

LOCAL LEGEND!

The Tarras Village Facebook page recently shared an image of Bill Cowie, aka Willie Wong, a long-term Tarras resident who died in 2011. Videos and photographs of Willie are preserved on the Tarras website and make fascinating viewing.

Mr Cowie spent his entire life in the Ardour Valley, working as a farmer, deer hunter, fencer and shearer, collecting material for a lifetime of entertaining yarns. He earned the nickname Willie Wong after playing a Chinese character in a school concert, and was later dubbed the "Lindis Magpie" for his habit of collecting "treasures" - often farm machinery from clearing sales.

Two episodes of Country Calendar featured his exploits, first in 1991 and again in 2003, the latter including footage from his 2002 clearing sale. His final television appearance was in August 2011 on Chef Simon Gault's show Chef on a Mission. (Courtesy of the ODT, 5 October 2011, Lynda Van Kempen.) His obituary reportedly ran to two full pages.

A painting of Willie by Dee Copeland, shared online, prompted 105 comments from people recalling memories and tributes. He clearly left a mark, and his antics have become part of local legend. A selection of those recollections is recorded below for those who knew him, those who didn't, and those who prefer to stay off social media. They're simply too good not to share.

CO remembers "seeing him driving his old car around Tarras, only to be surprised when he parked up and opened the driver's door. Willie wasn't sitting in the driver's seat - because there wasn't one. The seat had been replaced with a beer crate!"

KB recalled, "He was doing a documentary for Country Calendar, driving his jet boat onto his trailer, when he accidentally hit the accelerator pedal and flew right over his Land Rover!"



Dee Copeland shared, "Willie was an awesome character. I loved painting him! He was definitely the most memorable model I have ever painted. He came to my exhibition opening at Carrick Winery where his painting hung. He dressed up for the occasion, he told me - funny as. But he told me the cheese was 'off' because he ate the whole lump of cheese, wax and all! Legend!"

GM says, "Had a couple of episodes with Wong back when I was a young fella on Clearview Farm up Bendigo Loop Rd. Mustering and carting sheep off river blocks in his jet boat when the Clutha was in full flood. Absolute weapon he was. Beau Trevathan was behind the wheel too! Legends. Never forget his old meat safe on Ardour Rd either..."

TD remembers, "I got a dog from him, and he was telling me the yarn about how his Jack Russell got stuck down a rabbit hole near the riverbank. Home he went, came back with some dynamite, chucked it down a nearby rabbit hole and blew the bank out! The dogs dropped out! What a laugh."

JB remembers Willie "shooting rabbits out the windows of his house. I learnt how to cook a pig in a 44-gallon drum overnight, using a burning hay bale set-up. Clever man. A bygone era of decency."

PM says, "I remember when he tried to pull out a tree stump that wouldn't move, so Willy

put dynamite under it - but he put too much & blew up his tractor as well!! & all he did was laugh his head off. Funny as."

SM shared, "I worked with Willie when I was a troubled youth. He helped change my life. The hard times working with him set me up for life. Thanks, Willie."

SM has "lots of memories" - Mum stitching him up at our kitchen table, massive fry-ups, Pinky the fat cat, cleaning up a porker in a bath on the lawn... one of a kind."

HMR says, "He had the best clearing sale ever. You would try to buy something, then he would decide he didn't want to sell it, then he would change his mind again."

Others said: "One of life's good buggers." "Like a cat with nine lives." "Cowie's have a collecting treasures trait." "His Landy used to spend more time hanging on the bars to keep it upright. We had to stand on the topline to keep her rolling down the hill. We'd cart rocks to block the wheels after we'd winched her up the hill with a waratah and fencing strainer." "Willie was always helping us out when we had no idea what to do."

They don't make them like that these days, or do they? *Who do you think will be the next Tarras legend?*

TARRAS TALK

Proudly sponsored by TARRAS RURAL WOMEN

MARCH 2026



Photo courtesy of Reuben Burke.

