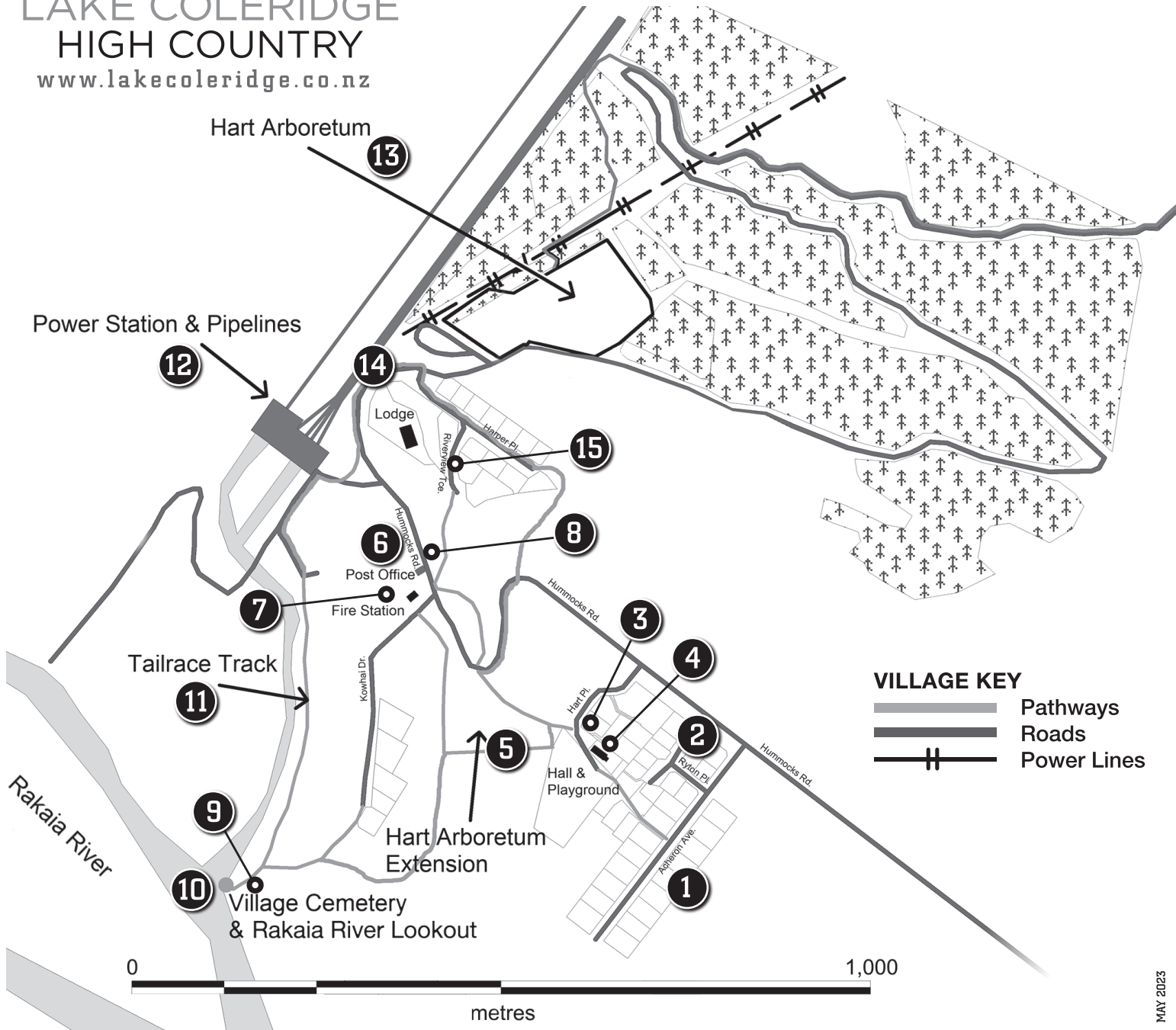




Village Walk

TAKE TIME TO EXPLORE OUR VILLAGE HISTORY

LAKE COLERIDGE
HIGH COUNTRY
www.lakecoleridge.co.nz



A Walking Tour of Lake Coleridge Village



A century ago Lake Coleridge Village was a very different place. In 1911 workers had arrived to begin the difficult and dangerous task of the power station's construction. In harsh winters, in a wild and bleak landscape, workers were initially housed in tents. The arrival of wives and families created the need for permanent housing and so the village began.

The station was operational in 1914, up to 400 men had been employed on the project's construction. In the 1960's the village's population peaked at approximately 130

residents, with a staff of 36 employed by the station. As automation has increased the station's staff levels have declined to present numbers of 6 employees. Station owned houses have been sold to holiday makers and the use of the village is now largely recreational.

