

“never anybody has been in that part of the country”: Contextualising Haast’s Journey over Tioripātea

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Julius Haast has been widely credited with ‘discovering’ Haast Pass and his words, quoted in the title, are an example of Pākehā blindness to indigenous knowledge and occupation. The pass, previously known as Tioripātea¹, was well known by Māori and its existence was noted on maps published in 1851 and 1858. After Haast’s journey in early 1863 it became known as Haast Pass. Since 1998 it has been officially known as Haast Pass/Tioripātea. The author prefers its original name and has used that throughout this article.

After the discovery of gold in Otago in 1861 there was great interest in finding a route to the West Coast. Symms and Sutcliffe, Patrick Caples, Captain Alabaster, James Hector, Charles Cameron and others spent time searching for a route to the West Coast. In relation to Tioripātea, the most significant man is Charles Cameron who sent details of his explorations to both the Otago and Canterbury Provincial Governments, hoping for a financial incentive to continue his exploring.

Although no support was forthcoming Cameron started out again in early January 1863, in advance of Haast. Both men had information from Māori about a pass at the head of Lake Wānaka but the journeys they made were very different affairs. Cameron travelled fast, alone and with few provisions whereas Haast had four companions, a lot of equipment and, at least initially, ate very well.

From his own description, Cameron travelled over what is now known as Māori Saddle at the head of Blue River and into the Okuru River, a route that Māori preferred to the long trek down the Awarua (now Haast) River.

Cameron claimed to have reached the West Coast about 24 January by which time Haast had only just crossed Tioripātea. It is likely that Cameron saw Tioripātea but it is doubtful that he actually crossed it. Cameron returned to Makarora on 29 January 1863 after a journey of 3 weeks while Haast and party took 6 weeks and did not return to Makarora until 2 March 1863.

Though neither man ‘discovered’ the pass they were both keen to receive credit for doing so and there has been significant debate over who was first. This paper examines the journeys made by both men and discusses their respective contributions.

Keywords: Awarua, exploration, Haast, Māori knowledge, place names, Tioripātea

Introduction

One of the many lasting legacies of geologist Sir Julius von Haast is the pass and river in southern New Zealand which were named by him. Haast Pass/Tioripātea (Fig. 1) is the lowest pass in the Southern Alps and the 100-kilometre long Haast River (or Awarua) drains westwards from the pass to the Tasman Ocean. Nowadays the pass is straddled by a road which travels from Lake Wānaka through the village of Makarora over the pass and down the Haast River to the sea, where there is a small township known as Haast.



Figure 1. Tioripātea, the remarkably low pass through the Southern Alps. The pass is in the middle of the photograph with Makarora Valley flats visible in the distance. Photograph by Geoff Spearpoint

The discovery of the pass now known as Haast Pass was claimed by Charles Cameron as well as Julius Haast and these competing claims have been discussed by writers such as Heinrich von Haast (1948: 302–313), W G McClymont (1959: 83–85) and Phil Ross May (1962: 519–525). In recent years many early New Zealand newspapers have become available online and further accounts from Charles Cameron have been discovered.

In 1863, when Haast ‘discovered’ the pass, he was typical of his time and saw the South Island back country as an empty wilderness, without history or people. When writing of his proposed journey he stated that “never anybody has been in that part of the country from Lake Wanaka to the mouth of the Awarua” (Haast to Hooker, 13 September 1862 in Nolden et al. 2013: 27). His words are an example of Pākehā blindness to indigenous knowledge and occupation.

While the country that Haast was travelling through was lightly populated, it had a long history of human occupation and was a landscape filled with names and stories. Atholl Anderson noted four Māori settlements in the vicinity of Lake Wānaka in the early nineteenth century (1986: 18–21). Māori living in the district moved away after Te Puoho’s war party travelled down the Makarora Valley in 1836 to get to Southland from the West Coast but seasonal visits still occurred (Anderson 1986: 19). George Hassing recorded finding the charred remains of “Kaika Paekae (the place of abundant food)” after burning forest in the Makarora Valley during the early 1860s (Hassing 1996: 49) and Vincent Pyke wrote about finding Māori huts, gardens and carvings when he travelled through the area in 1865 (*Otago Witness*, 17 July 1890: 31).

Haast was also understating Pākehā knowledge. That there was a track from North Otago to the west coast was not unknown. In 1844 a resident of the Lower Waitaki River valley, Te Huruhuru, who had lived near Lake Wānaka, drew a map of the lakes in the interior of the South Island for



Figure 3. Detail from 1856 map of the Province of Canterbury that shows the largely unmapped area of inland South Canterbury. Archives New Zealand R22420403

as a guide. Young knew some te reo and Kawana gave him a detailed description of a pass at the head of Lake Wānaka. Jollie and Young searched country on the western side of the lake for a pass in 1859 but did not find one (Young 1976: 135).

