

Arthur's Pass Historic Walk

The walk was originally developed to interpret the story of the village using historical photographs. This booklet also notes some obvious natural features you will encounter on the way. As you walk to plaque 1, you are skirting mountain-beech/tawhairauriki forest, which cloaks this entire valley up to the bush line. Refer to page 12 for more on the New Zealand beeches.

1. Glasgow Bridge

The main road once crossed Avalanche Creek here. The old bridge can be seen on the plaque photo. The numerous buildings shown, which were associated with the railway and tunnel construction, have been demolished. The foundations of the original bridge are still in place next to Glasgow Bridge, named after Melville James Pitt Glasgow, a mountaineer who was involved with the building of the Arthur's Pass Chapel of the Snows. Visitors are welcome to enter the interdenominational chapel.

Just after the bridge, a short detour to the left leads to a platform overlooking a waterfall on Avalanche Creek. The waterfall is often floodlit at night. Notice how the gap in the beech-forest canopy and the humidity from the falls and stream allow a variety of streamside shrubs, ferns and mosses to thrive here.

2. Brake's store

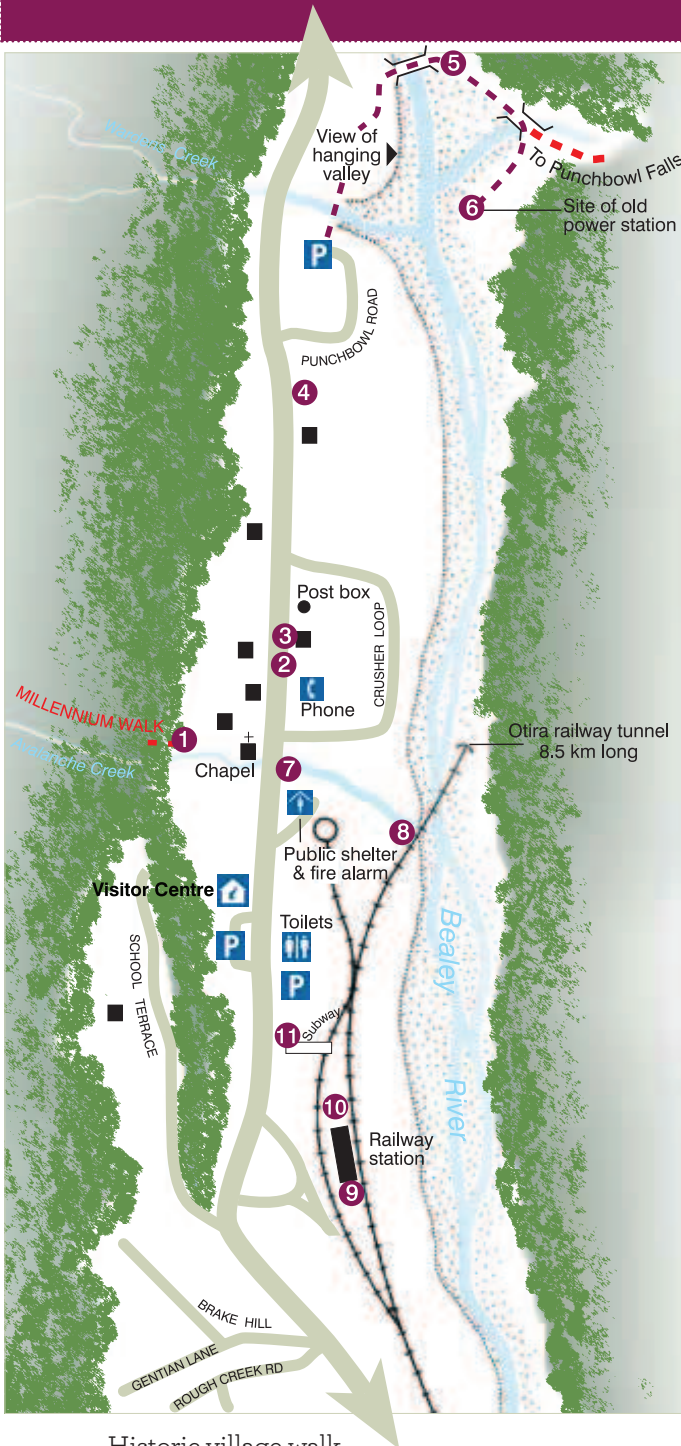
Jack Brake was the first storekeeper in Arthur's Pass during the busy tunnel construction days. The YHA hostel now occupies the original site of Brake's store.

The store catered for most of the day-to-day needs of the tunnellers, their families and the travelling public. Meat, groceries, hardware, medicines, coal, firearms, clothing and postage stamps were among the goods sold.

In 1942 Brake moved across to the site of the present-day store and tearooms, originally a five-roomed railway engineer's house. Jack Brake's son Brian achieved international fame as a photographer.

3. Coberger's shop

Oscar A Coberger came to Arthur's Pass in 1928 as an alpine guide. He established an alpine sports depot in this building and provided equipment and service to



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trampers, climbers and skiers for about 50 years. This building is now home to the Wobbly Kea café.

Oscar brought with him from Germany an enthusiasm for skiing, at a time when many visitors to Arthur's Pass were taking up the sport.

In 1929 the Christchurch Ski Club (now Temple Basin Ski Club) was formed. Development of Temple Basin commenced in 1933 with the building of a hut. A ski tow, one of the first in New Zealand, was installed in 1948.

