

newsletter

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

April 2004

HERE WE ARE FACING ANOTHER WINTER that seemed to arrive sooner than usual this year. However our newsletter editor who was up at Waiuta the other day reports a typical 'Indian summer' in progress, which makes us wonder why everyone doesn't just pack up and return there. Plenty of others have been enjoying the town and environs, while there are plans for events that will provide ample opportunities for others to follow.

APRIL MEETING

Even in the absence of our secretary Ian Davidson – missing a meeting for the first time in 19 years we believe – this was still a good-sized gathering of people with an age range from 20-something to 80-and-quite-a-bit. Matters discussed were many and varied, but most of all there was enthusiasm over the event over the hill at the end of February.

CHCH GET-TOGETHER

Alva Morgan not only did a brilliant job of organising the event, but also provided a report that we are glad to reprint:

"On February 28th 2004, in spite of the rain, 97 people arrived at the Shirley Community Centre hall. The talk was jovial and incessant for 4½ hours. Two people registered on the day – Yvonne Cooper's husband Ken, and Audrey Fife, the niece of Bert and Vi Le Comte who owned the Empire Hotel prior to it burning down. Rex Fattorini seemed to be the only one who registered and didn't show. There were only five men who had worked in the mine: Bill Gidley, Reg Avery, Jim Sullivan, Reg Baran and Jack Robertson. Women outnumbered the men with 93 year old Ivy Wynne being the matriarch on the day. We had a cuppa and biscuits 11am till 12 noon, then Gordon

Heyward, photographer,, took a photo of residents plus other interested groups. At 1pm we served lunch and the talking continued. Thank you to Irene Gallagher, Marion Dean, Diana Calvert, Jenny Orchard, Shirley Forbes, Lynette Ford Barfoot and Valda Ford for their contribution to catering. Thanks also for the men who helped: Bede Cordes, Alan Stephens, Owen Flaws. I did appreciate their muscle power to set up the hall and restore order so we could vacuum the place. I finally locked up at 5.30pm. The second generation seem to be keen to keep in contact with the Oldies.

The reunion was self sufficient with a balance of \$52.33, plus FOW advance, \$252.33 refund. Alva M. Morgan, organiser."

We would add thanks to those who brought along interesting photos and memorabilia, including Diane Calvert who is doing a wonderful job collating Tas Hogg's collection and Bill Laugesen who brought along some magnificent mine plans previously owned by McVicars.



Among previously unseen photos seen at the Christchurch 'do' was this one of Jim Wilson, wearing a very Australian hat, outside the Red Huts (Catholic Church behind). We'll print a pic of the assembled multitude when we receive one.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

We are now planning to mark Waiuta's centennial with a re-enactment of the Birthday Reef discovery right on the spot on 9th November 2005, a Wednesday. That may be part of a week's activities in and around Reefton. Then at Easter 2006 we'll have another memorable reunion – details as planning proceeds.

CONSERVATION BOARD

Members of the West Coast Conservation Board, a government-appointed body that advises the Department of Conservation on local matters, had its two-day February meeting at Waiuta, staying at the lodge. They were lucky enough to have Bill Gidley and Tim White there to provide a real insight into what was what. Friends of Waiuta were represented by Les