The Māori route was also known about in a general way by some Pākehā. For example, farmer William Gilbert Rees knew that Māori would come down the Makarora in mōkihi (rafts made from



Figure 4. Detail from an 1858 map of North Otago that shows the Makarora River flowing into the west side of Lake Wānaka and a route going from the middle branch of it to the Awarua. Archives New Zealand R698480

bundles of dried vegetation) (*Otago Witness*, 31 March 1860: 5) and the District Surveyor for Otago, James McKerrow, knew there was a Māori track up the Makarora River (*Otago Daily Times*, 28 June 1862: 5).

Survey cadet and part-time explorer John Holland Baker (later Surveyor General of New Zealand) had heard about the pass too and decided to have a look. He had 'discovered' what became known as Whitcombe Pass with runholder Samuel Butler in early 1861 and a couple of months later was in the Wānaka district with E Owen looking for sheep country. Although his journey was not mentioned until after his death, it is apparent from his journal that Baker and Owen stood on Tioripātea on 25 April 1861 (W G McClymont, *Press*, 17 August 1940: 5).

Not finding any sheep country, Baker and Owen returned the way they had come and did not think to mention their journey to any reporters or government officials, leaving Cameron and Haast to argue over who was first 2 years later.

Mapping of the interior did not proceed with any great urgency until the discovery of gold at Gabriels Gully in Otago in 1861. This momentous discovery was followed by more finds of gold further inland. Naturally there was interest in exploring further west in the hope of finding even more.

From mid-1862 adventurous men began looking for passes to the West Coast including Scottish-born Charles Cameron (Fig. 5) who had arrived in New Zealand in 1840 as a 20-year-old. Cameron became an experienced back country traveller and in 1847 was the first person to take a large mob of sheep and cattle from Wellington to Whanganui for the supply of troops during the siege of Whanganui (*Wairarapa Daily Times*, 18 Feb 1909: 5). During the late 1850s Cameron was exploring in Western Australia (*Hobart Town Daily Mercury*, 18 May 1860: 3) but came back to New Zealand when gold was discovered in Otago. He was a tall, lean man whom George Hassing, ferryman at Clutha River, described as an "impetuous explorer" (*Southland Times*, 16 May 1914: 9). In 1862 Cameron was 42 years old and recently married.

In September 1862 Cameron, his 19-year-old nephew John McGregor and 17-year-old Francis Foote, perhaps following Reid's 1858 map, travelled around the southern side of Lake Wānaka then up the Matukituki River valley and around the southern base of Mount Aspiring (*Otago Daily Times*, 26 February 1910: 3). Cameron recorded that on 14 October after a "hard struggle" he was successful in reaching a pass on the Main Divide, probably Matukituki Saddle (*Colonist*, 18 November 1862: 3).

After his return to Dunedin on 31 October, Cameron offered to disclose the route to Otago's Superintendent for £1,000 (about \$130,000 today) but was turned down as the Provincial Council was about to despatch their own expedition led by Dr James Hector (*Colonist*, 18 November 1862: 3).

While in Dunedin Cameron visited Māori who gave him details of a route at the head of Lake Wānaka (*Otago Daily Times*, 26 February 1910: 3). Cameron wrote to the Superintendent of Canterbury to tell him that he knew of a route to the West Coast near the southern border of Canterbury and was starting for it soon. Perhaps, he asked, Canterbury would consider offering him some financial assistance?³

Cameron's letter was received on 20 November 1862. Rather than giving any assistance, the Superintendent responded by saying that their geologist (Julius Haast) was about to start on an



Figure 5. Charles Cameron (1820–1909). Sourced from blenheim175.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/charles-cameron.jpg [accessed 9 November 2021]. Published online with a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International Licence

expedition to explore the area.⁴ Haast had already been planning to ‘find’ the pass from Makarora to the West Coast. Two months earlier he had written, “This year I shall be in time in the very

heart of the Alps [travelling] from Lake Wanaka to the mouth of the Awarua” (Haast to Hooker, 13 September 1862 in Nolden et al. 2013: 27).

Haast's specific information about the pass almost certainly came from William Young who had tried to find the pass in 1859 with Jollie and who was subsequently a member of Haast's Mt Cook party in early 1862 (Burrows 2005: 51). It is very likely that Young shared Kawana's information about a pass to the West Coast and his own experiences trying to find it. Haast's plans may have received added urgency after Canterbury's Superintendent received Cameron's letter on 20 November and Haast left Christchurch for the south shortly afterwards⁵, stopping en route to get additional information from Māori at Waimate (*Lyttelton Times*, 1 April 1863: 3).

