



# newsletter FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

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

## May 2011

First greetings for the year from the West Coast, where we were hoping to be more cheerful than last time. However the events in Christchurch, where so many former Waiuta people live, and more recently the loss of Mayor Tim White, mean that sadness prevails. Let's be thankful that all our members seem to have come through the big shake OK.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Waiuta defied the forecast to turn on fine weather, and although some might have been put off by the bad predictions, 33 turned up from as far away as Mosgiel for the AGM, walks and barbecue. All officers were relected.

### BEREAVEMENTS

After seeing Tim White at the meeting, members were staggered to hear of his sudden death a few days later. Edwin Woolgar White (to use his rightful name) was born at Waiuta on 9 August 1921 and filled many roles in his long life - teenaged packer, butcher boy, soldier, businessman, family man, motelier, honorary forest ranger and, at our 1986 reunion, one-and-only mayor of Waiuta. They were just a few, and some of Tim's stories are well told in two of our books. His knowledge of and enthusiasm for Waiuta will be badly missed and our sympathy is with Belle and the family.

With regret we also record the passing of Ron Foulsham in Australia where he had lived most of his 83 years. Ron's time in Waiuta was brief - from his birth there to pre-school age - but he maintained a close interest in the town and was a long-time member of our organisation, frequently in touch.

Former NZ Forest Service and Department of Conservation archaeologist Ray Hooker died recently at Tauranga. An enthusiast for Reefton quartz field history, Ray started the archaeological and oral history work at Waiuta that continues years after he left the Coast. Our sincere sympathy goes to his family.

### AROUND TOWN AND MINES

Plenty is happening, as the Department of Conservation's 'rusty relics' man, Jim Staton, told us.

Something we didn't want to hear: the Prohibition ball mill is now the most contaminated site in New Zealand, heading off the Tui mine up Te Aroha way. It's also third in the world - which we find hard to believe, especially in the light of recent global disasters - but regardless

of that, it isn't good. The basic facts are enough: sand in the retort is 44 percent arsenic and a teaspoonful would be enough to kill anyone. It's been decided to treat the problem on site rather than shift it elsewhere, so the area has been fenced off and old corrugated iron in an adjacent wet area will be used to absorb the arsenic.

The tall B&M agitating tanks at the Snowy battery are also unhealthy, in more ways than one, with their rusty state the reason why they will soon come down.

On the brighter side, restoration of the horse trough at the hairpin bend on the road up from Blackwater has been completed. This excellent work would please the late Bill Gidley who realised how rare the trough is and encouraged DOC to repair it.

Plans are now being drawn up for conservation of the lock-up, at present located at DOC's Reefton headquarters.

Jim also brought along a copy of the Waiuta town survey which records the location, condition and history of every known building site. The department is aware that there are more to be found, and welcomes any information that's available on houses, shops etc.

### BLACKWATER MINE DRILLING

Also of great interest at the March meeting was a presentation by Oceana Gold's Reefton project manager, Gareth Thomas. The 1000 metre deep drilling programme that began before Christmas stopped when the contractor encountered difficulties, but the company hopes to re-start in the near future. Meanwhile Oceana has obtained approval to increase the



**Tim White inside his bach, the former Waiuta police station, in 2008.**

size of its main Globe Progress open pit and mining of smaller associated areas. There are even possibilities of expanding the main pit and going underground - and the current gold price is good for confidence. At the present rate, (over 80,000 ounces a year) the Globe's all-time total gold production will surpass Blackwater's 740,000 ounces sometime next month. Everyone connected with Waiuta will be hoping Oceana will soon be back into the Birthday Reef, restoring the rightful order of things!

### OLD IRON RETURNS

A chance remark by Graham Hunter has led to the return of historic corrugated iron to Waiuta. On hearing that the Rahu hall was being pulled down, Graham mentioned to Frances that the roofing iron had been obtained from the South Shaft poppet head. Paul Thomas and others took a look - and sure enough, there was the original red paint, still on the underside. Not stopping at getting some still serviceable 'corrie', Paul also secured some native timber flooring and lining that can be used to repair old Waiuta buildings, such as the barber shop.

### BIKE EVENT

Nearly 100 riders, plus many more supporters, were at Waiuta on 2 April for the completion of the inaugural Quartzopolis Classic mountain bike race. From a rolling start on Reefton's Broadway they rode around to Soldiers Road, then raced along the bumps to Big River and over the recently upgraded track to finish at the Waiuta post office site. Our volunteers were there to provide food and sell a few souvenirs, which netted us \$380 profit - so hearty thanks to them.

### CHOPPERS ON SHOW

Recent correspondence included a letter of thanks from the Reefton Axemen's Club whose programme at this year's Inangahua A&P Show included the Friends of Waiuta 275 millimetre (11 inch) standing



**The Jos Divis cottage: in a sad state, but could be saved.**



**John Beckwith holding the Jos Divis underground photo he presented at the AGM.**



**All who missed the AGM also lost the opportunity to sample the customary pot luck tea. Needless to state, those who were there enjoyed good fortune.**

chop. Glad to report that the \$200 prizemoney didn't travel far, being won by Dennis McLaughlin of Ngahere.

### JOS'S COTTAGE.....

Members at the March meeting were told of moves to buy Jos Divis's cottage from the estate of the late Kris Bang. If the purchase goes through, the cottage will be handed to Friends of Waiuta with a view to restoration. So far there has been no confirmation, but

if our group is to take possession it will clearly have a big job on its hands, requiring outside assistance. More news soon we hope.

### .... AND PHOTO

At our meeting John Beckwith presented a framed copy of the Jos Divis underground photo showing John's father, Tom, on the reef with SP Williams and Tas Hogg. No problem picking Tom Beckwith, as John is a chip off the old quartz rock. The photo is to hang in the lodge - thanks John.

### CHRISTCHURCH EVENT

The 60th anniversary of the Blackwater Mine closure will be marked at the Salvation Army Rooms, 23 Manuere St, Hei Hei, Hornby, Christchurch on Saturday 9 July 2011 at 10.30am. Registration by 15 June to: Diane Calvert, Flat 1 / 1 Weaver Place, Sockburn, Christchurch 8042.

### NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 21 July 2011 at Fran and Graham Hunter's, 31 Victory Street, Reefton. All current and prospective members welcome at 7pm sharpish.