budge had independently acquired stations. Henry Redwood Sen., initially bought land by the section but in the late 1850's he began to acquire land by the block and run.

Henry Redwood became interested in the lower part of the plain as early as 1847 when he sent his son, Thomas, with a mob of sheep through from Waimea to stock the land. Floods and wild dogs caused Thomas to return to Waimea with the sheep.

Henry Redwood was Crown granted some of the sections south of the Lagoons in 1854 and 1855. Some he bought from Budge and in all he soon had an area of 20,000 acres in one block which he called Vernon, his wife's maiden name. Thomas meantime returned to manage Bankhouse Station above Renwick for Dr. Monro before taking over the running of Vernon.

ENTERPRISING FAMILY

Mr and Mrs Henry Redwood and their children Henry, Thomas, Charles, Francis, Austin, Martha, Mary, Ann and Elizabeth came from Staffordshire, England, to Nelson in the ship George Fyfe in 1842. This family was not backward in enterprise and they form part of the backbone of our past. Other passengers on the George Fyfe were Joseph Ward, Constantine Dillon and Charles Clifford.

Henry Redwood Jun., established himself as a farmer and flourmiller at Spring Creek; he was a breeder of race horses and won for himself the title of the "Father of the New Zealand Turf."

Thomas was mainly associated with farming, Charles will be mentioned later, Francis became Catholic Archbishop of Wellington and later Metropolitan of New Zealand; Austin, the youngest child, died at an early age. Martha had married Joseph Ward before leaving England and Mary, who married a Mr Greaves, died at an early age. Ann married Cyrus Goullter and Elizabeth became Mrs Edward Bolton.

Henry Redwood Sen., bought Wither's run in 1867 and by 1870 the Redwood family owned the land extending from the Taylor Valley to the sea and also many of the nearby flats in the Wairau and Awatere Valleys. Henry Sen. died in 1873 and the large block was split up to form farms and the Redwoodtown settlement, now part of Blenheim.

RIVERLANDS RUN

Charles Redwood followed his father in the aggregation of land. He established the Riverlands Run on which the Riverlands cob cottage stands. The Riverlands Run in its heyday had stables, racecourse, malthouse and other buildings which gave it an air of dignity. The extent of the run was about 5600 acres and the cottage stands on Section 32, Opawa Survey, Cloudy Bay District, Marlborough.

Section 32 was Crown granted to John Emmett on 2nd June 1854, and trustees conveyed it to Charles Redwood on 27th April 1865. Emmett was an absentee owner and therefore the present cob cottage could date earlier than Redwood's purchase since "squatting" was still a common practice in the 1860s. It is not known if the cottage had cob chimneys during its early life, during the recent reconstruction work no evidence was observed.

The Nelson Examiner reported in April 1873, that Charles Redwood had made 500,000 bricks for the construction of his malthouse which is to the north of the cottage. Possibly the cottage bricks were burnt when

the building was erected or the chimneys could have been rebuilt when the malthouse was erected.

FROZEN MEAT INDUSTRY

Charles Redwood was one of the men interested in developing a frozen mutton industry and on 11th August 1883 he presided over a directors' meeting which established the Marlborough Meat Freezing Company which built works at the western end of the sandhills at Riverlands. At this time the disposal of unwanted sheep was by killing and rendering down the fat for export. The advent of refrigeration indicated a new stage in farming. Space for the first shipment from the meat works was procured aboard the Indiaman Lady Jocelyn and the carcasses were sent via the Opawa River to Wellington, thence to England. This works, however, did not last long and they lost heavily on the enterprise.

Charles Redwood did not live in the cottage for long. It is on record that he did not like the dampness of the floor which was set low in the ground as with the English custom to keep out draughts. More substantial buildings were built to provide for his family of 13 children.

RESTORATION STARTS

About 1890 the bank took over the Riverlands Run and the Redwoods went to Queensland. The Run was placed in the hands of Robert Bell, one of the family who was associated with Hillersden, St. Leonards, Benhopai, etc. A later owner was Robert L. Forsyth whose son Mr R. L. Forsyth has allowed the building to be restored and the land on which it stands declared an Historic Reserve.

Interest in the restoration of the cottage started in 1959 when the Marlborough Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the Marlborough Historical Society Inc. invited the Trust to consider the restoration of the cottage as a pioneer home.

Late in 1960 Messrs John Pascoe (then secretary) and F. G. F. Sheppard (Government architect) inspected the building and in December 1960, the Trust granted £150 to the Society through the local committee. Mr Sheppard outlined the best way to tackle the work and the first working bee was held in that month.

Research into the past of the building showed that it had been used as a farm owner's cottage, worker's cottage, shearers' quarters, Riverlands School (1906-09), bookies' headquarters, stud sheep shelter, Home Guard store and headquarters, storeroom and hay shed. The various swaggers and farm hands who have occupied it for periods are quite numerous and there are some living in Blenheim who made it their home as newly weds while working on the Riverlands Run.

