

## Enjoy the experience, respect the site, stay safe

Access to such an important and remote historic site is a privileged opportunity which carries with it responsibilities, both for your own safety and to protect Port Craig's increasingly vulnerable relics.

- Stay on marked tracks; this will avoid unnecessary trampling, accidental damage and dangerously eroded areas.
- Keep away from derelict structures; they are easily damaged and potentially dangerous. The Department of Conservation is undertaking conservation work to protect some of these structures but your support is also essential to ensure their future.
- Leave relics where they are; they tell part of the story. It is illegal to remove or even move them.

### Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area



Port Craig sawmill and timber stack. (Photo: Hocken Library)



## Further information

### Further information is available from:

Department of Conservation  
33 Don Street, Invercargill  
Ph (03) 211 2400  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre  
Lake Front Drive, Te Anau  
Ph. (03) 249 7924  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track  
31 Orawia Road, Tuatapere  
Ph (03) 226 6739  
[www.humpridgetrack.co.nz](http://www.humpridgetrack.co.nz)

### Recommended reading

'*Viaducts against the Sky*', by Warren Bird, provides further information for those who want to know more about the story of Port Craig.

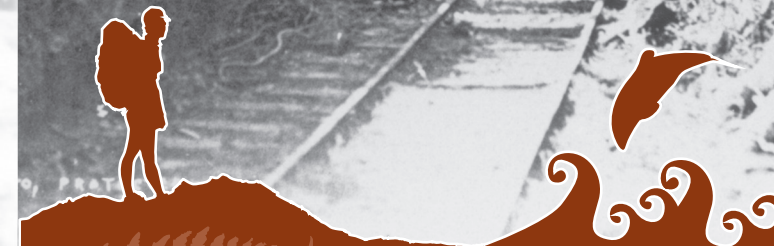
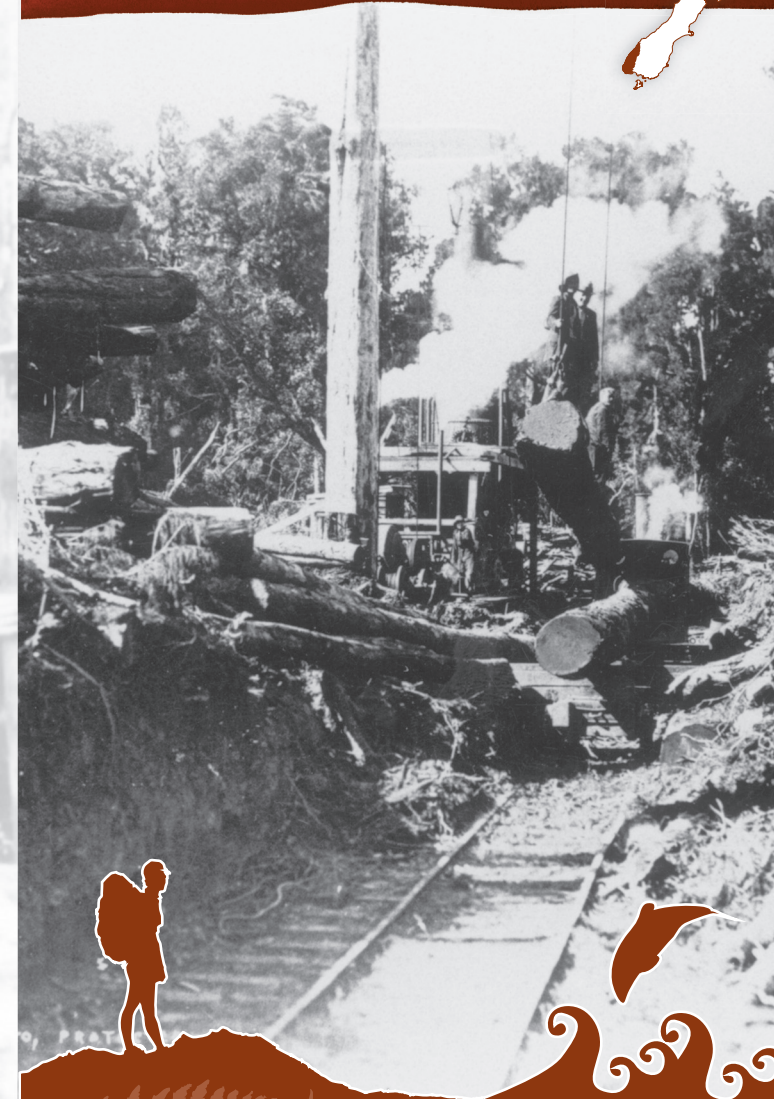
Cover photo – Lidgerwood log hauler

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# Welcome to Port Craig

the timber town that pushed boundaries



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



## Port Craig's Story

The story began in 1916 when the Marlborough Timber Company recognised the milling potential of the coastal forests west of Mussel Beach (the future Port Craig). Directors John Craig and Daniel Reese foresaw an exciting opportunity to achieve ambitious production levels through innovative technology.