Cameron reached Makarora first, having travelled with his horse and dog, and minimal equipment from the outlet of Lake Wānaka around the western side of Lake Hāwea, along the eastern side of Lake Wānaka and then upriver to Makarora village (*New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6). Cameron left Makarora on 8 January (*Lyttelton Times*, 19 December 1863: 4), well in advance of Haast's party who did not reach the village until 20 January 1863.⁶

The journeys made by Cameron and Haast and party were very different affairs. Cameron travelled fast, alone and with few provisions whereas Haast had four companions, a lot of equipment and, at least initially, ate very well. Cameron was carrying perhaps 10 kg of food and gear whereas Haast and party might have had as much as 300 kg, 60 kg per man.

“Travelling both dangerous and difficult”: Cameron's Journey

Cameron's account of his journey, written at Upper Clutha on 11 February (when Haast and party were still battling down the Haast River) has recently been located on the National Library of New



Figure 6. A view towards Tioripātea from Cameron's Flat. Mt Brewster is the snow-covered mountain in the background. Photograph by Julia Bradshaw



Figure 7. Looking down the Blue Valley from Haunted Spur, west of Māori Saddle. Cloud is gathering over the Main Divide on the left. Photograph by Geoff Spearpoint

Zealand's website Papers Past in a collection of his letters published in the *New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6. This provides some details of where he went but is lacking in specifics partly due to the difficulty of describing locations in unmapped territory.

After travelling with his nephew to the junction of the Hāwea and Clutha Rivers in early January 1863, Cameron struck out alone with minimal equipment, a horse, a dog called Lassie and a gun (*Otago Daily Times*, 26 February 1910: 3).

Cameron reported that he travelled about 40 kilometres up the valley from the head of Lake Wānaka (which would have taken him close to the pass) and then returned and left his horse and gun at what is now known as Cameron's Flat (Fig. 6). While Cameron may have reached Tioripātea it is odd that he does not mention it. It seems that Cameron was following information provided to him by Māori who often used a route up the Blue River in preference to the long difficult trip down the Awarua River (Roxburgh 1976: 11).

Leaving the flat, Cameron took with him 2 week's supplies and followed the Māori trail up the Blue River (Fig. 7), clearing the forest in about 5 hours and then crossing Māori Saddle. Cameron recalled:

The mountains here are high and steep, and partly covered to a great depth with snow. Travelling both dangerous and difficult. On the western side, the glens are covered with heavy timber and scrub, and the mountains are very steep, with perpendicular cliffs and chasms. (New Zealander, 19 March 1864: 6).

After a few days of difficult travel Cameron first caught sight of the sea on 21 January 1863, possibly from Mt Nerger. It appears that rather than going down the Okuru River to the sea,

Cameron followed the Highlander's custom of travelling along the mountain tops where he could, commenting that the summits were bare and steep and that at times he found it "impracticable to follow the zigzag ranges" (*New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6).

Continuing westwards, Cameron says that he reached the coastline between the Awarua and Okuru rivers, however his description does not bear this out. He said that the mountains ended directly into the sea and that it was impossible to get along the coastline. Both of these statements are untrue, but it might look that way if viewing the coastline from the mountain tops further back.

Cameron gives little information about how he returned to the Makarora Valley. Cameron may have travelled along some of the mountain tops directly south of the Awarua River as he gives a reasonable description of the direction of the river but commented that "I think the river is subject to heavy floods" (*New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6). No-one who has travelled down the Awarua River could fail to miss evidence of frequent heavy floods.

This alternative mountain-top route back to the Makarora Valley is supported by surveyor Noel Brodrick's 1881 discovery of a powder flask with the words "Charles Cameron, January 1863" scratched on it. He found this in a cairn on the top of a snow-covered peak to the west of Tioripātea from which, as Brodrick noted, Cameron "could not have failed to see the pass..." (*Southland Times*, 16 May 1914: 9). Brodrick named Mt Cameron and Powder Flask Peak in Cameron's honour but these mountains are now known as Lindsay Peak and Mount Cross with the names Mt Cameron and Powder Flask Peak now appearing on the west side of Fish River.⁷

On 29 January 1863 Cameron returned to the flat now named after him and surprised three of Haast's men who had returned to collect a tent. According to one of the men, Cameron "stated with the greatest coolness that he had just returned from the West Coast, describing his route as lying along the tops of the mountains, rough and perilous in the extreme, and to follow which again he would not take £1,000" (*Lyttelton Times*, 17 November 1863: 5).

Another of Haast's men later described Cameron as "pumping" them for information (*Lyttelton Times*, 31 December 1863: 5) about the pass which supports the idea that Cameron had not actually reached or crossed it, despite seeing it from above. Cameron's journey had taken him 3 weeks and if he had travelled for this entire time, and there is no reason to doubt this, then his trip was a remarkable alpine journey.

