



# newsletter

## FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

### December 2004

Just in time for Christmas (we hope), the last round of news before we enter what will surely be a long and enjoyable Waiuta centennial year in 2005-06. If you have your new calendar handy, mark 9<sup>th</sup> November as the day for the Birthday Reef discovery re-enactment. Take a look at the enclosed accommodation guide for then and the Easter 2006 reunion as well. Then settle down with a cuppa and we'll tell you what's been going on in the past few months.

#### NOVEMBER GATHERING

The November meeting date saw Waiuta Lodge well packed with members from far and wide - which is another way of saying the editor forgot to count heads. It was great to see some of our (dare we say) Golden Oldies such as Pat Stephens and Jack Robertson, the latter being one of the few remaining underground workers.

#### SHAFT REOPENING

Of course everybody wanted to know about progress on the Pro, and fortunately there were plenty of informants on hand - Oceana Gold Ltd Reefton project development manager Derek Byrne, Blackwater site manager Nigel Slonker and CRE master shaft sinker Russell Phillips. Unfortunately the news wasn't so good. A serious blockage that has occurred since the last reopening work back in the 1990s has stopped the present programme about 60 metres down. Part of the problem is that the rock at the top is wet and unstable, so geotechnic drilling will be employed to test the ground farther down. However the shaft delays are not critical and work is going ahead at the proposed new mine portal in the Snowy valley and along the route of the proposed

decline tunnel that will intersect the Birthday Reef below the old workings. A start will be made on the 3.5km decline during the first quarter of 2005.

#### TIMBERRR!

While the gold remains out of reach for the moment, the Pro shaft has already produced another valuable resource in the form of old mining timber, much of it heart rimu in remarkably good order. The Department of Conservation has

allowed Friends of Waiuta to salvage and sell what could prove to be a colossal quantity of timber for purposes ranging from furniture making to landscaping. We're hoping carpenters, wood turners etc will use some of it to produce special items to sell during our centennial celebrations.

#### PICS FROM TAS AND JOS ...

A fascinating feature at the get-together was a computer 'slide show' of photos from the Tas Hogg collection that Graeme Farrant had scanned for display. They included several shots that even the most seasoned seekers of Waiuta scenes hadn't spotted before, even a few Jos Divis pics that are not in the existing glass plate collection. Graeme has offered to burn them onto a CD for

anyone who'd like them, so if that's you, contact him via email - [graemef@caverock.net.nz](mailto:graemef@caverock.net.nz) is his address.

#### ... AND FROM THE CHCH 'DO'

Photos taken at the February 2004 get-together at Christchurch are also available. For details contact Alva Morgan, 4B Alvastone Drive, Halswell, Christchurch or ring her at (03) 322 7326.

#### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

The days leading up to 28<sup>th</sup> October 1944 saw activity aplenty on the Waiuta Anglican church site as



*Derek Byrne in front of the new Prohibition headframe.*

the building was put back onto its piles after being toppled in a storm. A big community effort had the job done in time for the wedding of Reece Harris and Bill Gidley. Although the church has long gone, the Gidleys have kept going strong to celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary. Congratulations to both of you; we were glad to see Bill over again for the November event.

### ROOM NEAR THE TOP

We'll be temporarily losing a vice-president at the end of summer when Bede Cordes heads off to the US, UK and other interesting parts of the world. He's not exactly sure where, but the itinerary will definitely include mining country in Cornwall and will probably keep him occupied for a couple of years. So we thank Bede for his recent efforts, wish him well and remind him that we want plenty of photos and information to be sent back. We'll also be seeking a new vice-president at the AGM in July.

### NUMBER PLATE FRAMES

#### TRAVEL

At last report there were just 65 sets left – and that was before Oceana Gold bought several for their fleet. Some even went to the United States, to grace vehicles owned by McIntosh Engineering, one of the world leaders in mine engineering. Frames bear the message: 'Waiuta 1906-1951, West Coast Gold Town', and to get yours send \$12 per set to Bede Cordes, 1/102 Woodham Rd, Christchurch 6.

### WAIUTARUA?

Another Waiuta has been spotted near Burnham,

south of Christchurch. The second Waiuta is not a town but a very nice house, owned, we believe, by a member of the Ramsden family. It's good to see people retaining their roots in this way.



*The church sitting safely on its piles.*

### AROUND TOWN

We were dismayed to hear, a few weeks ago, that somebody had been to our beautiful new toilet building and smashed all the porcelain to smithereens. The culprit (possibly an itinerant vandal who's damaged DoC toilets in other places too) was even mad enough to attack the big plastic water tank on Nob Hill with an axe – surely a dangerous as well as wetting act. Glad to say the building was only slightly damaged and DoC has had the necessary repairs done quickly. As part of the new Prohibition power line installation process the track up to Johnny Bright's house site on Lighthouse Hill has been reopened, providing another good place for a walk. Besides some fine views over the western end of towns there are

interesting remains of buildings and gardens to enjoy.

### NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2005 at 7.30pm in the Reefton Visitor Centre, entry from The Strand. All members welcome. Our address for messages, requests, orders etc is PO Box 83 Reefton.

### IN CLOSING....

Meanwhile, compliments of the season as we look forward

to 2005 – a year that will be distinguished by two important events: the Birthday Reef discovery centenary on November 9th and Friends of Waiuta's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary which we'll no doubt mark in some way at the AGM in July.



*The Coulsen brothers leaving for work on an afternoon shift. Photo from a collection given to Frances Hunter at the Christchurch get-together earlier this year.*