Sadly for them, they under-estimated the costs of working in such an isolated, rugged environment and over-estimated the volume of timber it would produce. While viability was a recurring issue, it was external forces associated with the approaching Great Depression that finally triggered the decision to close Port Craig in 1928.

Economic failure should not cloud Port Craig's groundbreaking achievements. Every facet of the enterprise, from logging to shipping, presented daunting challenges, each overcome by resourcefulness, ingenuity and determination. That legacy continues to inspire those who explore the viaducts, tramways and relics of Port Craig.



Photo: Craigpine Ltd

## Main Tramline

Between here and the Waitarurahi River the track follows the 146 km long main tramway where steam locomotives once hauled logs from bush workings to the mill. Even today the scale of the undertaking is impressive. The size and weight of the Lidgerwood hauler required a standard of construction that was more in keeping with a main trunk railway line than a traditional bush tramway.

a traditional bush tramway.

## Log Skids



Photo: Craigpine Ltd

A branch line brought loaded trains alongside the mill where logs were dragged off by winch and stock-piled on skids. Another winch drew the logs towards the mill entrance to be picked up by spiked rollers and carried inside to the saw benches. This photo shows the log dump outside the new mill with the old mill buildings, including the boiler house chimney, behind.

## Slab Conveyor



Photo: Department of Conservation

The new mill was built deliberately over Sawmill Creek which then flowed in a west-east direction. The original stream bed, still visible on the right after the first set of steps down to the beach, provided the route for a toothed chain conveyor. The conveyor carried waste timber slabs from the mill to a cliff-top chute, where they were dumped onto a permanently burning fire. Some time after the mill closed, the stream changed its course dramatically and the building remains collapsed into the rapidly eroding gully. Debris remains strewn around the gully floor.

## Cookshop and Bakehouse

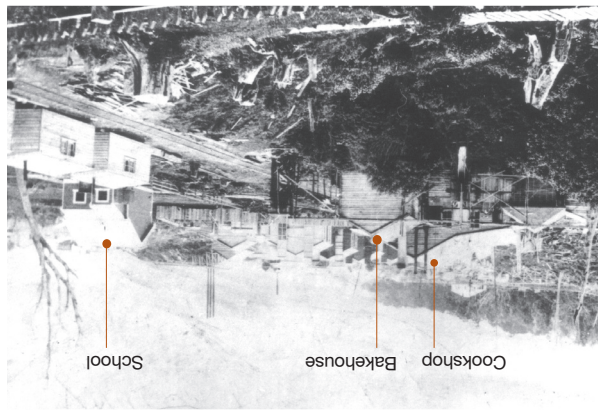


Photo: Craigpine Ltd

Cookshop (large building in centre), bakehouse (small building in front of cookshop) and school (right). The cookshop fed bush and mill workers three hearty meals a day from a large, wood-fired, cast iron stove. A huge open fire at the other end of the room was used to boil steam puddings for the evening meal and heat the dining room. The concrete bases of both stove and fireplace are still visible. In the early days, the cook was also butcher and baker. Later on a separate baker was engaged; the remains of the baking oven can be found nearby.