Cameron's friend, Warden Lowther Broad, shared with newspaper readers Cameron's letter to him about the journey in which Cameron stated:

My life has been in peril during this journey very frequently. On one occasion I gave up all for lost, and was on my knees praying for four hours, and my great entreaty was to be spared to accomplish the object of my journey. I have done this with God's help alive, and am now utterly callous as to the opinions of men.

(Cameron quoted by Lowther Broad, *Otago Daily Times*, 26 February 1863: 5).

Cameron's lack of interest in the opinions of others would turn out to be just as well.

"We were separated from the whole world": Haast's Journey

When Haast started his journey 2 weeks after Cameron, he was 41 years old, just 2 years younger than Cameron but much less experienced in back-country travel. His companions (Fig. 8) were the previously

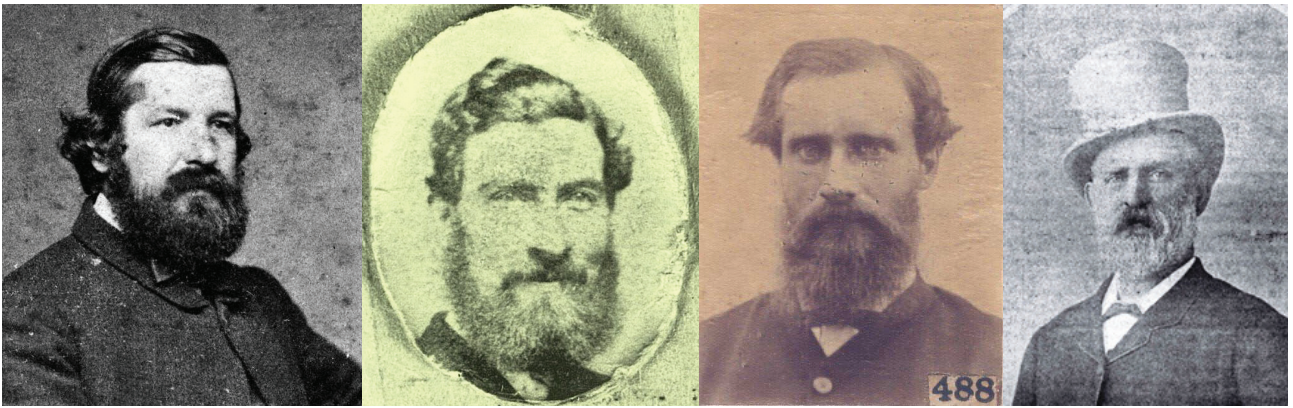


Figure 8. Members of Julius Haast’s party from left: Julius Haast (1822–1887), William Spearman Young (1842–1913), Robert Langley Holmes (1833–1915) and William Francis Warner (1836–1896). No photograph of the fifth member, Charles Häring, has been found. Photograph of Haast: 1/4-002124-G. Alexander Turnbull Library. Photograph of Young reproduced from Young (1976). Photographs of Holmes and Warner from ancestry.com.au

mentioned surveyor 21-year-old William Spearman Young as topographer, Haast’s good friend 30-year-old Robert Langley Holmes, 28-year-old mariner William Francis Warner as survey assistant and Charles Häring, another mariner also known as Charlie Williams, about whom no further details are known.

We are fortunate with accounts of Haast and party’s journey. Haast wrote a report for the Superintendent of Canterbury (*Lyttelton Times*, 1 April 1863: 3) and compiled a more personal account for a paper which he never gave (Haast 1863), and on which his son Heinrich von Haast based his account of the journey (Haast 1948: 273–301). Robert Holmes wrote to his sister in Ballarat, Australia, (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8), William Warner kept a laconic journal, mostly commenting on the weather and campsites



Figure 9. Gorge in the Upper Makarora River on the way to Tioripātea. Photograph by Julia Bradshaw



Figure 10. Haast's painting of the view from Fish River. Alexander Turnbull Library A-149-011



Figure 11. A sketch by William Young of Haast and party's first view of Tioripātea. Canterbury Museum 1984.224.1

which is held by Canterbury Museum (ARC1988.27), while William Young made a series of sketches which are also in the Museum's collection (1984.224.1–.6).

Haast's party had a very different style of travelling to Cameron's. While they too had a dog, they also had tents, blankets, clothes, cooking utensils, survey equipment, mining implements and a month's provisions (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8). These provisions included 90 kg of flour (Haast 1948: 276) as well as bacon, sugar, coffee, salt and brandy.

This was a lot to transport, and each man carried from 27 to 32 kg on their backs, constantly returning for a second load of the same weight (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8). Caches of food were left along the route. For example, at the head of the Makarora River they left 13 kg of flour, 2.2 kg of bacon and 2.2 kg of sugar.⁸

After travelling by boat to the head of Lake Wānaka, Haast's party, like Cameron, camped at the small sawmilling settlement which is now the village of Makarora. They started on their expedition on 22 January 1863 and reached the gorges of the upper Makarora River (Fig. 9) and Fish River that night. Here Haast found time to make a sketch of the pass that Figure 10 is based on.