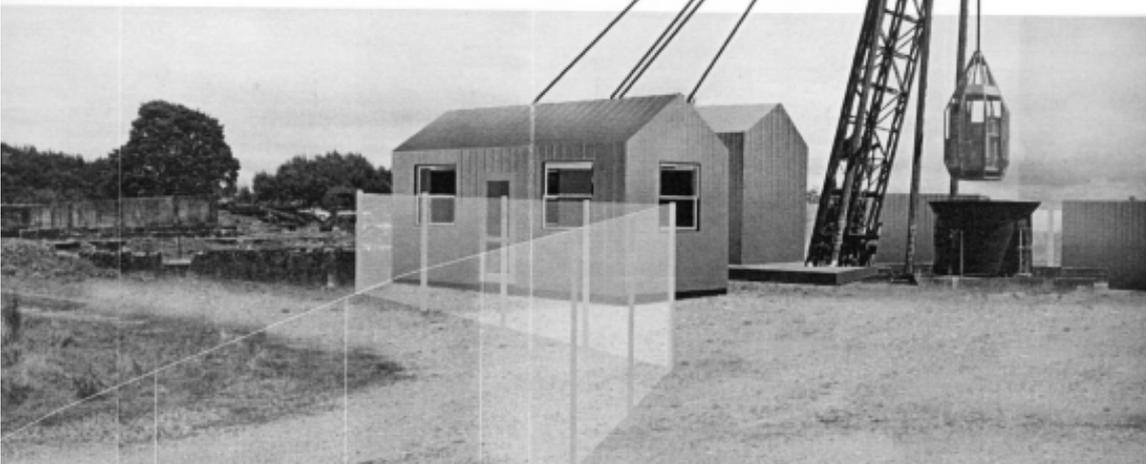
Wright who outlined the society's background and plans as well as helping with a guided walk around town. The Board chairman Rick Barber later wrote a letter of thanks, acknowledging the excellent working relationship that FoW has developed with DoC and offering the Board's support, along with members' best wishes for the future.

PRO REOPENING

GRD Macraes representatives also attended the board meeting. They outlined their planned reopening of the Prohibition shaft and the floating of the new company, Oceana Gold Ltd, that will be investing millions on South Island gold projects including Waiuta. The Pro proposal gained the general approval of board members and the company continues to go through the necessary processes to make it a reality. Friends of Waiuta also support the project as set out, with no adverse impact on the town and minimal changes at the Prohibition.

NUMBER PLATE FRAMES

With 60 or 70 sets sold, these are well into profit.



An artist's impression of how the proposed new headframe and winding engine shed at the Prohibition shaft will look. The foundations of previous winding engines are visible off to the left with rusty relics behind.

There are still plenty left, all bearing the message: 'Waiuta 1906-1951, West Coast Gold Town', so send \$12 per set to Bede Cordes, 1/102 Woodham Rd, Christchurch 6 and they'll be delivered free of charge. We're also considering new items for the centennial. (Ideas please - how about chocolate 'gold bars'?)

BUILDINGS

The Department of Conservation's intention to remove privately owned buildings from conservation land has caused some concern among members. Essential parts of Waiuta, such as the former police station, fall into that category. We trust there will be exemptions for special cases like that, but will seek clarification from the department. Meanwhile a small

group of FoW volunteers is planning a programme of repair and maintenance for Gills' Cottage (previously Stephenses' and Barans') which Friends of Waiuta bought for the department in 1990.

BOOKS

The Big River reprint is possibly underway as you read this. *Waiuta, Reefton School of Mines* and *Our Own Correspondent* are still in print.

Childhood reminiscences for our planned centennial book are slow to arrive, so we might have to go and knock on a few doors with pen, paper and tape recorder. We need old photos of children at Waiuta too,

so keep on looking through those old trunks and boxes - they could contain the sort of gems we're after.

BEREAVEMENTS

It's always a sad point when we come to farewell old friends - this time two of the oldest ex residents, Edna Dobbin and Syd Ward.

Edna and her husband Ned, a miner and shift boss, raised their family up behind the Anglican Church. Syd was the only son of a well-remembered couple, Betty and Gordon Ward. Both Edna and Syd were at

the 1986 reunion when the latter was interviewed for the movie *The Ghost Town Ball*.

During summer, family and friends of Kath Barrow gathered on the site of her childhood home at Hukawai to sprinkle her ashes. It was one of those misty, slightly drizzly February days experienced in so many parts of the country, but just as Ian Davidson spoke of Kath at rest, the sun broke through...

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 29th July 2004 at 7.30pm in the Reefton Visitor Centre, entry from The Strand. All members welcome. It'll be our 20th if you count the inaugural event in 1985. Our address for apologies, messages of support, huge cheques etc is PO Box 83 Reefton.
