



newsletter FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

PO Box 83, Reefton 7851 www.waiuta.org.nz

August 2011

Greetings from the West Coast where we're enjoying sunshine while much of New Zealand suffers icy blasts. Here's hoping there aren't too many cold snaps to come. As usual there seems to be a lot happening at and in connection with Waiuta, so let's get started.

JULY MEETING

The Hunter home was a cosy venue for our mid-winter meeting. Christchurch, Blackball and the Stephens family were all well represented. Fortified by dinner and supper, Alan Stephens and Graeme Farrant (with some assistants) went on to perform good deeds at Waiuta, including a rebuild of the back porch at Gills Cottage and the uncovering of a Snowy skip that Alan spotted a while back.

CHRISTCHURCH GATHERING

On 9 July 2011, 60 years to the day since the south shaft collapsed and forced the Blackwater Mine in Waiuta to close, 43 people gathered in Christchurch to commemorate that event.

A very informative welcoming speech by Alva Morgan provided a good start for the day. Diana Calvert read extracts from a letter written by her uncle, Alex Hogg, who commended the cohesion between ex-Waiuta-ites and the remarkable way they have all kept in touch.

Graeme Farrant passed on a message from our president, Frances Hunter, who was unable to be there. Graeme also had his wonderful collection of Waiuta photos running continuously.

Diana and Alva's files, photographs and noticeboards also prompted memories of the old days, while the ladies from the Islington Tavern provided the sort of food that has accompanied Waiuta social occasions for more than a century.

MINE PROSPECTS

With the possibility of the mine reopening after all those

years ever in mind, there was interest in what Oceana Gold's Reefton project manager, Gareth Thomas, had to say at the July meeting. Drillers who attempted a 1200 metre deep hole earlier this year were down 900 metres (somewhat deeper than the Prohibition shaft) when they struck difficulties, but there are hopes of a fresh start late in the year. Meanwhile drilling at Big River is going well and results should be available soon. Gareth was also able to tell us that back in May, Globe Hill had (temporarily we trust) surpassed Waiuta as the West Coast's greatest gold producing area.

NEWS FROM DOC.....

Jim Staton from DOC (Department of Conservation)

was able to confirm the purchase of Jos Divis's cottage. As it was the only building on freehold land, the whole town is now under the department's management, but the cottage will be transferred to Friends of Waiuta for conservation and use. DOC's work on the Prohibition contamination continues, the latest move being the introduction of waste from the old Blackball coal mine which, remarkably enough, can be used in treatment of the Pro problem. Very clever on someone's part. Jim also told us that a company intends to harvest pinus radiata near Waiuta, and he suggested ways of limiting damage to the road by logging trucks coming up from Blackwater. We intend to take that matter up with the company involved.



All in a day's work.... Alan Stephens in the rebuilt back porch at Gills' Cottage.

..... AND OF DoC!

People required to do community work through DoC (the Department of Corrections) have been added to our free-of-charge workforce, and a great job they've been doing too, keeping road edges trimmed and weeding out invasive plants.

TREES

Self-sown exotic trees that have been spreading alarmingly could turn out to be of some value. Sawmiller

and history buff Kevin Williams (a grandson of 'Taffy') is keen to produce timber from the trees, with some of the proceeds going to Waiuta projects. Historic trees will remain, or will be replaced when they reach the age where they require felling or fall over by themselves.

TAKE A PEW!

Making a call at Charleston in the service of the SPCA, Margaret Sadler came upon a couple of pews from the Catholic church - and the owner gave us one! It will make another handy historic item of furniture in the lodge, along with the Anglican church altar.

SCHOOL DIARIES.....

We will again sponsor the Reefton Area School diaries. The school makes regular use of Waiuta and there's nothing like keeping the importance of history in young minds.

.....AND ROLLS

Helen Booth (née Bannan) is doing research for a book on Blackwater and among other information would like a copy of the school rolls. If you can help, please let's know and we'll put you in touch with her.

WHO CAN YOU SPOT?

We're always keen to get information on great old photos that keep turning up. This issue we'd like help with a 'new' one (at right) and soon we hope to send out the well known 1934 Divis school pic in a bid to add a few more names to that as well.



Waiuta kids of the 1930s include Lance Dean at right, with Mick and Godfrey Anderson above him, Terry Smith with his hands clasped, John Beckwith wearing a tie, Reg Baran next to him and Brian Smith over to the left with his tongue out. That could be Olive Chapman bottom right. Helen Talbot might be there too. How many can you add?



Bikers recovering in an unmistakable Waiuta landscape with the south shaft mullock heap in the distance, right of centre.



Christchurch event organiser Diana Calvert at left with Jack Robertson and Reece Gidley - plus plenty of Waiuta photos and memorabilia in the background. Thanks to Graeme Farrant for all the colour photos in this letter and on the reverse side of our financial report enclosed with it.

MORE ABOUT BIKERS

An important detail regarding the Quartzopolis Classic mountainbike race back in April, which somehow eluded our last issue, was the fastest time. Now we are not making this up: someone rode from Reefton along the old mine road to Big River and on over the track to Waiuta in just two and a half hours! Some of us thought that was a good time from Reefton to Big River in a four wheel drive, so maybe two wheels (and two legs) are better than four. It's also good to report that the mining community

was well represented by Oceana Gold employees, including the 'captain' (as he'd have been known in the old days) Gareth Thomas.

SUBS

Something we missed with the last newsletter: subs are due! \$10 will keep you up with what's happened and what else is planned. Cheques, and any other form of bankable money, including small gold bars, will be welcome at the address up top.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, November 2011 at Fran and Graham Hunter's, 31 Victory Street, Reefton. All present and prospective members welcome at 7pm sharpish.