DIARY DATE

RURAL WOMEN MARCH EVENT
House Tour and Croquet.

We're thrilled to be invited to visit Tarras's own New Zealand House of the Year "Green Home of the Year" finalist - the stunning home of Linda & Jakub on Bowman's Road.

Enjoy a guided tour of this architecturally designed home, surrounded by beautiful gardens and 360-degree views, followed by croquet and refreshments on the lawn. Wednesday 18 March, 3pm.

RSVP: tarrasruralwomen@gmail.com

FROM VISION TO REALITY

Tarras community plan, your support will help bring the vision to life.

We are well into peak season around Tarras, whether you are a farming family, working in town or running a small business. With the weather reminding us Winter season is coming, you may have some free time to consider supporting one of our many community groups.



Sarah Browne - photo CODC



Rebecca Anderson - photo CODC

The council in February appointed two Tarras Community Liaisons, Rebecca Anderson and Sarah Browne. You can contact them via council if you feel they can help your group.

Many of us have seen Tarras in the media over the last few weeks, with various opinions on our community (and pronunciations of Tarras!!) shared. We also have a Tarras community plan (TCP) which was led by

Rural Women and supported by council. If you haven't read the TCP in a while use the QR code to have a look.

If you can see a part of the plan where you'd like to help, or your group is working on part of the plan or your group wants to help with bringing the plan to life - drop us a note at tarrastalk@gmail.com

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Whether you'd like to advertise, share your news, or receive Tarras Talk by email, just get in touch with Chris at tarrastalk@gmail.com



PROHIBITED FIRE SEASON NOW IN PLACE

Tarras is included in the Prohibited Fire Season declared for Central Otago from 8am, Saturday 21 February 2026.

This means all outdoor fires are banned until further notice.

Although summer has felt milder than usual, conditions across Central Otago, including our Tarras district, are now very dry. Grassland fuel levels have increased significantly, creating a high fire risk. With our open landscapes and rural environment, fires can spread quickly and be extremely difficult to control. While permitted burns have been carried out safely in recent months, it is no longer safe to light any outdoor fires.

We ask everyone in the Tarras community to be vigilant and take extra care. To check the fire status for your specific property, visit www.checkitsalright.nz and enter your address.



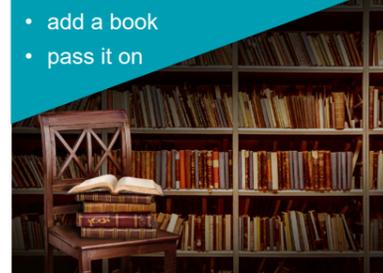
MARCH DINNER EVENT

11 March, 6pm - Alexandra District Club, Centennial Ave, Alexandra
Join us for an evening of inspiration with Meri Murphy, a pocket rocket - psychologist turned fearless solo adventurer who travelled the world, wrote for Lonely Planet, and now proudly calls Central Otago home!

Event details and bookings: events.humanitix.com/central-otago-rwnz-dinner-group-february-2026

We'd love you and your friends to join us.

Register before Friday 6 March - All welcome.
Email tarrasruralwomen@gmail.com for more information.



A REMARKABLE LEGACY OF SERVICE

"It's been an honour and a privilege to serve the Tarras Community as a Justice of the Peace for the past 33 years" *Helen Pledger.*

After 33 years of dedicated service, Helen Pledger has retired from her role as Justice of the Peace for the Tarras community.

For more than three decades - while also running Rocky Point Pottery alongside her husband, Helen generously gave her time to witness documents, complete statutory declarations, and assist locals through important life moments. Balancing her own business commitments with community service speaks volumes about her dedication. Her professionalism, integrity, and quiet willingness to help have been deeply valued across our district.

