

Ross and South Westland

St Peter's Church / Our Lady of the River Jacobs River

Anglican

- The need to build a church in Jacobs River was proposed in March 1930.
- The land was gifted by local Māori.
- The Church was built to the same design as at Waitaha.
- The materials were transported from Hokitika by sea aboard the MV Gael, a coastal trader belonging to the South Westland Shipping Co.



SS Gael at Okarito Wharf, 11 February 1939 (Westcost.recollect.co.nz)

- The first service was held in St Peter's on Sunday, 13 December 1931. The Vicar was AK Warren, vicar of Ross and South Westland. The congregation of 62 was squeezed into a building built to seat 35.
- The first christening took place on 13 December 1931 for Herbert Daniel Rochford, son of Mr and Mrs T Rochford.
- The church was dedicated to St Peter on 5 October 1932 by Bishop West-Watson.

Costs and Gifts

Of the £234 cost of building, £200 was provided by the Henry and William Williams Memorial Trust. Much of the remaining costs were paid for 'in kind' with either free labour or services such as cartage or the gifting of the foundation piles. Among the gifts received for the new church were:

- The altar and linen – Heathcote church
- Candlesticks – Canon HE Newton
- Wooden Cross made by Dean Carrington

- Further linen – Mrs West-Watson
- Tapestry Altar Frontal from a Mothers’ Union in England presided over by a sister of Mrs West-Watson
- Hymn and Prayer books – Parish of Aldingham, England, Bishop West-Watson’s old parish
- Large Bible on lectern – member of the Parish of Ashford, England, Rev’d Warren’s old parish
- Organ – Rev’d JR Young
- Lamps – Churches at Kanieri, Kokatahi and Belfast.

Catholic

- The Anglican congregation began to decline and the church was used by the Roman Catholics and unofficially renamed ‘Our Lady of the River’. However, the Anglicans still owned the land and building.

Historic Churches

- It was incorporated into the ‘Pioneer Church Route’ including historic churches at Hari Hari, Whataroa and Franz Josef.



Photos supplied by AnglicanLife

Repair and Destruction

- In 2017, the local Bruce Bay community had been planning to fix the piles as part of a maintenance project that had already seen the roof repaired and the building repainted.
- Unfortunately a storm associated with Cyclone Fehi (February 2018) blew it off its foundations and caused catastrophic collapse.



Photos from STUFF (George Heard photographer)

www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/101159886/west-coast-church-destroyed-by-extropical-cyclone-fehi