The first stage of the work was to bare the walls and roof, both inside and out of the ivy which grew throughout the building. When this was done the extent of repair necessary could be estimated. In many places the original dampcourse of sacks, pitch, stones and glass had deteriorated and moisture was causing the lower walls to crumble. It was decided to remove the weak lower parts of the walls and to inset concrete blocks on which the main walls would rest. Starting in one corner the working parties dug down to solid base and placed a block on its face, then by working along the wall both inside and out they were able to slowly drop the sound part of the walls on to the rows of blocks giving a strong and continuous wall throughout the building. Some 700 blocks were bought or donated for this stage of the work.

MANY HOURS OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN RESTORING LINK WITH PAST

Much work involving many hours of voluntary labour — and the donation of materials — was involved before the Marlborough Historical Society brought the Riverlands cob cottage and its surrounds alongside the Main South Road three miles from Blenheim — back to their former condition.

The general dampness of the area was overcome by felling trees which shaded the house, and drains were dug to remove the rainwater from the roof. In the course of removing the ivy one chimney was pulled down. The fireplace, oven and chimney were rebuilt and restored on the eastern wall. During this stage of the restoration a large section of the mud wall fell out and was successfully jacked back into position and secured by a concrete lintel over the fireplace. The western chimney was found sound and only the top two rows of bricks were re-mortared.

All the bunks in the upper part of the building were removed and rebuilt. Borer had played havoc with the sap white pine timber used in the original construction. It is interesting to recall that the bunks which extended around the wall were capable of sleeping about sixteen people. In the early times children would sleep alternately under the blankets on flax or straw mattresses made of sacking.

Windows and doors were replaced and slowly the stage of work was reached when results of the efforts could be seen.

The next big job was repairing a section of the roof which had rotted away because of holes in the iron roof which had been placed over the wooden shingles. Rafters and sarking were cut in and here it is interesting to recall an extract in The Marlborough Express of 13th April 1891.

"... at 10.30 yesterday morning Mr A. Cundy discovered the roof of Mr C. Redwood's malthouse on fire. High winds made it impossible to save more than a few sacks of barley. A message was dispatched and the Fire Queen was towed to the scene by horses from McKenzie's stables under Captain McArtney. Little could be done and after the fire all that remained was the brick walls. The roof was of shingles and the iron for re-roofing had arrived but it had not been put on...."

It could be presumed that the cottage itself would be re-roofed about this time.

The front part of the roof was re-shingled. This proved a big job. The type of timber for shingles is no longer available and whereas the shingle cutter picked his trees and if not satisfied, he tried another, we resorted to using treated apple case lids and some 2500 pieces were nailed on to the original sarking. These were later given a coat of tar as a preservative. The iron roof on the rear of the house has been retained to prevent damage from falling branches from nearby trees.



Top: IN THE SITTING ROOM, SHOWING DECORATIONS OF THE 1860s.

Bottom: BEDROOM ON LOWER FLOOR.



NEW MUD FOR OLD WALLS

Our hot summers and frosty winters convinced us that the existing mud walls would have to be well covered. We conducted "test plots" around the walls to determine the best mud to use, the best system of applying it and possible additives to bond the new mud to the old and almost perished walls. After about 200 tests a system was evolved which we think will give a lasting surface.

Cob houses in Marlborough are of several types. Some are made from tussock and soil which has been trodden by animal hooves until the right texture is secured and then slapped on to the top of the walls and the surplus pared down giving a good flat surface. Others have been made by using boxing and the mixture rammed in the boxing which is moved higher up the wall as each mix is used.

Some houses are made from mud bricks made in rectangular moulds and baked in the sun. In the Clarence Valley there is one building built of bricks made in an off-square mould and the walls have a herring bone effect. In the construction of cob cottages soil is used and through the passage of time this resembles clay. Tussock is usually chopped and worked into the puddled mass.

In the cob cottage at Riverlands the tussock has been spread in layers in places and this gives a recess where insects can hibernate. The main essential of cob walls is to keep out the moisture by a good plastering on the surfaces. For this a mud wash with horse dung was used and on this newspaper was pasted and white-washed. One of the essential parts of this work was the chaff fed to the horses — it was evidently the sections of chaff undigested which provided the reinforcing in the mud wash.

As all cracks in the walls had to be dug out and soil mixture forced into the holes, the task of building out the walls was a time-consuming work, particularly when it was found that the mud had not taken to the old wall. Some four cubic yards of soil were hand-pulled to provide enough to repair the building. Plasticisers were used to waterproof the older sections of the walls and the restored walls are now sound and should stand for many years. Six hundredweight of cement and lime wash was used in place of the whitewash which would have been used originally. In such restorations as this some of the materials used are not available and the work has been done with the future in mind.

INTERESTING FINDS

During the course of cleaning down the walls prior to patching and treating some pieces of newspaper were found. These were half page sections of the Nelson Examiner dated May 16, 18 and 30, 1865. One piece has Mr C. Redwood, Riverland as the address, but it is not known if the remainder of the address was Marlborough or Wairau.