These gorges present significant obstacles which are not apparent when you glide past on today's modern highway. After some difficulty negotiating them and with several men returning to bring more supplies, the group reached Tioripātea on 24 January where they halted, gave three cheers and had a drink of brandy.

William Young sketched the scene of the party's first sight of the pass (Fig. 11). Writing to William Warner in 1890 he said "[this] will remind you of the first discovery of the Haast Pass ... you see the drs excitement when I made a sketch from the tree top as he exclaimed 'Well that must be one of ze most remarkable passes in ze world!'" (Canterbury Museum 1984.224.1).

Haast described finding such a low pass (562 m) in "a chain of such magnitude as the Southern Alps" as remarkable and "probably without parallel in the known world" (*Lyttelton Times*, 1 April 1863: 3). Later Haast would describe how he forged ahead while his men returned for more provisions and commented that, "Only those who have been on similar exploring expeditions can understand what delight it is to go on by yourself in a country, when perhaps never before the foot of men has trodden" (Haast 1863: 7), ignoring the fact that as Māori had given him directions to the pass they had obviously been there.

The next day Haast and Young climbed Mt Brewster, collecting plant specimens as they went. They obtained a good view and could see that the route down the Awarua river was not going to be easy. This was probably the most enjoyable part of the trip. In just 3 days since leaving Makarora they had found the pass and had views towards the West Coast. But the good times didn't last. On 26 January it began to rain and it would continue doing this for the next 2 weeks.

During this rainy fortnight the party was only able to travel 7 km to the junction of the Burke and Haast Rivers which they reached on 12 February (by which time Cameron had written his report). Getting past the rough country around what are now known as The Gates of Haast (Fig. 12) was described by Holmes as "some of the roughest work I ever experienced, carrying our heavy loads up and down mountains and precipices" (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8). During 3 days of heavy rain the men were forced to camp on a steep slope and Haast would later recall, "We were separated from the whole world, our only neighbour the abnormal night parrot, whose shrill call enlivened the dismal nights" (Haast 1948: 282).



Figure 12. The rugged country near the Gates of Haast in good weather. Haast's party travelled down the left side of the river. Photograph by Julia Bradshaw

By now Haast's party were running short of provisions and flour was rationed to 2.7 kg per day for the whole party, supplemented by whatever birds or eels they could get (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8).

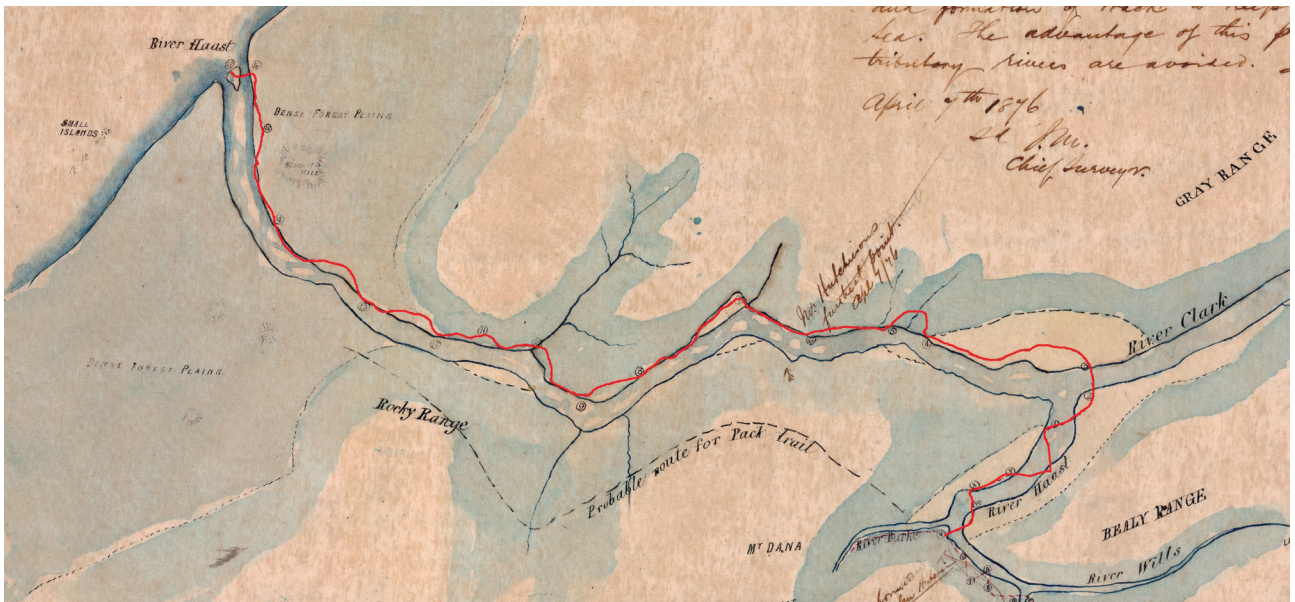


Figure 13. The route taken down the Awarua River by Haast and party (in bright red) from Burke River to the sea. Detail from a map annotated by Holmes for Dr James Hector in June 1865 with additional information added by subsequent users. Archives New Zealand R698485



