

Experiments to populate the rivers of New Zealand's South Island with Brown trout were met with minimal success prior to 1900.

The length of time taken to complete the voyage from Great Britain to New Zealand before steam was at best unpredictable and trout ova once eyed had to arrive within 6 to 7 weeks to stand any chance of survival.

The earliest shipment we can find of Blagdon ova successfully arriving in New Zealand dates back to April 1906. The steamship S.S. Maori arrived in Dunedin on 22nd April that year carrying a consignment of Blagdon Ova. On this occasion the ship had set sail from London and R.B. Marston, Editor of the Fishing Gazette, had overseen arrangements for the voyage.

The packing of the cases was an art in itself and this together with ongoing care throughout the journey very much determined the health of the ova when it arrived. The ova were packed in



A steamship circa 1906 similar to SS Maori



wooden crates, which were called Howietown cases. The cases were 8 trays deep and each layer was surrounded top and bottom by dampened sphagnum moss collected from the Mendips.

The moss served two purposes, primarily it was used to keep the eggs cool and moist but it also acted as a buffer for any knocks or sudden movements encountered during transit. Whilst on the ship it was the Chief Engineer's responsibility to look

after the Ova. He would place ice over the top of the trays every day to keep the ova at the required temperature and go over the trays regularly to remove any that had gone bad.

When the consignment arrived in Dunedin and subsequently was delivered to the Opaho Hatchery on the South Island the eggs from Blagdon were found to be 85% good.

Five days after arriving and having reduced the water temperature from 47F to 39F some 8000 young fish were hatched.

The Otago Acclimatisation Committee hailed the huge distance that these tiny trout eggs travelled and successful outcome as a great success.

The Chairman proposed that the Engineer of the S.S. Maori be granted £5 for looking after the ova so well and ensuring that a good strain of trout would be present in the rivers of New Zealand's South Island for many generations to come.



Trout spawning at Ubley Hatchery 1914