4. Tunnellers' cottages main street Bealey Flat 1910

Tunnellers' huts dating from 1908 still remain on both sides of the main road. These originally unlined dwellings were sold at the completion of the tunnel in 1923 and are now privately owned as holiday cottages.

The large building on the left-hand side of the plaque photo is the old schoolhouse, used during the tunnelling days.

It is interesting to note the different names the village has been called over the years—Camping Flat, McLean's Town, Bealey Flat, as well as Arthur's Pass.

The walk to plaque 5 takes you through the car park for the Devils Punchbowl Falls. Before you enter the beech forest 100 m further on, look around you for clues to the valley's glacial past. Notice how the falls plunge out of a hanging valley, and how the forested fronts of the ridges are truncated and smoothed out.

5. Bealey Swingbridge

The Arthur's Pass area has been popular with sightseers and visitors for a long time. The most popular walk is to the Devils Punchbowl Falls (131 m). The present bridge is the most recent of several used to take visitors to the falls. Floods in the Bealey River have carried earlier bridges away. In 1962 the floodwaters washed away a cottage at the back of the Chalet Restaurant.

The increasing use of Arthur's Pass, especially at the time of the first train excursions around 1924, coincided with damage to the native vegetation by enthusiastic plant gatherers. Botanist Leonard Cockayne led a campaign to set aside land around Arthur's Pass for National Park purposes in 1901. Concerned people pressured the government to further protect and reserve the land. In

1929, 48,600 hectares (120,000 acres) were gazetted as national park. Progressive additions have been made and the park now covers 114,839 hectares (283,652 acres).

6. Punchbowl power-station site

This is the site of the power house which was built in 1909 to generate electricity for the construction of the rail tunnel. Power was needed for lighting, ventilation, air compressors, and for pumping water out of the tunnel.

The concrete foundations were for generators driven by Pelton wheels. The water to drive the wheels was piped from the top of Devils Punchbowl Falls through tunnels and penstocks down the steep hill next to the falls. Part of the pipe line and tunnel can still be seen 20 minutes up Mt Aicken Track. The power house was removed in 1929.

7. Avalanche Creek and main road Arthur's Pass 1917

An interesting comparison can be made between the main road in 1917 and today. The road level has been raised and most of the tunnel workers' huts removed, but some, on the right-hand side, remain.

Part of the large building on the left-hand side was originally a dining hall for unmarried tunnel and railway workers. Guy Butler bought it and enlarged it by adding part of the old Otira Schoolhouse before opening it as a guest house in 1923. In 1969 the building was developed as an Outdoor Education centre for use by school groups.

8. Arthur's Pass to Otira rail tunnel

The tunnel is 8.5 km long and is on a gradient down to Otira of 1 in 33, a fall of 278 m. It was drilled from both sides, the first shot being fired from the Otira end in 1908. When the two headings met in 1918, the alignment and levels were accurate to within 3 cm. World War I, contract problems, high labour turnover and harsh weather conditions meant that the tunnel did not open for rail traffic until 1923.

The turntable nearby was built to replace the original one near the engine shed. It had to be long enough to take the large Kb-class steam locomotives. These

were, in their day, the most powerful locomotives in New Zealand.

9. Arthur Pass Railway Station

The first railway station complete with refreshments and dining rooms was constructed in Arthur's Pass when the line reached here from Springfield in 1915. The present station was built in 1966 to replace the previous one which burnt down. Steam trains were replaced by diesel locomotives in the late 1960s.

Two brass plaques at the station were among those placed by the Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand to mark 150 years of New Zealand engineering. They commemorate the construction of the Midland Line and the drilling of the Otira Tunnel. An historical mural inside the waiting room, depicting attractions along the highway, should not be missed.

The railway yards were built up with spoil excavated from the tunnel. The subway floor is on the original level of the yards.

10. Arthur's Pass to Otira coaching link

Before the advent of the railway, the 274 km horse-drawn coach journey from Christchurch to Hokitika took 36 hours, including an overnight stop at Bealey. As the railway advanced eastward and westward, coaches transported passengers between the rail-heads, over Arthur's Pass, until the tunnel was opened in 1923. This trip was exhilarating, sometimes dangerous, and the weather was often miserable.

The Cobb and Co-type mail coaches were licensed to carry up to 17 passengers. On steep sections of the road, passengers were asked to assist the horses by getting out of the coach and walking. The average working life of a horse on this section of road was 18 months. Accounts of accidents are common but there were remarkably few fatal incidents during the 57 years that the coaches linked Canterbury and Westland. You can see one of the original coaches at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.

On the knob just to the south of this plaque are the remains of one of the concrete 'monuments' from which surveying for the tunnel was done.



Coaches at Glacier Hotel, Bealey c. 1900 Photo: National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa

11. Warden of the Snows

Appointed to Arthur's Pass in 1950 as one of the first full-time professional rangers in the country, Ray Cleland set new standards in conservation and recreation.

Ray made the park more accessible and enjoyable for visitors, creating the Bridal Veil Track, and building six back-country huts. He was instrumental in the development of the 48-bunk youth hostel and the Chapel of the Snows.

He shared his passion for nature with the park visitors, creating an alpine garden and giving evening talks.

In 1958 he became supervisor of all national parks—a leader whose influence is still felt today.

Ray's rock has been resurrected in Arthur's Pass to acknowledge his contribution to the management of our national parks.