Figure 14. William Young's sketch of the party on the lower Awarua River flats. Canterbury Museum 1984.224.3

After crossing the River Clarke (now Landsborough River) the party was committed to staying on the north side of the Awarua as the main river was now too large to cross again. The route Haast's party took can be seen in Figure 13.

Fortunately, the weather improved and the men had high hopes of reaching the sea soon.⁹ But the Awarua is a long valley and after 5 more days and 45 km the men were still 5 kilometres from the sea. But at least they were now in flat country. Young would later comment that his sketch at this point (Fig. 14) shows "... the doctor geologising, me taking a sketch and yourself, Holmes and Charlie congratulating yourselves that we were getting out of the everlasting mountains ...". (Canterbury Museum 1984.224.3).

Starting early on 20 February the men left their camp, taking just blankets and provisions with them. Before leaving Warner wrote in his journal "... beautiful weather. Pray to God it may remain so until we come back or we shall all be starved".¹⁰

The party reached the coastline at 2 pm on 20 February, 30 days after leaving Makarora. None of the surviving accounts say much about this significant milestone so perhaps it was a bit of an anti-climax. Holmes recorded that they had hoped to find a Māori village from which to get food but were disappointed (*Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8), the coastal village of Okahu being 40 km further south. Haast sketched a panorama (part of which is shown in Figure 15) showing the landscape north and south.

The journey back up the Awarua River was a much faster affair. Haast and party were able to follow the tracks they had already made and had mostly good weather and they got back to Makarora in just 10 days. Altogether they had been travelling for 6 weeks.

A final comparison of the two journeys concerns the birds that the men ate, which, because of the scarcity of food, both Cameron and Haast's men noted. In 3 weeks Cameron ate just one kiwi and two kakapo (*New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6). Haast's party ate about 80 birds including kakapo, whio, weka, kea, kaka, putangitangi, plovers and a single kiwi, along with 10 eels.¹¹ If you do the calculations, Cameron ate one bird per week while each man in Haast's party ate five birds per week.

Competing 'Discoveries'

While Cameron and Haast had been travelling beyond the head of Lake Wānaka, others had also been searching for a pass to the West Coast. On 16 February 1863, Samuel Symms and William Sutcliffe



Figure 15. Section of a panorama by Haast showing details of the Awarua or Haast River mouth, looking south. Alexander Turnbull Library C-097-085

reported that they had found a pass west of the Shotover River (*Otago Daily Times*, 16 February 1863: 5). Cameron's journey was reported shortly afterwards prompting Symms to write a letter saying that their pass was in Otago and much more useful than Cameron's Canterbury pass (*Otago Daily Times*, 18 February 1863: 5).

Also in February, there was news of another expedition to the west. Newly appointed Otago Provincial Geologist, 27-year-old James Hector, following in Cameron's footsteps (and possibly using information Cameron had supplied to the Otago Provincial Government), set out leading a party which included an embedded *Otago Daily Times* reporter, J W Hamilton (*Otago Daily Times*, 18 February 1863: 4, 5). Hector, Hamilton and a man named Rayer reached what is now known as Hector Col on 17 February 1863. Hector named the glacier below the pass, Haast Glacier (now Bonar Glacier), the river flowing from it Haast River (now Waipara River) and presumably also the Haast Range which still has that name. The group had difficulty crossing the glacier but after another 7 days reached the junction of the Arawhata and Waipara rivers. Soon afterwards, due to lack of provisions, the three men had to turn back only about 20 km from the coast (Pascoe 1976: 93–102).

Unaware of all this activity, Haast and Young continued surveying and exploring. Finally on 3 March at Makarora, Haast sat down and wrote his report to Canterbury's Superintendent and this was published by the *Lyttelton Times* on 1 April 1863. Haast reported that he had given his name to the river as directed by Superintendent William Sefton Moorhouse. The name Haast Pass was first used by Haast himself on a map he sent to Joseph Hooker, Director of Kew Gardens in London, England, dated 12 June 1863.¹²

Other examples of Haast's geographical names are Mt Hooker (Fig. 16) which was previously Rakai (standing up threateningly), Mt Brewster (named after Scotsman Sir David Brewster) which was Hau-mai-tiketike (the wind blowing from the heights), and the Young Range which had been known as Te Whare-manu (the house of birds). Thankfully the Grey Range which Haast had named for New Zealand's Governor-General Sir George Grey did not stick and a version of its earlier name has survived as the Matukituki Range (Beattie 1945: 70–71).



