



newsletter

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

August 2003

HERE WE ARE AGAIN, nearly two thirds of the way through another year and already we're talking about the end-of-year get-together.

To avoid pushing time along too quickly we'll put the details right at the end, proceeding with the most recent event, the Annual General Meeting.

KATH BARROW

Sadly missed at our AGM was a founding member and long-serving vice-president of FOW, Kath Barrow (née Absalom).

Kath's passing was a great shock to friends who knew her as an active person, belying her 81 years.

That vitality was evident from an early age when she lived at Hukawai (where her father was a gold mine manager) and frequently walked up the track for visits to Waiuta.

A twisted ankle a day or so before the 1986 reunion slowed Kath briefly (just when she had sharpened up her dancing skills too!) but her explorations of the district's scenic and historic places soon resumed, highlighted by a trip to Big River on the old miners' track with Les Wright and Nelsa Rollerson.

Kath missed just one Friends of Waiuta meeting in her 18 years of membership and in the same time typed addresses on countless newsletter envelopes. These statistics are just one indication of the loss our group has suffered, quite apart from her cheerful company.

COMMITTEE NEWCOMER

Our youngest and newest member, Bede Cordes, was elected to the vacant vice-president's position at the AGM. Bede's ideas and enthusiasm have already produced some interesting results (including a bundle of number plate



frames - see later) and we look forward to more interesting developments as he grows in the position. Other news relative to the meeting and the past year's highlights are included in the annual report from Frances Hunter - who, we are glad to report, still occupies the president's chair.

TOWN DEVELOPMENTS

The lodge verandah at last has its roof at the eastern end and wider steps on the north side - all fine work by local builder Dave Hawes. This also makes it possible to reinstate the seats that suffered from the weather and were skilfully restored by Graham Hunter. New interpretation panels have also been installed - most importantly at the hotel site so visitors know where they are as soon as they arrive.

With cattle no longer grazed around town, the Department of Conservation has had to do more regular weedeating - and true to form they've exceeded expectations by tidying the Snowy-powerhouse and Big River tracks and blitzing gorse on the South Shaft mullock heap as well. The DoC team are also generally regarded as better looking about the place than their predecessors.

WORKING BEES

An offer received from a young West Coast man to take part in working bees at Waiuta has raised a few new possibilities. Up to now FOW has been more an event-holding, book launching and fund-raising group, but with younger members coming along, we could consider some hands-on contributions.

Perhaps, for example, we could adopt a building. Gills Cottage is an obvious choice, while the 'new' bathhouse attached to the mine chimney is another that could do with attention. Work would have to meet strict standards and specifications of course.

Officers 2003-4

President: Frances Hunter

Vice Presidents: Nelsa

Rollerson & Bede Cordes

Secretary: Ian Davidson

Treasurer: Ronnie Buckman

Newsletter Ed: Les Wright

Committee: Those present at committee meetings in March,

July and November - every

FOW member welcome!

REEFTON PROMOTIONS

Talking of people who get stuck in, there are the good citizens of the Inangahua's other notable town. As you

may have seen on TV, they recently re-installed streetlights and poles of the type that made the town famous as the first in NZ to 'see the light' in 1888. The First Light Festival that accompanied the switching on, exactly 115 years after the original event, involved several of our members, notably Ronnie Buckman and Paul Thomas. Our congratulations on that and best wishes for future projects which include getting the old power house restored and running again.

ROLL OF HONOUR

The Waiuta RSA Roll of Honour for World War Two, mentioned in our last letter, could be placed in the Waiuta Lodge.

Apparently there's no room for it at the Reefton Workingmen's Club, which is the new gathering place for local old soldiers, so the lodge and Inangahua College are the most likely repositories.

Meanwhile, we've printed a photo of it, big enough we hope for the names to be read. The crosses indicate three who did not return: A. J. McEwin, R. M. Pascoe and R. Ridling. Many others, whose names are familiar have since passed on too, but a few others are, glad to say, still with us.



NUMBER PLATE FRAMES

As mentioned earlier, Bede Cordes has been busy organising these, and there's one at the top of the next column, with an advertising pitch in the place where the number plate goes. You can't have the

Subs Due!

\$NZ10 is all it takes to help continue the work of FOW and keep the news flowing your way. Just send it to:

**Friends of Waiuta Inc.,
PO Box 83, REEFTON**

Also be sure to include some news of how you are and what you're doing.

West Coast Gold Town

*Number Plate Surrounds are now available
at \$12 a set delivered to your door*

ALL PROCEEDS TO FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

*Make your cheque out to FOW and send to:
Bede Cordes, 1/102 Woodham Rd, Chch 6*

1906

WAIUTA

1951

WAIUTA personalised plate (it's firmly fixed to Bill Gidley's wee 4WD) but these will be conversation pieces - and they're a lot cheaper! So be sure to order yours soon - all proceeds to good works on the historic Inangahua Goldfield.

FURTHER

BEREAVEMENTS

We extend sincere condolences to the families of Agnes Kent (née Hempseed) and George Halsey who have both died recently. Agnes, who lived to the great age of 93, was a member of two well-remembered Waiuta families and was a valuable source of information at the time leading up to the 1986 reunion.

George, the brother of

Pat Stephens, always enjoyed returning to Waiuta from Fox Glacier where he ran a motel for many years. We have fond memories of him taking his regular dip in the swimming pool over the reunion weekend.

BOOKS NEW & REPRINTED

Speaking of memories, remember we're after childhood reminiscences for the proposed new book to mark the Waiuta centennial in 2006. It's never too early to start writing, and it doesn't have to be long - brief anecdotes will be welcome. Also, we understand that the Big River book is being reprinted.

NEXT MEETING

The annual barbecue and meeting at Waiuta Lodge will be held on Saturday, November 29th - the meeting at 4pm and the eating at 5.30pm. Those who confused the times last year, please note! All the best in the meantime.