



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND  
POUHERE TAONGA

Victorian Kitchen – pre and post visit experiences

## Food preparation

The present coal range oven at Highwic is a Shacklock “Orion” featuring two equal sized ovens with a fire box between. It was a popular New Zealand brand developed by Henry Shacklock in Dunedin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Highwic’s model dates from around 1911 and is especially suited to using lignite coal which has always been widely available in New Zealand. It is still in good working order. Before 1911 there would have been another earlier range oven and possibly an open fire to begin with.



Coal ranges were kept going day and night, providing hot water and warmth in summer and winter alike. The service wing at Highwic, comprising the kitchen, scullery, wash house, dairy and meat storage, is built of brick as a fire deterrent. During the winter months the coal range fire in the kitchen made this room the most inviting of the house. In days gone-by the laundry was usually aired in the kitchen and the young children of the Buckland family were fed here.



## Entertaining

It is not known how often Alfred and Matilda Buckland entertained at Highwic but dinner parties would have been a feature of their social life. Victorian etiquette meant serving several courses, with each course beautifully decorated and ready at the right moment. This would have meant hours of preparation and good servants were always difficult to come by in the early days of Auckland. Matilda Buckland may well have done some of the cooking and food preparation herself. Her hand written recipe book has two dates, 1879 and 1890.

There are recipes for making griddle cakes, tapioca cream, bread, apple dumplings, barley water, marmalade pudding, gem scones, raspberry jelly and Victorian biscuits. The emphasis is on good plain English cooking with an emphasis on cakes and puddings.



The Buckland's had five acres surrounding their house which provided vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy produce. There would have been at least one groom and a gardener, possibly more. Accommodation was provided for the outdoor staff in the lower paddock. This was where there was a large vegetable garden which would have kept the household supplied with fresh produce. As well as their own garden they would have had access to the city markets and no doubt hunting and fishing excursions would have added to the range of food available.



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### **Work, work, work!**

In the courtyard on the south side two purpose built brick rooms were built under the water tank. They have arched roofs to support the weight of the water and keep very cool even on the hottest days. One of these rooms was the dairy and the other was for meat storage. They are the equivalent of modern refrigerated store rooms. Fine wire mesh across the windows meant the food was protected from flies.

A maid would have been responsible for collecting the milk buckets from the cowman first thing in the morning and in the evening. Some of this milk was poured into large basins and kept cool for 24 hours. The cream was then skimmed off and churned to make butter. Leftover buttermilk was usually fed to pigs or used for bread making. The cream would be churned into butter at least twice a week. It is difficult to imagine the amount of sheer physical work and time that went into providing enough food for a large family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century given today's labour saving technology.