Figure 16. The mountain previously known as Rakai (which means to stand up threateningly) but now known as Mt Hooker, from the junction of the Burke and Awarua or Haast Rivers. Photograph by Julia Bradshaw

Haast's news coincided with the return to Christchurch of James Drake who had been surveying northern routes to the West Coast and with Hector's return to Dunedin from the Matukituki. Rather unkindly, Otago newspapers described Hector's journey as more thrilling than Haast's (*Otago Daily Times*, 6 April 1863: 4).

Cameron and Haast's competing claims to have 'discovered' a pass at the head of the Makarora were aired in letters to newspapers. In October 1863 Cameron stated that he had "discovered the northern route through Canterbury, being in advance of Dr Haast" (*Lyttelton Times*, 10 November 1863: 5). Alluding also to Hector's journey, Cameron complained that no credit was "conceded to private explorers in connection with the discovery of these routes ...". (*New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6). Those employed by provincial governments to fill in blank spaces on maps needed to secure their careers and they were not generous in recognising competitors.

Robert Holmes fiercely defended Haast's right to be acknowledged as the "first discoverer of the pass to the West Coast" (*Lyttelton Times*, 17 November 1863: 5). Holmes asked, how could Cameron have possibly done the trip in 10 days while they took 6 weeks? Could anyone believe, he asked, that Cameron had "performed the Herculean task of crossing to the coast along the tops of the mountains, a feat that might be performed by a chamois, but certainly not by a human being". He added that Cameron's sole claim to discovery was a bird's eye view of it from the flanks of Mt Stuart (now Lindsay Peak) (*Lyttelton Times*, 17 November 1863: 5).

Holmes had been misinformed. Rather than leaving 2 days before Haast, Cameron had actually left on 8 January and was away for 21 days rather than 10 days. Cameron attempted to correct this error in a restrained response and pointed out that his sketch of the route which had been forwarded to the Superintendent of Canterbury would show clearly that he was the discoverer (*Lyttelton Times*, 19 December 1863: 4). Unfortunately this map, which might provide some clarity, has not been located in the surviving Canterbury Provincial Government records held by Archives New Zealand.

Charles Häring responded to Cameron's letter by calling him a "Blowhard" and saying that all Cameron had done was "crawl about the ranges" between Lakes Wānaka and Hāwea (*Lyttelton Times*, 31 December 1863: 5).

In July 1863 John Browning published the latest map of Canterbury and this included information provided by Haast and Young along with work done by other surveyors. Not only did the map include Haast River, it also showed the Haast Range named by Hector, but did not show Hector Col. Figure 17 shows details of inland South Canterbury from Browning's map, and the amount of information added by Haast can be clearly seen when compared to the 1856 map (Fig. 3).

Haast was very fortunate with the timing of his expedition. If he hadn't located the pass in early 1863 then others would have. Cameron, who had at least seen it from above, would have further publicised it and gold miners trying to get to the new rushes on the West Coast would have found it, as would other surveyors. Not only was Haast's timing fortunate, he also worked quickly to get his new geographical names and information officially recognised.

The discovery of a payable goldfield on the West Coast a year later meant that rather than falling into obscurity, Haast's pass, which was fortunately of very low altitude, provided a cheaper, though potentially a much more dangerous and uncomfortable, way for Otago diggers to get to the new goldfields on the West Coast. Their only other option being to go by sea from Dunedin or Invercargill (*New Zealander*, 7 September 1865: 30).



Figure 17. Detail from Browning's 1863 map of the Province of Canterbury. Sourced from gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b530252869 [accessed 29 March 2022]

In April 1865 District Engineer Charles O'Neill was sent to explore the route from Wānaka to the West Coast. Following a tracing that he was given, O'Neill tried to find a pass at the head of the Young River but without success. From a summit he saw Māori Pass and he also referred to a "Maori Track" which he thought could be made into a "practical track" to the West Coast, though unfortunately O'Neill did not record its location (*Otago Daily Times*, 5 June 1865: 5).

Holmes wrote to Haast that there was a "paper war" about Haast Pass and that Hector was "fighting a little battle for you here [Dunedin]" (Holmes to Haast, 11 June 1865, Burns & Nathan 2012: 19). The battle consisted of roasting O'Neill by insinuating that he was incompetent. Hector wrote that when O'Neill referred to the "Maori Track" "he apparently overlooked the results of Dr. Haast's explorations" (*Lyttelton Times*, 13 June 1865: 3).

