

# newsletter FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

PO Box 83, Reefton 7851 [www.waiuta.org.nz](http://www.waiuta.org.nz)

## December 2010

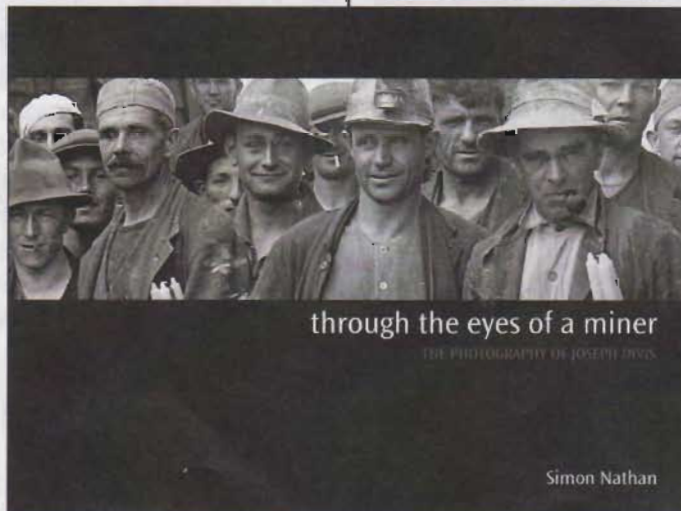
End of year greetings from the West Coast, still feeling the trauma from last month's Pike River coal mining tragedy. As members of the wider mining community, many Friends of Waiuta will know of the fears associated with work underground and extend heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost family and friends.

### NOVEMBER MEETING

There were 15 people along, with the highlight a slide presentation by Nigel Slonker of Oceana Gold, showing us whereabouts at Waiuta they're drilling right now and the Snowy River valley location where they propose to site the decline tunnel. Yes, things really have advanced that far. More details at our next meeting and in our next newsletter.

### JOS DIVIS BOOK

Simon Nathan's book on the 'Wondrous Waiuta' photographer is now out, and what a superb job has been made of it - right up to the standard Divis always demanded of himself in whatever he did, mining or photography. Thanks to Simon not only for writing the book but also for increasing our knowledge of the man



**Cover of the Jos Divis book - good to see SP Williams there!**

and his life and work. Also, congratulations to publishers Steele Roberts Ltd on achieving such a magnificent result. Copies are obtainable from them for \$39.95 (including packaging and postage in NZ) and they can mail books overseas as well. Contact them at Box 9321 Wellington 6141, by fax (04) 499 0056, or email [kathy@steelersroberts.co.nz](mailto:kathy@steelersroberts.co.nz).

### WAIUTA IN NOVELLA

Move over Denniston Rose - now there's Amy Hamblin, heroine of *Guardian of the Jewel*, a novella by Nelson author LaVerne Clark. It's a modern-day romantic suspense, set partly at Waiuta and in the Prohibition mine. As you'll gather there's a bit of author's licence, as they go into something resembling the low-level tunnel (on horses) until it meets the (Prohibition in this case) shaft.

There Amy has a thrilling showdown with a nasty hit-man called Razor while her young son dangles above a drop equivalent to eight football fields in quest of a stolen diamond! But we mustn't give too much away. It's available in electronic form only, from the Wild Rose Press ([http://www.thewildrosepress.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=137&products\\_id=4283](http://www.thewildrosepress.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=137&products_id=4283)) or via Amazon.com. Besides winning the competition it was aimed for, *Guardian of the Jewel* has been awarded four stars on two review sites. Incidentally, LaVerne decided to set the action at Waiuta after reading about it on our website, and is keen to visit the scenes of her novella with her family. We thank her for a riveting story and the publicity it will surely bring for the town and its history.

### HATS AND PLATES

Alan Stephens has been investigating sources of hats worthy of bearing the Waiuta logo, and believes he's struck gold, so to speak - maybe they'll be ready in time to ward off the rays of summer.

Meanwhile, Bede Cordes has uncovered his cache of Waiuta number plate surrounds, now available for just \$13.50 a pair. These not only smarten up any car, but often prompt the question we're always

happy to answer: "Where the \*&^%\$#@! is Waiuta?"

### AROUND TOWN

Inspired by the revelation of more overgrown house remains in our last newsletter, secretary Graeme Farrant moved into the lodge with the intention of spending a few days attacking the undergrowth. For assistance he enlisted his sister Julie (we could have warned her, but hey, this amount of voluntary labour doesn't become available all that often). With Julie able to clear colossal areas of scrub between brief tea breaks they uncovered not only the house site, but another of Graeme's favourite haunts, the brakehead for the Snowy skip (pic next page). For summer, we hear, the target could be the Snowy battery assay house.

## BEREAVEMENTS

Once again we mark the passing of people who were former Waiuta residents or had links with the town.