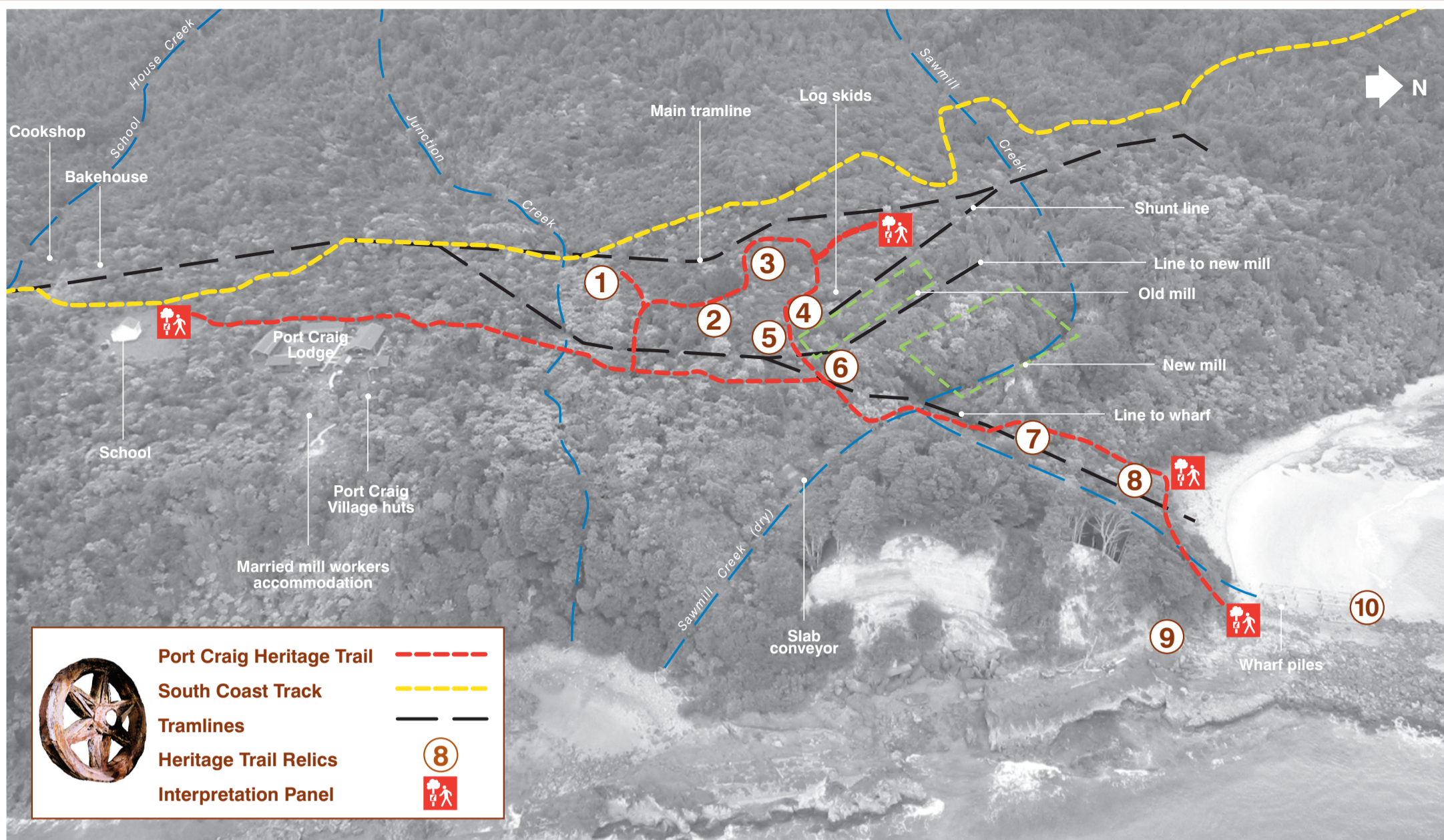
## Married Accommodation



Photo: Craigpine Ltd

These typical family homes along the cliff top used a simple wooden tramway to transport their firewood and other supplies.



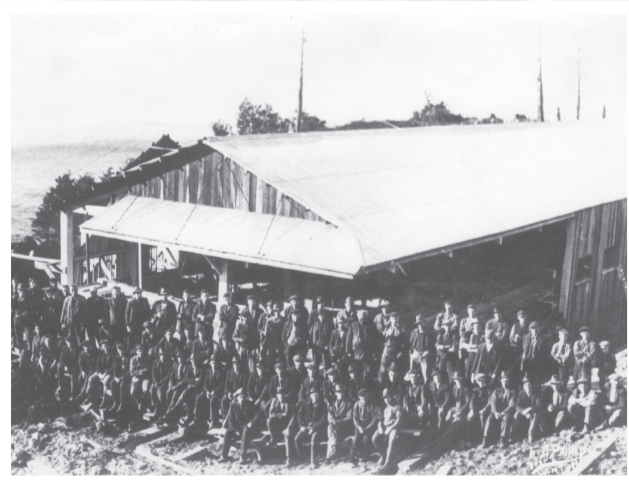


## The Heritage Trail



At first glance it is hard to believe that this site was once crowded with buildings and all the activity that surrounds a major timber milling operation. The heritage trail helps to recreate a sense of Port Craig as it once was. Allow one hour to explore at a leisurely pace. Just add a little imagination to visualise the people who lived and worked here; smell hot engine oil and freshly cut logs; and hear the deafening clamour of working machinery.