Helen has stepped down effective immediately, and we kindly ask that she is no longer contacted for JP services. At this stage there is no local replacement. For assistance, please contact Cromwell Community House (03 445 1690) or Community Link Upper Clutha (03 443 7799). *Thank you, Helen, for your remarkable service to our community.*

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATIONS VACANT	TRANSPORT NOTICE
<p>Volunteer Trustee/Board Member</p> <p>Are you well connected in your rural community and want to see farmers and growers thrive? Help us support rural communities by becoming a volunteer Trustee on the Board of the Otago Rural Support Trust. We are seeking expressions of interests from all over Otago, but particularly in South Otago and the Maniototo. Apply via Seek.co.nz before 31 March 2026. For further information email us: otago@ruralsupport.org.nz</p>	<p>Road change</p> <p>Tarras travellers turning into Cromwell now need to give way to the Alexandra traffic.</p>
<p>ACCOMODATION</p> <p>Seasonal Workers</p> <p>In our community, seasonal workers are pivotal for local businesses to survive. If you have a spare room, caravan or even toilet and cooking facilities, please email details of what you have to offer, to: tarras.org.nz so that a list can be formulated for next year.</p>	<p>DOG TRIALS</p> <p>Tarras Dog Trials</p> <p>The Tarras Dog Trials will be held at Phillips Road, Tarras. Please follow the TUX signs to the grounds. The trials will run over two days, March 26 and 27. Morning tea and lunch available to buy on site. Everyone is welcome to come along and enjoy the event.</p>
	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA</p> <p>Tarras.org.nz</p> <p>The Tarras.org.nz website is now live! We're building our community directory so everyone can see who does what around Tarras We reckon there are 20+ organisations active locally. <i>If your group is active locally, we'd love to include you.!</i></p>

TARRAS SCHOOL NEWS

The best little school in Central Otago - ALICE CASEY, PRINCIPAL



Kia ora,

We've had a tūmeke (awesome) start to the year!

We've loved having all the tamariki back at school; happy, engaged and determined.

We're delighted to welcome to our kura:

- Will with his whānau Amy and Sean
- Talia with her whānau Lisa and James

With our increase in roll, you may have spotted our new, bigger bus on the roads. The new runs are keeping Gae busy!

We loved seeing all our families together, meeting new and 'old' and enjoying some sunshine at our Whānau Swim and BBQ evening held in the first week of the term. We're lucky to have such a friendly and welcoming group.

Last week we participated in the Wānaka Challenge - we are so incredibly proud of all the tamariki.



They tackled the race with resilience, positivity and determination - we couldn't be prouder.

We're now busy practising for our Small Schools Athletics in Roxburgh. It'll be another successful day no doubt!

Ngā mihi nui, Alice

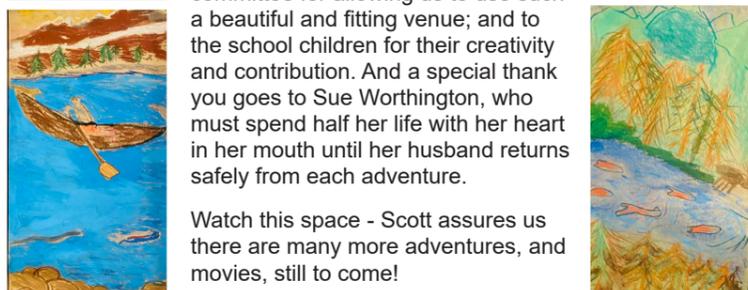
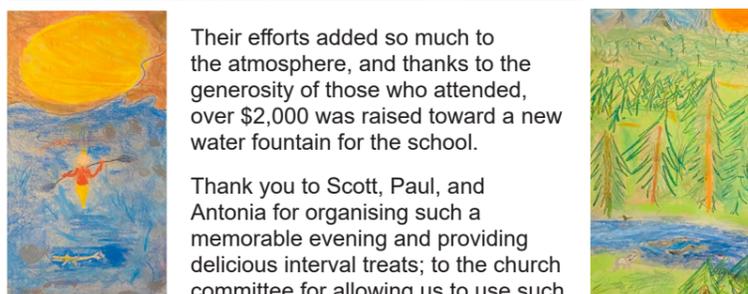
CHASING ADVENTURE

If you weren't at the Tarras Church in February for movie night and the screening of *Chasing Adventure*, created by and starring local adventurer Scott Worthington, you truly missed something extraordinarily special.