After O'Neill's lack of success, the next to be sent to investigate the route was Vincent Pyke, secretary of Otago's Gold Fields Department. Pyke's mission was to find a practicable and easy route to the West Coast. After his return in October Pyke wrote that he had fully accomplished this (*Otago Daily Times*, 4 November 1865: 5).

Unsurprisingly this generated another letter from Haast's party, this time from William Warner, accusing Pyke of taking credit for finding the pass (*Lyttelton Times*, 1 Dec 1865: 2). Pyke responded by saying that he had never taken credit for finding the pass but took credit for finding a good line for a pack track which Haast hadn't done. Pyke described Haast's route down the north side of the river as "impracticable for any useful purpose" (*Lyttelton Times*, 20 December 1865: 3).

In 1875 Pyke's track along the south side of the Haast River was upgraded to a horse track. During the Depression men worked on turning this into a road and it was opened to motor cars in 1960. Today it is a very scenic journey along a sealed road and you can get from Makarora to Haast village in about an hour.

Conclusion

Cameron and Haast made two very different journeys with Haast's being more significant from almost every point of view but particularly from the perspective of science and mapping.

Haast and his party have the distinction of being the first Europeans to travel down the entire length of the Awarua River and to confirm the location of a Māori route. It was a difficult journey hampered by poor weather and the large amount of gear that they carried. This, together with the need to take survey measurements and collect specimens, meant that the expedition proceeded at a reasonably leisurely pace. Even on their way back from the Awarua River mouth to Makarora the party only averaged 9 km per day. They returned with surveyor's measurements of the country, sketches, plant specimens, some rock samples and Haast's first kiwi skin.

In contrast, Cameron's journey was lightweight and fast and he was fortunate with the weather. Cameron got to within sight of the Tasman Sea along the mountain tops which was quite a feat and worthy of recognition, however, his lack of observations and scientific information meant that it was easy for Haast and others to belittle his trip and inflate the importance of their own journeys. Although it is still to be established exactly how far Cameron got, he has the distinction of being one of the first Europeans to make an extended alpine journey in the southern mountains.

Credit often goes to those who make the most noise and to those who are in the position to make sure that they get recognised. Haast was very quick to get his name on maps. This was due to his ambition and his need for the recognition that would improve his professional standing and secure his career.

One of Haast's unfortunate legacies is the displacement of Māori names. At the time this was not unusual but some surveyors and explorers did make an effort to find out the original names rather than making up their own. Due to Haast's need to impress he was reluctant to acknowledge Māori. He asked Māori for information about the route but did not return to ask them for the names of geographical features he had observed along the route. Indeed, he knew before his trip that the name of what he called Haast River was Awarua. Haast's new names effectively covered up centuries of accumulated observations and stories connected to the landscape. This is frustrating as these earlier names lead to a greater appreciation of the history and stories of the areas than irrelevant newer names, such as Hooker and Brewster, given simply to win favour with the great and influential men of the 1860s.

Haast's journey was significant for Pākehā knowledge of the country's landscape, flora and fauna but it is a mistake to say that he discovered Haast Pass. The pass was well known to Māori who had discovered it hundreds of years earlier but Haast and party were the first Europeans to travel and map the route.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Kā Huru Manu, The Ngāi Tahu Atlas, www.kahurumanu.co.nz [accessed 5 May 2022].
- 2 For more information about Te Huru Huru's map see Barton 1998.
- 3 Charles Cameron to J Moorhouse, 11 November 1862, ICPS 1790/1862. Archives New Zealand, Christchurch.
- 4 Letter from AFN Blakiston, Clerk, to Charles Cameron 21 November 1862, reproduced in *The New Zealander*, 19 March 1864: 6.
- 5 Haast was at Lake Ohau by 10 December 1862, taking perhaps 2 weeks to get there. See Nolden et al. 2013: 32.
- 6 W F Warner's Journal, entry for 20 February 1863. Canterbury Museum ARC1988.27
- 7 W G McClymont, Press, 24 August 1940: 5. Geoff Spearpoint, personal communication, 24 April 2022.
- 8 W F Warner's Journal, entry for 1 March 1863. Canterbury Museum ARC1988.27
- 9 W F Warner's Journal, entry for 17 February 1863. Canterbury Museum ARC1988.27
- 10 W F Warner's Journal, entry for 20 February 1863. Canterbury Museum ARC1988.27
- 11 Holmes, 7 March 1863 in *Otago Witness*, 25 April 1863: 8. W F Warner's Journal, entry for 25 February 1863. Canterbury Museum ARC1988.27
- 12 Map, The Southern Alps of The Middle Island of New Zealand by Dr Julius Haast, 12 June 1863. C.14.3 Kew Archives.

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