



# newsletter

## FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

### August 2004

WITH THE AGM JUST PAST and plenty happening up at the Prohibition there's no shortage of news, so let's get going.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held late in July with a good turn-out, including two ex-residents now living in Christchurch - Bill Gidley and Alan, the boy of Stephens (as they used to say. What's happened to those good old Coast expressions?) Glad to report all officers were re-elected - Frances Hunter as president with Nelsa Rollerson and Bede Cordes as deputies, Ian Davidson secretary and Ronnie Buckman treasurer. Frances summarised another good year in her annual report included with this newsletter.

#### MEET THE MANAGER

We were pleased to welcome Oceana Gold Ltd's Reefton project development manager, Derek Byrne, and his partner, Yvonne Twort. Derek is a Chartered Engineer from the great north of England mining (and rugby league) centre of Wigan. During 20 years of mining he's worked at every level from machine operator to general manager in underground, surface and marine mining operations as widely scattered as the UK, Spain, Turkey, Australia, Namibia, South Africa, Ghana, Angola, Botswana, India, and New Zealand. He's also worked on projects for the Congo and Zimbabwe, and has nine years experience in underground mines rescue work. Derek's qualifications include a first class honours degree in mine engineering and an MBA in financial management - not bad for someone claiming to have had a school report that summed him up as "suitable for pit work only". His most recent operations appointment included leading a workforce of

750 persons at a surface and marine diamond mine in South Africa. Before taking up the new position at Reefton he provided contract project management services to the Blackwater and Globe Progress developments. Yvonne, from Perth Western Australia, will also be working for Oceana.

#### PRO PROGRESS

As we went to press, foundation work was going ahead at the Prohibition for the new winding engine and headframe. Brightwater Engineering of Nelson won the contract to build both the headframe and the sinking stage that the crew will work from while unblocking and repairing the shaft. The engineers were a bit mystified at the start when they learned that everything had to be bolted *and* welded - not knowing that underground you wear belt and braces as the old saying goes - but Derek Byrne says they've done a cracking job. We look forward to publishing a picture of everything in place.



*Pouring concrete for the new headframe foundations at the Prohibition shaft. The white stuff in the background isn't concrete, but snow. (Photo courtesy OGL.)*

Derek's found an unexpected staff training resource in the Reefton Visitor Centre 'mine experience' - in fact he's taken so many new workers there to point out the finer points of shafts and timbering, he's thinking of getting a season ticket. Oceana Gold's new chief executive, Steve Orr, has also been to the centre's mine and been impressed by its realism.

#### AROUND TOWN

A lot of hard work by Department of Conservation staff has Waiuta looking its best for years. It's proving a big job, as growth has been quite phenomenal over the past decade in particular. Also much more in view is the south shaft mullock heap where one of our Christchurch members, Graham Farrant, has put in many days of toil. Up at the Pro the routes of the aerial and the belt conveyor that replaced it can now be

easily followed. DoC's "rusty relics" expert, Jim Staton, is even looking at the possibility of putting the last remaining aerial tower up again. If so it'll go well with the new shaft headframe. Jim's also panning to clean up the old compressor flywheel which Oceana kindly put back on its correct foundation for him.

**GOODBYE MURRAY**

Another DoC staff member who's had a lot to do with Waiuta, Murray Thomas, transfers to Geraldine soon. A NZ Forest Service employee back in the days when Waiuta was first being developed for visitors, Murray was particularly helpful through his hobby as a collector of memorabilia, including some fine old photos. Recently he's been behind the clearing work and our own favourite new project, the toilet near south shaft. We thank Murray for his efforts and wish him and his young family all the best for the future in their new home town.

**BOOKS**

Having finally achieved the Big River reprint we now find that copies of the Waiuta book have almost run out. As the original plates are no longer available, the reprint is going to be a major mission, but we're confident. The plan is to print enough to last through to the centennial celebrations in 2006 and then produce an updated edition including a chapter covering the centennial and the Prohibition rehabilitation work. Childhood reminiscences for our planned centennial book are coming in gradually. Bede Cordes is also

planning to get out and gather stories - see the separate box at the foot of this page.

**CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS**

Hope you've marked down Easter 2006 as the time to be on the Coast for the Waiuta centennial. Our reunion secretary, Sarah Clarkson from the Visitor Centre, is ready to take registrations, so send yours via Friends of Waiuta, PO Box 83, Reefton. There's no registration fee for financial members of FoW. Note also that there'll be a re-enactment of the Birthday Reef discovery by Jimmy Martin in November next year.



*A group of Waiuta-born folk photographed at the Christchurch get-together in February. If we had all the names we'd print them, so help if you can!*

**COMINGS & GOINGS**

Came: The annual Blackball Winter School included a day and a night at the lodge in early July, the West Coast Alpine Club spent a weekend there later in the month

and an Alpha church group also had a stay. The latter, comprising 18 children and six adults, was sponsored by Friends of Waiuta.

Went: The lodge TV - not with any of the above groups, but with someone who sees nothing wrong with breaking in and ripping off volunteer groups like ours. A replacement has been obtained on favourable terms.

**NEXT MEETING**

Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2004 at Waiuta. Arrive any time, but be at the lodge for a meeting at 4pm with a barbecue to follow. We supply the meat, you bring a salad and anything else you'd like. All members and other interested people are welcome to ramble around town, reminisce, play games with the kids ...

**Subs Due!**  
**\$10 is all it takes to keep the news flowing your way. Send it to:**  
**Friends of Waiuta Inc., PO Box 83, REEFTON**  
**Be sure to include some news of how you are and what you're doing.**

**Tell us your story!**  
**Bede Cordes is keen to collect stories from people in the Christchurch area to include in our book of Waiuta childhood memories. If you're willing to chat with Bede, please ring him on (03) 389 0432.**