The films were filled with spectacular scenery, honest commentary, and good old-fashioned grit. The audience was transported to Greenland, and throughout the evening you could hear voices - young and old - whispering "wow" as image after image revealed breathtaking natural beauty and, at times, very real natural danger.

Scott is a genuinely humble man who shares his adventures not for glory, but to inspire and encourage others to step beyond their comfort zones. It was an evening of awe, perspective, and quiet motivation.

The event also raised funds for Tarras School, with the children contributing wonderful artwork inspired by scenes from the film to help darken the church windows for the screening.



Their efforts added so much to the atmosphere, and thanks to the generosity of those who attended, over \$2,000 was raised toward a new water fountain for the school.

Thank you to Scott, Paul, and Antonia for organising such a memorable evening and providing delicious interval treats; to the church committee for allowing us to use such a beautiful and fitting venue; and to the school children for their creativity and contribution. And a special thank you goes to Sue Worthington, who must spend half her life with her heart in her mouth until her husband returns safely from each adventure.

Watch this space - Scott assures us there are many more adventures, and movies, still to come!

VARIABLE SPEED SIGNS

To help keep our tamariki safe, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) is setting a new variable speed limit that targets the times when our tamariki are most active around our school. These will be installed in March. The variable speed limit will be active when students are travelling to and from school, at the beginning and end of each school day. Between the hours of 8:15am-9:15am and 2:30pm-3:30pm, all traffic must reduce their speed to 30km/h. This map indicates where the Variable Speed Signs will be installed.

The school and NZTA may also turn the signs on for activities such as late starts, or early finish times, or school functions, when there is similar risk to tamariki. When operating, the variable speed limit will appear on a flashing electronic sign. If the sign is not turned on, the normal permanent speed limit applies. Thanks in advance for slowing down and helping to keep our tamariki safe.



THANK YOU

FEBRUARY THANKS GOES TO:

- Stu Perriam and Santana for kindly donating firewood that will keep us toasty in winter!
- Di and Carl at 'The Gumshed' for donating plums for the stall.
- Devon Atfield from Clyde Orchards for kindly donating cherries and apricots for the stall - delicious!
- Time and time again we are blown away by the generosity and support from our community! This time, Scott Worthington kindly premiered his adventure films to a captivated audience

at the Tarras Church. It was incredible to see the places he has visited, the things he saw and the challenges he had to overcome with nothing but resilience and strength!

Thank you. To all those that purchased a ticket - I'm sure you all enjoyed every minute of it. Scott generously donated all the proceeds from the ticket sales to the school as well as his own personal contribution. Because of his incredible kindness, we raised \$2000.90! These funds, plus the School Produce Stall funds from December and January will be used to purchase a much needed drinking fountain for the tamariki!

How good! Thanks Scott for helping us, Paul and Antonia for their organisational skills and the Tarras Church for letting us use the beautiful space.

Christchurch Earthquake – 15 Years On

We acknowledge the 15-year anniversary of the Christchurch earthquakes. Many in our Tarras community were directly affected, and most of us knew someone whose life changed forever. We remember the 185 lives lost and those who still carry the weight of that day. Nature reminds us of its power - hold your loved ones close and live each moment well.

TARRAS CHURCH

11am service on the first Sunday of every month.

All welcome...

SUNDAY 1 MARCH 2026

DUTY: Spin Lucas and Trudi Pryde

After the service, the AGM will be held, with a picnic and farewell to Vicar Damon Plimmer, who is retiring as Vicar of the Upper Clutha Anglican Parish.

Easter SERVICE

11AM, SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2026

DUTY: Billee Marsh and Christina Perriam

The service will be led by Barry Entwistle