

Detective Office,
Dunedin,
3rd December 1940.

Dear Ted,

I know you are always on the look out for something interesting for your museum and at the present time I have possession of a shoe and contents which are very interesting.

It appears about 20 years ago the Mental Hospital Department were issuing bluecher boots to patients with M.H. S. stamped on the top.

Toward the end of last month a schoolmaster was pig hunting about 12 miles back from the main road near Merton when he came across a boot with human bones inside in a gully. He brought the boot to Waitati Police Station and on Sunday last Detectives went out with him to the scene and recovered another boot and most of the bones of a human body but could not find the skull. The bones were strewn about and some were partly buried and they may have been deposited there by any of the following means, a slight wash out or landslide, flood waters, or distributed by wild pigs as decay set in. The bones were bleached and there was signs of burning on certain of the large bones and it is known that a scrub bush fire went over the area some years ago.

The bones were collected and a coroners report rendered but the coroner endorsed it "No inquest necessary" and directed the Police dispose of the bones according to their own discretion, they will eventually be sent to the medical school for lecture purposes and then disposed of by them.

The interesting part about the exhibit is that where flesh originally was is now packed with vegetation roots with the bones showing through, the flesh had obviously acted as manure, the boot is quite hard and shrivelled. The fire no doubt cooked the leather and thus preserved it against rot.

The Mental Hospital assure us it is 20 years since such boots were on issued.

If it is of interest to you I will retain it awaiting your reply, there is nothing objectionable by way of smell, I consider it would make a most interesting exhibit for a lecture to young detectives to demonstrate points to look for in assisting to determine the length of time a body may have laid on the surface, compared with one which had been buried and recently dug or washed up.

In haste to catch the train

Yours.

Tom Holmes

*I sent it up
to Chamberlain
4/12/40*

Recd on 13.5.41.