



MR GEORGE MUNRO, AFTER WHOM MUNRO'S GULLY IS NAMED.
Mr Munro is 81 years of age, and came to Tuapeka in 1857. The hut was erected 40 years ago, out of the original timber of the home in Munro's Gully.

In the Lawrence Cemetery lie the graves of George and [Helen Munro](#) . . .

GEORGE AND [HELEN Munro](#) had the distinction of being the first permanent residents in the Lawrence area.

George was born at Sutherland, Scotland, in 1829 and [Helen](#) (nee McLeod) in 1831. They married in 1856.

Before leaving Scotland in May of that year, George had secured employment as a shepherd with Smith and Allan, who farmed at Tokomairiro and also had a sheep run at Tuapeka.

The [Munros](#) sailed for New Zealand aboard Strathmore in May 1856, arriving at Port Chalmers on October 1.

They proceeded to Tokomairiro to take up their employment and acquaint themselves with the farming operation.

In January 1857, George and [Helen](#), along with 1800 merino sheep, moved up to Run 53 at the Tuapeka.

They made their first home at the head of Clarks Flat, an area George described as "a wilderness". In July 1857, in order to be more centrally located on the run, they moved to the head of the gully (afterwards known as [Munros](#)).

There, they started their family — there were to be five: Ann, Arabella, John, George and

Alexandrina. Ann later died of diphtheria.

In 1860, James Allan sold his share in the lease to John Martin, James Smith's brother-in-law.

It was an extremely isolated life, and particularly so for a woman. One day, [Helen](#), who hadn't had any female company for almost a year, noticed from the door of the cottage a light form coming through the manuka scrub. Thinking she was at last to have a woman's company, she rushed inside, changed her dress, set the table with her best china and linen, then ran out to give welcome. But it was only a cow, its white face giving the impression of a woman's attire. She went back inside and wept with disappointment.

In late May 1861, George was out checking sheep one day when he met a prospector, a Tasmanian by the name of Gabriel Read. He showed Read where Black Peter had been prospecting at Evans Flat two years earlier and invited Read to stay with his family that evening. The offer was accepted and the following morning, together, they headed up a ridge. At the crest, they parted, George to tend his flock and Read to prospect the gully that ran parallel to [Munros](#) on its eastern side, a gully that [Munro](#) called Glen Dhu, the Black Valley.

Later that day, Gabriel Read discovered what was to become the Tuapeka goldfields. The gully was renamed Gabriels Gully.

[Helen Munro](#) had shown some interest in how gold was recovered and, a few weeks after Read's discovery, she did some amateur prospecting in [Munros](#) Gully using a dish and butcher's knife.

She was successful in finding payable gold and caused a rush to [Munros](#). [Helen](#) will be long remembered as the first and only woman to discover part of a major goldfield in New Zealand. On August 1, 1861, Run 53 (24,320 acres) was proclaimed a goldfield and Smith and Martin were compensated by the provincial government with the sum of £1216.

All stock was removed — and with the sheep gone, presumably so too was George's job.

At the end of 1861, they moved to the foot of the gully. George took up various occupations over the following years: dairying, butchery, and a carrying business. Later, he returned to shepherding and droving.

During this time, they shifted again, in 1865 to a cottage at Evans Flat on a hill which is still known as [Munros](#) Hill. The cottage was still there in the 1950s but is now gone, its site marked by a group of mature trees. This site is 2km west of Lawrence beside SH8 (just over the brow of the hill when travelling towards Central Otago).

During the 1911 jubilee celebrating 50 years since Gabriel Read discovered gold, George and [Helen's](#) home was a drawcard for visiting pioneers from the gold-mining days.

George died in 1912, [Helen](#) not long after, in 1913. The family grave is in the "old" part of the Lawrence Cemetery of which there is no known existing plan, block or plot records, but is easily found by entering the bottom gate and proceeding straight ahead for 20m. The grave is on the left.