



# newsletter

## FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

### August 2006

GREETINGS from the Wondrous West where we're already looking forward to the first summer of Waiuta's second century. It looks likely to be an active one too, so let's get started.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There was a tight squeeze around the Reefton Visitor Centre meeting room table for the 22nd Friends of Waiuta AGM on 27th July. It was particularly good to welcome Margaret and Ewen Hammerich, Waiuta visitors for decades and members of the Gills Cottage painting team last September. It took them a while to track us down, so we hope they'll justify the effort with a long association.

#### OFFICERS 2006-7

We are glad to say Frances Hunter was again elected president. Her remarkable service to the old home town was recognised with an award from the Department of Conservation a while back (which we omitted to mention at the time) and her organising skills and enthusiasm are clearly as strong as ever.

A new vice-president was elected: Lyn Anderson, a grand-daughter of Pat and Stan Stephens. A resident of Blackball with a young family, Lyn is a bright personality with that Stephens family trait of never being lost for a word, so we can look forward to some lively meetings.

Sarah Clarkson completed her term as secretary, taking with her our sincere thanks for a huge contribution to the success of the Waiuta centennial year. Stepping in is Graeme Farrant whose voluntary scrub cutting efforts have made such a difference to the appearance of Waiuta. Now he's going to prove that

he's as mighty with the pen (or more likely the computer) as the slasher, doing the new job largely from Christchurch through the wonders of email etc.

We're also seeking a new treasurer as Ronnie Buckman needs to devote more of her time to motherhood, promoting tourism in Reefton and helping run The Future Dough Company (or the Broadway Tea Rooms and Bakery - just the place to treat your tastebuds next time you're in town). Fortunately she

will continue until a successor is found.

Ronnie's financial report and the president's annual report are included with this newsletter. Note that subscriptions are due too - still \$10 - details on the slip.

#### MARKETING

Something that's clear from the financial report is that we're "asset rich", particularly in books, but could do with a quicker turnover. Margaret Sadler has taken on the task of marketing not only our books, souvenirs etc, but also Waiuta in general. That will include having the brochure updated and reprinted, as well as possibly producing a smaller colour brochure promoting the lodge for holidays, school trips etc.

#### WEBSITE

To help with promotion, Marg has enlisted the computing skills of Bob Waldron, whose Waiuta connections go back four generations - being a grandson of Mary Norton (Coulson). Bob's not only very quickly gone about designing a Friends of Waiuta website, but may have even managed to obtain some sponsorship for it. This still had to be confirmed as we went to press, but whatever the case the site should be running by early September, so if you just type 'Waiuta' into Google it should come up near the top.



*Bill Gidley beside the chimney of his house around past the hall, one of the town sites that have been cleared recently by Graeme Farrant.*

## DoC Doings

The overall appearance of Waiuta attracted many good comments during the reunion. It's interesting to note that the Department of Conservation team that's been largely responsible has strong connections: One is Lindsay Barrow, son of Kath and grandson of South Blackwater mine manager and prospector David Absalom; and another is Ian Davidson, the long-serving former FoW secretary, best known for his surprise appearances as 'Jimmy Martin the Prospector'.

The department's representative on the FoW committee, Nia Rowlands (Programme Manager, Historic, for the dept's Greymouth Mawheranui Area), outlined a few more developments at the last meeting. River works have been completed to protect the cyanide tanks at the Snowy River battery, planning has started for strengthening the south shaft boiler flue, and means of regaining access to the Prohibition ball mill site is being looked at. Finally, after years of trying, it looks as if signs indicating Waiuta will at last be put up at the Highway 7 turn-off!

In conjunction with an eco tourism conference at Greymouth in August DoC organised a 'then and now' field trip to Waiuta. After enjoying a walk around with Nia and an encounter with 'Jimmy Martin' they were whisked off to 'Little Earth' near Runanga for a look at the model Waiuta village with its creator, Alan Hunt.

## GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

The good news is that we managed to get the Reefton Community Hall free of charge for our centennial reunion events. When we



*We're on the lookout for photos, descriptions and other memories of Waiuta houses for a town survey that could grow into a book. Who remembers these? Above: Mr and Mrs French's house between the Battery and Hukawai tracks. (Photo by Frances Hunter.) Below: The house at the top of the Skip. (Schofield collection.)*



complained about the disgraceful condition of the hall, the Buller District Council had no hesitation in waiving all charges. Thanks again to those who pitched in to quickly tidy it. All the 'thank-you' messages that continue to roll in following the Easter event, confirm that all the effort was worthwhile. The bad news is that the washing machine was stolen from the lodge ablution block in July, followed by the big hot water cylinder in August. The dryer apparently wasn't wanted, but has been removed to a safer place just in case. How we guard against these break-ins and thefts has been the subject of much discussion, but so far there's no sure solution.

Meanwhile the cylinder will have to be replaced, but the washing machine may have to wait until security

about the place has been improved.

## MEMORIAL BOARD NAMES

The first names are about to be put on the board, made for us by Martin Cordes, commemorating people whose ashes are scattered at and near Waiuta.

They are Kath Barrow, John Cave, Eddie Chandler, Mrs Mangan, Muriel and Bill Stancombe and Tosh Stephens. We are still trying to contact relatives of Kitty Dooley/Coulson for permission to add her name. We aim to put the board up at our.....

## NEXT MEETING

Our annual outing at Waiuta will be on Saturday, 25th November, with a walkabout, then a meeting at 4pm. Bring your own salads etc for the meal that follows; meat will be provided. See you there!



*Just some of the Waiuta products we'll be promoting widely in the near future. They include bottles, cups, letter holders, key rings etc, beautifully turned from old Prohibition shaft timbers by John Askin, Rex Crook and Graham Hunter.*