Kris Bang lived most of the time in Canterbury after migrating from Europe, but got to know of Waiuta and acquired three buildings: Rimu Cottage, the adjacent barbershop and Jos Divis's cottage. A long-time Friends of Waiuta member, he allowed us to put displays in the barbershop and recently handed it to the Department of Conservation.

Max Foulsham, born at Waiuta in 1929, left when was just four and lived most of his life in the Melbourne area. He died earlier this year at 81. Max's brother Ron is still going strong in Australia and frequently corresponds. Artie Gill grew up at Waiuta and was one of the family who kept Gills Cottage for many years as their bach. In 1990 Artie handed the cottage over to Friends of Waiuta, accepting only the price of a new roof he had recently had put on.

To their families we offer sincere sympathy over their losses.



**Julie Farrant having a quick cuppa while clearing years of growth from around the brake bands that once controlled the Snowy skip. Thanks to Graeme Farrant for the photo, and to both for all that effort.**

## MCVICAR MEMORIES

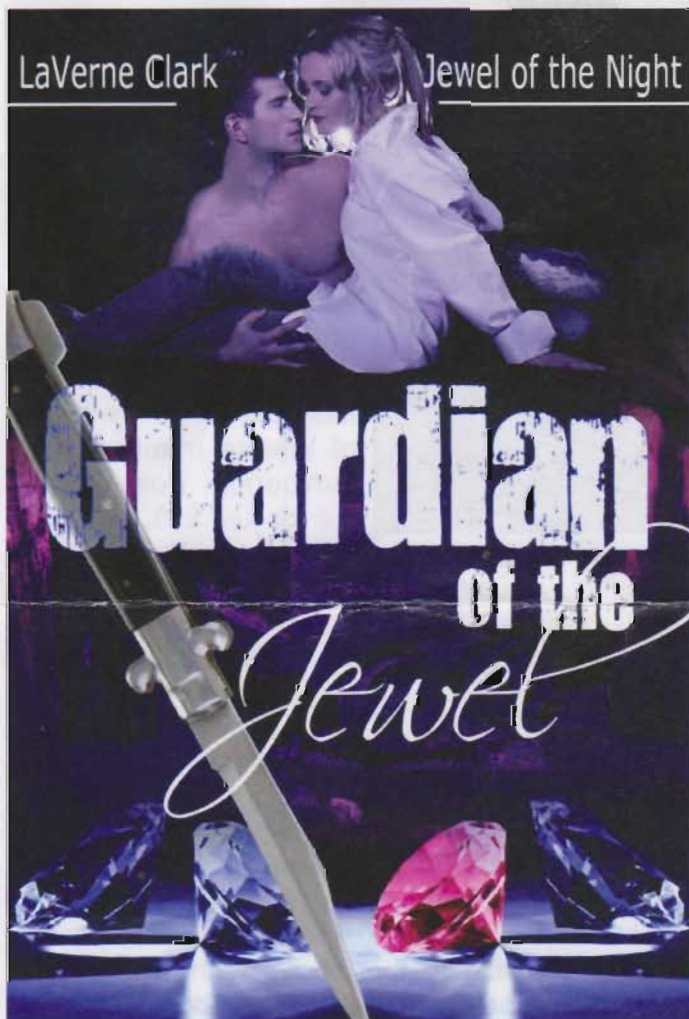
Back in July Diana Calvert, ably assisted by Jim Rosanowski and Annette and Bill Laugesen, recorded Neil McVicar's reminiscences of life in the Grey Valley. Born at Greymouth in 1921, Neil has clear memories of Blackwater, Mawheraiti, Hukarere and plenty of places in between. The tape has now been transcribed and has provided some very interesting reading - thanks to all concerned. Neil now lives in Christchurch and has a wonderful collection of vintage cars.

## YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS

Our silver jubilee passed almost unnoticed back in August, so we've decided to make 2011 a year of celebrations instead. Our next meeting (details below) will be almost bang on the 25th anniversary of the 1986 Waiuta reunion. It's aimed to launch the long-awaited reprint of our book, updated to include all the recent reopening efforts at the mine. Also coming up next year is the 60th anniversary of the mine and town closure - something we can mark at our July meeting and we hope with an event at Christchurch. We aren't sure what milestone will be observed at our November meeting, but there'll be something, even if it's just the 80th anniversary of the silver jubilee of 1931.....

## NEXT MEETING

Saturday, 26 March 2011 at Waiuta from 1pm onwards. Nigel will be there to show us the drill sites and outline Oceana's mining proposal - which will certainly have advanced a great deal by then. There'll be the annual general meeting at 3pm and a barbecue tea - we'll supply the meat, so you bring your choice of salad, sweets etc. See you there!



**The cover of LaVerne Clark's novella leads into 124 pages of mysterious visitors and happenings at a Blackwater B&B, followed by a gripping climax down the Prohibition shaft.**