



Polson Twin's grave near Polson's Hut on Morven Hills Station

On Sunday 1st Nov 2009 nearly 30 people gathered together on the finest day for months at Polson's Hut, Morven Hills, Lindis Pass. Why? To dedicate a new plaque over the graves of George and William Polson, twins, who were born and then died at Polson's Hut, during the winter of 1869.

Their father John Polson was a Sutherlandshire shepherd on Morven Hills at the time and Christina his wife had given birth to the twins at Polson's hut, a small stone dwelling up on Morven Hills Station. It had been built about 1865 when big Jock McLean owned Morven Hills, then a Station of almost 400,000 acres.

The nearest doctor was 30 miles away in Cromwell. Fifteen months previously at Polson's Hut Roderick Polson had been born, probably without medical help, like the twins. In 1869 one baby was expected but two arrived, and much earlier than anticipated. It was so cold, first one baby boy died and then the other. Deep snow covered the ground. It was frozen solid for days and John couldn't dig their graves. By this time the babies were also frozen. No one was able to get in or out of the long three-mile valley, the police weren't able to visit the site, and although there was an itinerant registrar from Waikouaiti who visited Central Otago gold fields on horseback during parts of the year, the twins were never registered. At this time Morven Hills was part of St Paul's Church, Oamaru. The only other possible place to search for a registration was in the Presbyterian records for Otepopo, the parish that took in Morven Hills after St Pauls, but unfortunately these records are lost.

So there was never a funeral service for the twins but they were eventually buried when the ground thawed. The site was marked with a slab of Central Otago schist with the date, 1869, but no names. It is in the valley, over the hillside, in front of Polson's Hut. It looks west and is a quiet and peaceful site. A willow was planted to mark the spot.

It was time to put this to rights. The old gravestone was threatened by the now dead willow tree planted 140 years ago, and Polson family members gathered together to complete a little grave-site maintenance and to place a new plaque for the twins memorial.

The new plaque reads: 'In loving memory of George and William Polson, twins, born and died in the winter of 1869 Polson's Hut.'

Getting the new stone to the gravesite meant physically manhandling it on a sack barrow, towed with ropes, up over the hill from the Hut and down into the next valley. It's a long way, maybe about 500-600 metres, and it was a very heavy stone.

It took relays of four people to move the plaque slowly over the hill to next valley and to position it above the graves, placing the old original schist behind the new replacement.

The descendants of John and Christina and their families had travelled from Rotorua, Christchurch, Ashburton, Dunedin, Timaru and Invercargill for the twin's dedication and

blessing. Also present were interested families from local Shirlmar and Forest Range Stations and representatives from the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand.

The original stones that covered the burial site were found and reset to take the weight of the new foundation stone. Interestingly, many of the original stones were buried vertically in a circle. This apparently is a Scottish tradition for burial.

After the heavy work, lunch was enjoyed together under the willows at Polson's hut. Then it was back over the hill to the graves. Great, great grandson Rhys, who had helped saw down the old tree, relocated a few logs for seats, moving them around as if they were matchsticks.

The Rev Neil Cowie from Wanaka gave the dedication and blessing for the twins, his words very appropriate for the occasion, and he brought water from the River Jordon which he mixed with a little Wanaka tap water which was then sprinkled about the two little graves, and eventually the new stone was unveiled. Allan Polson from Timaru, Adair Polson-Genge from Invercargill and Jean Allpress from Christchurch spoke on behalf of the family.