The village's attractive park like surroundings featuring abundant bird life and stately specimen trees are a living reminder of the legendary contribution of station superintendent, Harry Hart.



1

Acheron Ave: Site of some of the first cottages built in Lake Coleridge. The earliest around 1914, the area catered for workers with families. Most houses have been upgraded but a walk down this street gives an indication of the character of the early village.

2

Site of the village Cow Club. Land around Ryton Place and across the road was used for running a rotation of milking cows to supply fresh milk to club members. Villagers could collect their milk but delivery to the various households was an excellent source of pocket money for village children. As regular deliveries of household supplies increased the need for the Cow Club dropped off. It was disbanded in 1989.

3

School Site: Originally a sole charge school opened in 1914, the school grew to 2 teachers at its peak serving families from the village as well as neighbouring stations. It closed in 1995 and the remaining children were bused to nearby Windwhistle School.

4

The Village Hall, opened in 1939, was the hub of the community, a place for residents to relax and socialise. Dances, movies, meetings, craft groups, sporting events and church services were well supported. Today this well maintained facility remains a popular venue for community activities.

5

Hart Arboretum Extension: Fears arose that the original Hart arboretum sat on power station land with the station's possible expansion threatening the existing plantings. Local Farm Forestry members and volunteers have worked to establish new plantings of the original trees on this secure site. A work in progress, many interesting species of both conifers and ornamentals can be seen.

6

Post Office: Mail services in the Coleridge area were originally outside the village but in 1913 a mail service began, operated by village personnel. In 1951 the General Post Office agreed to take charge and erected a purpose built building. Mail time was always a popular and sociable part of the day as villagers, waiting on the village green, exchanged the day's news and views. Midland bus mail services later became part of the rural mail service and the post office closed in 1988. Today the building still remains as the depot for the village's mail services.

7

The Electric Cottage: Opened in 1915 the cottage was built as a show home to demonstrate the use of electricity in a domestic setting. Over the years the cottage has had many uses including as a maternity home, village hospital and workers' accommodation. In excellent and near original condition, this quaint cottage is now privately owned. Please do not go beyond the picket fence.

8

The Bulk Store: This building stands prominently in the centre of the village. As the name suggests it was used to store machinery parts and as a workshop to overhaul equipment. Today it stores surplus equipment.

9

Cemetery: Originally created by construction workmates as a burial site for Laurence McKeown who died suddenly in the 1918 'flu epidemic. His grave stands prominently with its iron surround. The burial ground was consecrated as a cemetery in 1936 and is now administered by the Selwyn District Council.

10

Lookout: site of the power station tailrace water entering the Rakaia River. Spectacular views of the upper Rakaia can be obtained with a backdrop of the Southern Alps and in the foreground stations, Manuka Point (L) and Mt Algidus (R).

11

Tailrace Track, a pleasant walk along this fast flowing stream where many runaway garden plants, tossed as garden waste, can be seen growing amongst the native vegetation. Fruiting trees can be found along this section and in autumn, spawning salmon can sometimes be viewed from the bridge.

12

Power Station: Opened in 1914 to boost the supply of electricity to Christchurch city, the station's construction was seen as a significant engineering feat. Built on glacial moraine, it's massive construction was a source of fascination to engineers throughout the world. Details of the station's history and the scheme's operation can be seen on the diagrammatic panels outside the station. The station is not open to visitors.

13

The Hart Arboretum is the story of Harry Hart, power station superintendent from 1923 to 1953. Harry recognised the urgent need to provide shelter in a harsh high country environment. The arboretum became his experimental block as he collected hardy conifer trees from throughout the world. The arboretum is now recognised as one of the largest collections of conifers in the southern hemisphere. Current policy is to let it grow as a wilderness woodland.

14

Lake Coleridge Lodge built in 1934, was originally known as the Single Men's Quarters. The Quarters slept up to 12 men and provided employment for a number of local women as cooks and domestic staff. When no longer needed it became a tourist lodge but in recent years it has reverted to a private lodge.

15

Billiards Club: In 1918, in the absence of a "strong moral control" in the village the need to improve the social life of villagers was recognised. In 1920 the club opened with a strictly all male membership. Whether to accept women members was a source of fierce debate for almost 20 years when the male membership finally relented. Today the club no longer focuses on billiards but is enjoyed as a locals' social club.

Further information about the area's history can be found in **West of Windwhistle, stories of the Lake Coleridge area.**

www.lakecoleridge.co.nz
or in **Lake Coleridge, the Power, the People, the Land** by Rosemary Britten (out of print).

