

**Reinstating a horse track through the Boyle Gorge. St James Conservation Area  
Hanmer Springs Horse Riders  
Autumn Winter 2016**

Even before the earliest runholder era of the Canterbury high country, the Boyle River was one of the routes used to drive cattle from Nelson to the Goldfields on the West Coast for hungry miners. These hardy drovers fought weather, mud and thick bush to earn their few pounds, but as the runhold leases were gradually taken up, tracks were made through the saddles and into the upper basins.

As grateful as we are that much of our alpine flora is now spared this grazing, these routes are part of our heritage, and as such are worth protecting. There is a growing group of recreational high country horse riders who use these routes in their weekends, or as part of the horse-riders version of *'Te Araroa'*.

The Boyle Gorge route has used parts of the St James Walkway- with approximately 3 km of which involved remediating those parts of the track which were covered by delapidated boardwalks by digging down to the substrate with pick and shovel then layering up with boulders and varying grades of rock and gravel to provide proper drainage. The cartage of tools and gravel was all done by pack-horse as there is no vehicle access. Where possible, we found old cattle tracks away from the trampers track- weaving through the gorge with many river crossings making this a trip suitable for fine weather/ low water only. Where years of overgrowth had narrowed the track to a few centimeters, the track was widened and graveled. It is worth noting that horse routes are now designated with a lime green triangle as opposed to the traditional orange. Some extra explanation at huts or the addition of a horse shoe may be needed to prevent confusion for trampers.

An overnight holding paddock was re-instated below the Boyle Flat Hut, fences repaired at the Magdalen Hut and an alternative route to the tramping track marked through the lower Boyle river from the Lewis Pass Highway to the Magdalen Hut .

Because of varying work schedules this project was 'chipped away at' by club members in their own time with the bulk of the track remediation being carried out through the winter months. There were two recce trips in the late summer autumn trying various routes and making a plan, a weekend of paddock building at Boyle Flat for three volunteers and 20 odd short winter days of pick and shovel work for two people and two horses. Many thanks to Canterbury High Country Pleasure riders who donated a gate for the fence at the bottom of the Boyle Gorge, and members who have donated time, fuel and a fee to use the Glenhope station road to deliver materials to the Magdalen.

