



newsletter

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

December 2003

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR when we keep exclaiming how quickly it's passed – ever aware, of course, that it's gone as quickly as all others in history (except leap years of course). Still, 2003 has been a year of some progress on the Waiuta front and was not allowed to slip by without a great get-together – as we're about to tell you.

November Get-together

Our big day out at Waiuta drew somewhere between 40 and 50 people from as far away as Christchurch. (They were moving around so quickly, chatting and looking, nobody managed an accurate count.) We did get almost everyone to the lodge for the November meeting where several issues were discussed.

Chch Gathering

The successful gathering at Christchurch in 2001 has been recalled so fondly so often, we've decided it's time for another one. It's scheduled for late February 2004 – ring Alva Morgan (née Baran) on 322 7326 (that's a Chch number) for details of date, time, place and what to bring.

Centennial Celebrations

The matter of how Waiuta's centennial should be celebrated was discussed thoroughly. It was agreed there should be an event on Saturday 6th November 2005 (the weekend nearest the Birthday Reef discovery date, which was the 9th) and it was suggested this could set off a week-long festival at Reefton. That's to be confirmed, but you

can just about mark that 6th November date in your 2005 diary (you'll have one soon enough). It's also suggested that we seek Lotto funding for the first time.

Pro Reopening

Meanwhile, Tas Hogg's prediction of nearly 50 years ago, that the Blackwater Mine "will one day live again" looks closer to fruition than ever before. GRD Macraes' Environmental and Sustainable Development Manager,

Mark Cadzow, says applications for the necessary resource consent and access arrangements to redevelop the mine will be lodged before Christmas. Once approvals have been received, GRD Macraes intend to begin by refurbishing the Prohibition mineshaft (which we all know is New Zealand's deepest at 879 metres or 2,881 feet). Dewatering the shaft and workings will take approximately 6 months, followed by development drilling and mining to establish the ore body. The construction of a 3.2 kilometre (2 mile) decline tunnel from the

Snowy River valley to meet the bottom of the shaft will incorporate two vertical air vents en route and take 12 months to construct.

Mined ore will be taken to the surface via the decline, Mark says, and taken by road to GRD Macraes' proposed Globe Hill plant for initial processing. "Our objective is to develop both the Globe Progress mine and Blackwater mine together and utilise the synergies of



An event years ago for kids including Betty Ward (back, middle), Ray Ward (back, right) and Leo Beard (front left). Can anyone help with the others? Venue seems to be around the Rec with Bottom Road in the background.



As we've mentioned before, the lodge has a new section of verandah, seen here at left. It proved popular at the November get-together, but people were having such a good time, nobody thought to take a pic of the assembled multitude on it.

processing the ore at one process plant." Friends of Waiuta have already had discussions with Mark and others involved in the Blackwater Mine project and look forward to further news. We're also interested to hear what members think – we already know of a few who are hoping they'll get the chance to stand at No. 17 level....

Winder Gone

Our newest vice-president, Bede Cordes, set off to Australia recently in search of an old Waiuta identity and one of the Blackwater Mine's finest pieces of machinery. Unfortunately the Prohibition electric winding engine, last heard of as a standby plant at Mt Isa, has gone and nobody seems to know where. Just as well GRD Macraes won't be needing it.

Alf Going Strong

On the plus side, during his trip Bede had the thrill of meeting Alf Saunders and finding out about the Waiuta workings from one who knew them in detail. Glad to report that Alf's still doing well, wishes his many NZ friends all the best and is looking forward to our centennial.

Number Plate Frames

Another Bede project, these bear the words: 'Waiuta 1906-1951, West Coast Gold Town', and are already to be seen on an increasing number of vehicles far beyond the Blackwater turn-off. (They're also turning a tidy wee profit to Friends of Waiuta.) Just send \$12 per set to

Bede Cordes, 1/102 Woodham Rd, Christchurch 6, and they'll be delivered free of charge. But be quick as we're sure GRD Macraes will be buying them up soon for their Reefton-based fleet.

Next Meeting

Thursday, 1st April 2004 at 7.30pm in the Reefton Visitor Centre, entry from The Strand. All members welcome. Remember to send your \$10 sub if you haven't yet – or if you've forgotten whether or not you've paid, we'll always accept another! Our address as always, PO Box 83 Reefton. Hope to see you in February and/or May, meanwhile compliments of the season to all Friends of Waiuta.

We lost one of our oldest members with the death of Viola ('Vi') Thorn at Reefton in December, not long after the birth of her newest great grandchild. Born at Greymouth in 1910, Vi grew up in Blackball, married Fred Thorn and moved to Waiuta where their daughter (now Friends of Waiuta president Frances Hunter) was born. Following Fred's sudden death, Vi and Frances remained in Waiuta until it closed, then went to Reefton. They were a great team, never more so than in the movie 'The Ghost Town Ball' that showed them strolling around Waiuta and reminiscing on their 'home' town. Our sincere sympathies to Frances and her family.