Two schools of thought exist about these newspapers. One is that they were pushed into the cracks when the building was being built and the other is that as the mud dried out over a period of time they could have been used for renovating and repairing. The date of the papers conforms with the date of Redwood's purchase; however it was mentioned earlier that the house could have been built prior to the actual purchase in which case the repair idea would be understandable. In any case it is known that the house was built in 1865, or earlier, but the name of the builder is not known. Redwood could have done some of the finishing himself and used his own newspapers as a filling for the cracks.

About 5000 hours of mainly voluntary labour was used in the whole project. Mr A. R. Flood undertook much of the timber work in the

reconstruction and he was assisted by Mr J. R. Eyles prior to his leaving to take up the position of curator of the Nelson Museum. Members of the Society worked alternate Saturdays and the final burst to complete was when anyone had spare time.

COOKING AND WATER

The oven on the eastern side of the house is a modernised version of the mud ovens which still stand beside many of the old homes in Marlborough. At Altimarlock, Upton Fells, Quail Flat and no doubt other places, the solidly mudded-over ovens stand as a reminder of when bread was baked across the backyard. In the cob cottage, however, the coals from the fire on the hearth would be shovelled into the oven overnight to heat it up and in the morning the coals would be raked back on to the hearth to be used with more wood to cook the breakfast. The oven, because of the sand insulation, would stay hot until later in the morning when the bread would be baked.

The days of the Douglas pump in the backyard are not so very far behind, and prior to that water would be carted by the bucket from the creek nearby. Redwood was early to appreciate the possibility of an artesian flow and his earliest recorded well was sunk in the early 1870s.

The cottage would also have the clothes washing facilities outside. The old bricked-in copper has not been rebuilt, nor have the toilets which would also be down the path. It is recorded that one such building in the district was able to cater for three different ages in one family at one time. Though we take our modern homes for granted the days of spreading clothes out to dry on bushes and fencelines is not so far back.

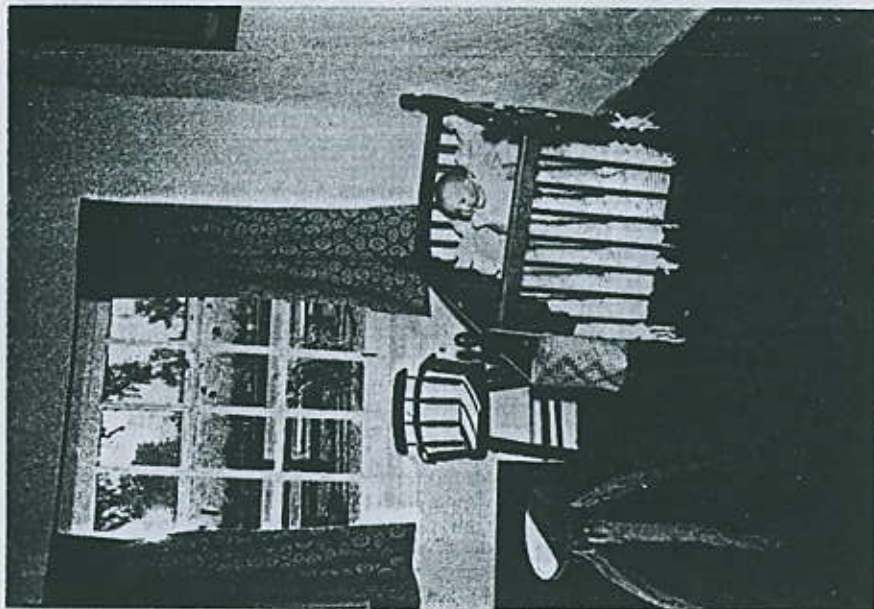
Cob houses are quite warm in winter and cool in summer. The 16-inch thick walls provided good insulation and with all sleeping in the upper storey the heat within the building would rise to give a warm bedroom. Access to the bedroom was by ladder and the original has been carefully copied to show the way to bed from the living room.

The original floors in the cottage were rammed soil with a thin layer of concrete on top. The wooden floor in the two front rooms dates from 1906 when the building became the Riverlands School. The first day of the school was held under the trees while Mr John Fawcett, sen., and his carpenters sawed and hammered. These floors are of matai. The timber work in the original building was pitsawn yellow pine—that is dead white pine which has been weathered by rain and wind.

TASKS OF THE DAY

The displays set out in the various rooms show the mode of living in the 1870 to 1890 era. Cream was skimmed off the milk which was allowed to stand, butter was hand-made, pickles, preserves and salted meat would adorn the shelves and rafters of the dairy or store room. The main room of the house was the kitchen where the housewife and children would work and play. The living room or parlour would be for when the day's work was done or for when visitors arrived.

Most of the goods on display have been donated to the Society while some have been loaned in the meantime. The Society is grateful for the donations from business firms and private people. The whole project has provided something which the younger generation will wonder at. The only remaining fact is that visitors will possibly drive up to the front of the building while their forebears either rode by horse or walked not along a sealed road but over a track worn dusty through use.



CHILDREN'S SECTION OF THE DISPLAYS. LADDER ON LEFT LEADS TO ATTIC BEDROOM