On-site interpretation panels tell important site stories while numbered pegs identify special features or relics which are explained below.



Mill, bush and tramway workers gather for a photograph at the rear of the mill  
Photo: Craigpine Ltd

### 1 Cement barrels

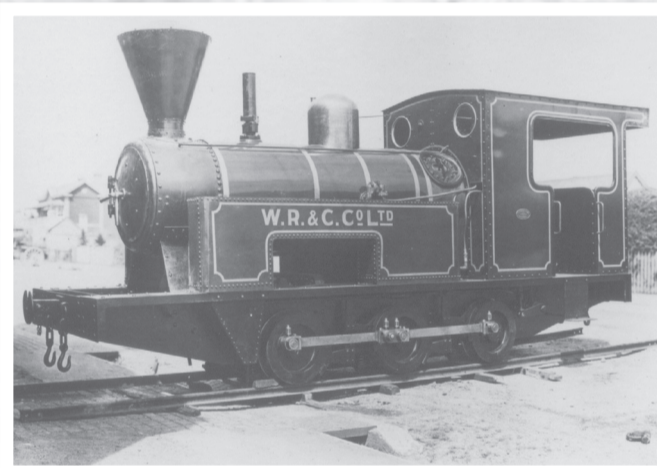
Cement stored in wooden barrels has set hard and outlived its containers. An assortment of industrial relics, invisible from the trail, include a winch drum and water tank.

### 2 Toilets and septic tank

Eight or nine toilet stalls were built over the concrete trough where a constant flow of water flushed waste into the adjacent septic tank. They would have been used mainly by mill workers and men from the nearby single men's huts. Homes for married men had their own long-drop toilets.

### 3 Steam locomotive water tank

This water tank belonged to Johnston '28, one of the geared locomotives used to haul heavy loads of logs from the bush. The tank was probably abandoned in the early 1920s, when it was replaced by a new saddle tank.



Johnston '28' locomotive. Photo: Wallace Early Settlers Museum

### 4 Old mill boiler house

The weathered brick structure that once housed the boiler is now the most substantial feature of the original mill site. The boiler drove a flywheel that in turn powered the mill saws. When the 'new' mill replaced this traditional technology the old boiler continued to serve a useful purpose including hot water for men to wash off the day's mud.

### 5 Small boiler

An obsolete boiler like this one may have been used to dry beach sand in its large flues. The sand was sprinkled onto greasy rails to give locomotive wheels a better grip.

### 6 Blacksmith's shop

Scorched earth and foundry slag are all that remains of the blacksmith's shop where a small team of versatile smiths and engineers made whatever was needed to keep Port Craig in working order. Jobs ranged from cast iron brake blocks for locomotives to steel bolts for the Sand Hill Point viaduct.



The blacksmith's shop, Port Craig's official opening day, 1921. Photo: Craigpine Ltd

### 7 'New' mill chimney sections

A large section from one of the new mill's chimney stacks lies alongside the track, where it dropped when the mill was demolished.

### 8 Wharf crane

The chassis and turntable of the wharf crane, manufactured by Priestman Bros of Hull, England, has been recovered from its half-buried state. Originally used to load barges at the wharf it was later incorporated into an innovative system of loading ships at anchor by means of overhead cables.



Wharf crane loading a barge. Photo: Bill Howden Photographic Collection, Tuatapere.

### 9 Rock wagons

These rock-carrying wagons were used to build a protective breakwater for Port Craig's wharf. Despite their rusted state, the wagons' tipping mechanism is still recognisable. The four-wheeled bogie was designed to tip rocks forwards, while the six-wheeled version had a sideways tipping action. (The *Wharf activities* interpretation panel illustrates one of the wagons at work.)

### 10 Lidgerwood boiler

Abandoned upside-down in the sand the Lidgerwood hauler's boiler, just under four metres high and 1.8 metres diameter, remains an impressive sight. Some of the Lidgerwood's winch gear has been saved and is displayed at the Tuatapere Bushman's Museum.