



# newsletter FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

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

## April 2010

A big hello from the wondrous West where, even if the nights are drawing in, there's still plenty going on - especially at Waiuta which is looking its best in years and seems sure to continue improving. There's even a strong prospect that an important part of it will be returned. But let's start with business....

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our first late summer AGM and day out at Waiuta was a success with about 30 members present from as far away as Nelson and Oamaru. The meeting was preceded by a wander along Incubator Alley to the school site, then down School Track for a look at Jack Maldi's wine cellar. A fearless few then took the long way back to the lodge, via the Greek Creek short-cut track, recently reopened by Graeme Farrant. It was great to see Kath Waghorn doing the full trip around old haunts, not daunted in the slightest by a few obstacles that remain here and there.

At the meeting all officers were returned - Frances Hunter in the chair with Margaret Sadler and Lynn Anderson as deputies, Graeme Farrant (sporting Bill Gidley's hat for the occasion) secretary, Tracey Hampton treasurer and anybody who turns up to meetings as automatic committee members.

Afterward there was the customary barbecue tea, plus plenty more chit-chat. We're also pleased to report that our decision to have the annual Waiuta get-together in March - "when the weather's better" - was fully justified as the rain just held off.

Please note that **subs are now due** to the address at the top - still just **\$10**. Accounts in the next letter.

### CHURCH OF ENGLAND ALTAR

Also present at the AGM is the altar from St Barnabas's Anglican Church that we told you about in the August newsletter last year. Carefully restored by Graham Hunter it's now in the lodge, but somehow we've failed to get a photo of it. We will in future and meantime thanks to Graham for his efforts, and to those who enabled us to get it back.

### BLACKWATER SCHOOL.

The power of the press has aided our project to repile the Blackwater School. No sooner had the *Greymouth*

*Star* run a story about our AGM, including something about the school repiling, than we received a call from a repiler in Greymouth, offering to do the job if we provide the materials and some labour. So we're setting about doing just that.

### REMEMBER THE O'REGANS?

Mention of the school has led Peter Kerridge to recall his maternal grandfather, Cliff O'Regan, who was for a time the council roadman based at Blackwater where his children attended the school. The ruins of their former residence are on the left just before the Blackwater No. 2 bridge on the road to Waiuta. More from Peter in future letters.

### DOC DOINGS

They're always on the job, and deserve more credit than we can usually

find space to mention, but a few things Department of Conservation staff have been up to lately include organising volunteers to clear around places like the school and house sites, repairing storm and vandal damage to the barbershop, investigating ways of cleaning up the Prohibition, New Zealand's second most contaminated site (we wonder what's first?) and finding more bits to put back on the horse trough.



**On the school steps, a quartet of former pupils, plus a pair of pre-schoolers in front. From left, back: Frances Hunter (née Thorn), Lance Dean, Eileen Flaws (née Stephens), Kath Waghorn (née Chandler); front: Alan Stephens, Margaret Sadler. The school building site is at left with bases for the chimneys still standing amidst the manuka.**

## AGE RANGE

Being reluctant to ask people's ages we aren't sure who the oldest ex-Waiuta resident is, but Jean Page (néé Collins) must come close, still going strong at 97. There's certainly no doubt about our youngest Friends of Waiuta member though - that's Miami Ruby Tindall, born in the centennial year of the Birthday Reef discovery, which makes her five! Miami loves going there and regards it as her second home, which gives her plenty in common with the rest of us - so we're glad to welcome her to the society.

## CONDOLENCE

Sincere sympathy to the family of the late Margaret Brough, one of the Robertsons who lived at 'Bogawallah', away up the road toward the Alexander. Margaret made the daily trek to and from Waiuta School from about 1928 to 1935 and spent most of her adult life in the Nelson area.

## JAIL RETURNING

Among the outbuildings at Broughs' home at Nelson was the little lock-up that had stood next to the Waiuta police station. Margaret's brother, Doug Robertson, removed it, detached the porch and replaced the gable roof with a flat one, fortunately retaining the solid door and barred windows. Unable to bear the thought that someone may buy the home and just destroy the jail, Margaret's children have offered it back to Friends of Waiuta. One of her



***The fireplace for the cottage above Greek Creek, on the right side of Side Road when heading up toward the hotel, is now visible again thanks to Conservation Volunteers.***



***The lock-up on its original site near the lower right of the Jos Divis photo above, and on its present Nelson site, still equipped with the door that held some of Waiuta's most notorious drunks.***



***Our youngest member, Miami Ruby Tindall, outside the lodge last January, a month before her fifth birthday.***

daughters, Christine, has also shared her memories of the tiny building:

"It has lead a very quiet and blameless life over the past 49 years really. It has always just been used as a storage shed but Donna and I did use it extensively as a play house when we were children. We just took it for granted we had a jail in our backyard but everyone else was always fascinated by it. Children who visited Mum and Dad over the years were remarkably well behaved on hearing about the jail and then seeing it for themselves. Donna and I knew that if you stood on a small box and got your arm at just the right angle you could put your hand out the peep hole in the door and unbolt the lock,

however much to our delight nobody else knew that so they were at our mercy once we lured them into the jail. The screaming from the person inside would alert Mum of course but by the time she got outside we would have innocently unbolted the door. We always just referred to it as 'The Jail' and still do. People we have been chatting to about it since Mum passed away, like work colleagues etc., are amazed by the story and immediately want to see photos and know about Waiuta. I believe Donna and I will always think of it as our jail, but it will be so special to think future generations – like my one year old grandson – will be able to go and see it whenever they wish."

We've also received a great offer of assistance to bring the building back to Reefton for restoration and, we hope, eventual returning to its site - more details in our next newsletter.

## NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29 July, 7pm, at Fran and Graham Hunter's, 31 Victory St Reefton. All members and prospective members are very welcome.