

**TABLED AT HEARING**

Date 16/11/2009

Personal statement from Margaret Blue

Growing up at Ohau Downs shaped my future, it made me who I am and how I feel. It was the centre of my universe. I always loved the outdoors and at every opportunity was outside. I remember longing for the day when I was big enough to go with dad mustering up at the lake. I started my mustering career very early on with dad leading me around on Merrylegs, doing small jobs close to home. When I got older and had my own pony, Yarrabin, I was away. Yarrabin and I explored everywhere and went mustering when ever we could.

Mustering up at the lake involved getting up very early for a breakfast of a mutton chop and greasy fried egg. We would set out in the dark to beat the heat, it was freezing sitting in the saddle and would long for the sun to come up. When it did it was a delicious feeling warming your back. We took a packed lunch in our saddle bags. Cold meat and pickle sandwiches a slab of fruit cake and a bottle of cold black sweet tea. Mustering up at Boat Harbour was always special for its feeling of remoteness to a little girl. The stories of Maori wars and camp sites, moas and previous workers all added to the mystique of the place. As we were riding along dad was always on for a good yarn. There is an old rabbiters camp by the lake and he told me that the old rabbitier fell off his horse and his team of rabbiting dogs worried him on the ground! I don't know the out come, but the dogs cant have liked him much.

It usually came out very hot and windy droving the sheep home and with not too much water the dogs had to be used carefully. Mary Vincent, a previous owner, used to bring fresh dogs up the road and tie them to a big rock so her husband Dick could spell tired and thirsty dogs on the long and dusty way home. The rusty old dog chains used to be still there, in Mary's rock.

We often went up to Boat Harbour for picnics and swimming. There were always great "debates" as to whose turn it was to lead everyone down the sheep track to the lake. When that was sorted we headed off Indian file, the leader was not popular if they strayed off the track and we all ended up in the briars.

We were very fortunate to have a simple and very happy childhood growing up here. We all have a great empathy and sense of belonging to the Boat Harbour that we don't want spoiled.