WILLIAM ROBERTSON

Doctor William Robertson was the only medical professional in the West Otago region for forty years.

Doctor William Robertson was born and educated in Dunedin. However, he journeyed to London to complete his studies. William Robertson became Doctor William Robertson in London in 1900. On his return from London, Doctor Robertson practiced in the North Island before he took up the vacancy at the Tapanui practice in 1902. Doctor Robertson planned to stay in Tapanui for five years before he took up specialist work, but he remained in West Otago for forty years.

Doctor William Robertson had a strong personality and inspired confidence in his patients with his hearty laugh. He looked after the whole of West Otago for forty years except for the few years that Doctor Johnston practiced in Heriot.

For years Doctor William Robertson travelled around in a single seater buggy with a hood pulled by two chestnut horses. Often, he would get back from a call out at six pm and there would be someone waiting for him and he would be off again. He did this with a smile and never complained. Often, he travelled through a foot of mud during the winter.

When the motor car came onto the scene, he was one of the first in the district to acquire one but in those days, with very few of the roads metaled he often had no guarantee that he would get anywhere during the winter. However, the roads got better, and Doctor Robertson’s job got easier.

He was a great lover of thoroughbred horses. He brought two horses with him when he came to Tapanui. He bred and raced his horses.

In 1941 a movement was started by J.H. White to honour the doctor with William R Quin as Chairman (he was the son of William Quin). On 12 July 1941 a dinner was held to honour Doctor and Mrs Robertson at the Town Hall. Mr Phil Sim made a special presentation as he was the first baby delivered by Doctor Robertson in West Otago.

Three months later doctor Robertson passed away on the 29 October 1941 after working late the night before.

He will be long remembered for his kind acts and was a shining example of a medical practitioner. Doctor William Robertson was long remembered in Tapanui even after his death.