



newsletter

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

PO Box 83, Reefton

December 2006

Waiuta's centennial year was seen out on the 25th of November, when even some spring weather that could be most charitably described as 'patchy' did not dampen enthusiasm.

No fewer than 31 members packed the lodge for the year's last meeting while children and dogs whizzed around in the drizzle outside at a rate that defied any attempts to count them (although we're assured there were five dogs).

Inside there was a fair bit of business to deal with, so let's get on with it while it's fresh in the memory.

WAIUTA WEBSITE

To mark the occasion, Bob Waldron had us on the Internet with our very own website that he not only created but also obtained sponsorship for. Not having a phone line at the lodge we couldn't view it on line, but did manage to get a preview courtesy of Graeme Farrant's computer and a copy of the website on disc.

Everything's covered - including how to get there, what was there (22 historic photos), what life and work were like (town and mine details plus several reminiscences) how to get more information (such as by buying our books!) Bob, who is 15, is a grandson of Mary Norton (Coulson) and therefore has Waiuta connections going back four generations. Looking ahead he seems set for a big future in the 'Information Technology' business, so we're grateful to have had free access to Bob's services so early in his career. Our thanks to him and also to Oceana Gold Ltd who have agreed to meet the hosting costs for the first two years at least. The web address is: www.waiuta.org.nz. At the moment you have to type it into the address line at the top of the browser, rather than down in the usual place, until it's had enough hits to be picked up by the search engines (or words to that effect). So get on line soon for an absorbing look.

MEMORIAL BOARD

The board made by Martin Cordes now bears the names of people whose ashes are scattered at or near Waiuta and is a splendid addition to the lodge interior. Thanks to (name) for putting on the names for us.

REEF DISCOVERY PLAQUE

A plaque now marks the spot by Greek Creek where

Jimmy Martin first scraped a rock with his heel and "saw the gold shining like the stars in Orion on a dark, frosty night". (On second thoughts, that was Gabriel Read, but in the absence of a quote from Jimmy it'll do fine.) The Department of Conservation provided it and, we hear, also found the funds for the big brown 'Waiuta' sign at the State Highway 7 turn-off. (Yes - the rumour in our last newsletter turned out to be correct!) So thanks to DoC for those as well as the work that's gone into the general appearance



With the Waiuta Memorial Board: Eddie Stancombe, his sisters (both names) and (both names) and Cora Crozier (née Mangan) at right. All are children of people whose names are on the board.

and condition of the town and mine sites over recent times. We'll have photos of the plaque and sign when someone takes some.

BROCHURE

The Waiuta brochure first produced by the New Zealand Forest Service in 1986 and reprinted by the Department of Conservation a few years later will be seen again, as we've decided to reprint it. Changes over the years will require some alterations to the text, but it will be substantially the same - after all, how can you improve on Jos Divis photos? The idea is to continue to sell brochures for a dollar or two a time - great value for a 20-panel publication - although some will be given away for promotional purposes. Consideration will also be given to producing a smaller, all-colour brochure promoting Waiuta as a place to visit and the lodge as a place to stay - we'll see how this one goes and how finances shape up.

GLOBE TIMBER

When we asked for timber being extracted from the Prohibition shaft a few years ago, there were people who wondered why on earth we would want "that old stuff". The answer came in all sorts of high-quality items produced by John Askin, Graeme Hunter and others, that now grace many homes. There was great disappointment when Oceana Gold's attempt to reopen the shaft failed and no more timber was available, but with the company now set to open cast the old Globe workings there is a prospect of more timber that, while not from Waiuta, may be marketable for Friends of Waiuta funds. We have decided to put in an application to the Department of Conservation to retrieve the timber for sale - more details in the next newsletter we hope.

GILLS COTTAGE

A keen group of volunteers spent extra days in town working on Gills Cottage. Inside jobs included removing a wall to restore the front livingroom to its original size, stripping away the old lino and replacing broken windows. Newspapers dated 1938 and 1939 found under the lino gave an indication of how long it had been there. Outside, a collapsed shed was dismantled and there was a general clean-up. Once again the team included several members of the Stephens family who have close connections with the building as well. Special thanks to Carol and George Lindsay who went back a couple of weeks later and did some painting on the cottage as well.

INFORMATION ON THE SAWMILL ...

On the subject of building, there's considerable interest at the moment in the sawmill near the mine that provided so much mine and construction timber over the years. If anybody has information on it we'd like



The latest person to craft exquisite items from Prohibition timber is Lance Dean who made a ballpoint pen, a jam spoon and a honey dipper. We hope to include his work in a selection of timber products available soon.

to know. Of particular interest is a brick structure still on the site which looks like a furnace or a kiln. One of the old Mick Brett movies shows someone stoking it with slabs from the mill, but we're told by an expert on steam engines that it probably had nothing to do with the sawmill boiler. A coke kiln to supply fuel for the gas engine at the battery has been another suggestion, but we don't think that engine was running in the 1930s when the film was made. All a bit of a mystery which we hope someone will help solve.

... AND THE SKIP

Also, our secretary Graeme Farrant has developed a fascination for the Skip tramway leading down to the battery. He's been clearing growth

around the top of it and from around the house that stood near it. If anyone has knowledge of either he'd be pleased to hear from them.

THE LODGE

We're relieved to say that the hot water cylinder reported stolen from the lodge in the last newsletter has been replaced. Unfortunately the thieves haven't been apprehended and we won't be replacing the washing machine that was taken about the same time. However the dryer, removed for safekeeping, will go back as it's so useful for drying clothes and gear that get wet in the course of general fun and games about the place. After so much had gone missing we

were alarmed to find a blank wall where a map and an aerial photo normally hang, but were glad to find DoC had just taken them down to paint the walls.

FINALLY

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year. Note that the first meeting for 2007 will be on Thursday, 29th March in the Reefton Visitor Centre meeting room, entry from the Strand, everybody welcome!



Building at Waiuta in the past: Taffy Williams at work on his Bottom Road home in 1935 with a Red Hut in the background. Thanks to Taffy's daughter Ivy Riley for this and other photos, plus information on the house.