



newsletter

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

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August 2008

Welcome to the winter newsletter from way out west where we're not only occasionally snowed in (passes closed as we write) but snowed under with so much going on to do with Waiuta.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A slightly earlier meeting time coaxed a good number of members away from cosy coal-powered firesides. Leslie and Ina Black from Oamaru and Alan Stephens from Christchurch managed to get across the passes, but bad weather prevented Bill Gidley and Graeme Farrant from making it - we hope to see them over in November or sooner. Thanks to Lynn Anderson who took the minutes for the meeting.

Gareth Thomas from Oceana Gold showed us a very good promotional video about the Globe mine that the company has commissioned, and we were glad to see a bit of Waiuta in there too.

Officers were mostly unchanged: Frances Hunter president, Lynn Anderson and Margaret Sadler deputies and Graeme Farrant secretary. Welcome to Tracey Hampton as treasurer with Dawn Chandler auditor. Les Wright continues with the newsletters, which could be why this one's late. **Subs** remain at **\$10**, now due.

ANDREW REMEMBERED

Former Waiuta airman Andrew McEwin and his fellow crew members were commemorated on 23rd June near Markelo in the east of the Netherlands. It's been 65 years since their RNZAF Stirling bomber was shot down while returning from a World War Two bombing raid on Germany. A striking memorial featuring the burnt-out engine of a Stirling was unveiled by the New Zealand Ambassador to the Netherlands, Rachel Fry. It bears the words: 'They gave their lives for our freedom.' The initiative to erect the memorial came from retired businessman Benny Schreurs who is leading a project to restore ancient walking paths around Markelo. One path runs alongside the crash

site, and the memorial will be a prominent feature on the walking route. Our sincere thanks have been extended to Mr Schreurs and the people of Markelo for keeping the memory of a favourite Waiuta son alive in this way. They also provided the photos below.

JOS DIVIS ON THE WEB...

An internet exhibition of Waiuta photographs by Joseph Divis can now be viewed on New Zealand History Online (www.nzhistory.net.nz). It features 24 photos, sourced mostly from Brendon Wilshire's collection of Jos Divis glass plates, with a few from the

collections of Derek French and Ian McEwin, and including all the photos in the Friends of Waiuta travelling exhibition.

Geologist and author Simon Nathan became interested in the Waiuta photographer while researching a story on the West Coast for Te Ara, the on-line Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, and he put the idea of an internet exhibition to his contacts at the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. They were equally impressed with Jos's work and 'Waiuta - through the eyes of a miner' resulted. Not only are the photos beautifully presented, there's a biography of Jos by Simon, who found a lot of interesting details during his research, plus a history of the town and its mines.

People with memories of Waiuta are welcome to leave a comment beneath any photo, and there is also an email address to send in corrections, additional information or memories. Our appreciation goes to Simon and the team at the ministry for according Jos national recognition, more than 40 years after his death. There's a sample pic over the page.

Incidentally, about 150 photographers have booked a guided trip to Waiuta with 'Jimmy Martin the prospector' in October next year - what a great time they will have. We look forward to seeing and perhaps publishing some of the results.



Scenes at Markelo on 23rd June: The NZ ambassador unveiling the memorial, Benny Schreurs in front of the fliers' graves, and a closer look at the memorial.



CATCH THE OLD NEWS

Also available on line are Issues of the 'Grey River Argus' up to 1920 via the National Library of New Zealand's 'Papers Past' website. There's plenty of Waiuta news, much of it already familiar through Anne Hutchison's book of Waiuta snippets, 'Our Own Correspondent'. We have a link with the library in Margaret Hurst (née Fisher), senior reference librarian for family history services. In a recent newspaper article, widely published, Margaret warned that researching family history can become addictive -something she knows from professional and spare-time perspectives. For a bit of other history, historical maps of the Waiuta, Globe and Big River mines, ideal for framing, have been produced by Oceana Gold and are available from the Reefton Visitor Centre for \$12.50 each plus p&p.

TOWN & AROUND

With spring on its way our keen 'fixit' members are eyeing up things that need doing, with the back porch at Gills Cottage most likely to be the next job.

The Department of Conservation has fenced off the Prohibition ball mill site, because of contamination, and removed the boardwalk linking the mill and mine sites. Various options to solve the toxic waste problem are being looked at.

A large slip has taken away about 10 metres of the track from the battery to the powerhouse, near the bottom end. It seems likely that it will be re-routed directly to the Hukawai Track, so the powerhouse will still be accessible.

Work on access to the Snowy battery, including a better sign system, is being



Half a million ounces of gold passed through this, the Snowy battery vault. Photo from Jim Staton.



Appropriately the Jos Divis photo exhibition on the Internet (see previous page) has a couple of shots taken from his favourite spot, looking out on the 'old' mine. This one is from the Derek French collection.

planned - we'll have details in a later newsletter. Meanwhile, spraying of growth along the cliff at the back wall has re-exposed a few interesting features, particularly the vault where gold bars were stored. The strongroom door has gone, but its concrete doorway and the cavity in the rock behind are quite evident and fairly sound.

Gold is still being won, northward at the Globe, by Oceana and its 160-strong workforce, but you wouldn't want their electricity or diesel bills. The Blacks had a trip up there with 'Around the Globe' tours, which they recommend - and Leslie would have seen a few mines during his career as a mining engineer.



There's snow business like show business when it comes to showing visitors around the Globe mine plant in August. Thanks to Paul Thomas for the pic.

SAUNDERS 70TH

It was great to send a congratulatory letter to Bella and Alf Saunders on their 70th wedding anniversary. At the other end of the marital scale, congratulations are due to Bede Cordes, now back from a few years working and travelling overseas with Emma. The pair have just announced their engagement.

BEREAVEMENTS

Sincere sympathy to the families of Madge Barrow and Joe Cooper who both died recently. Joe, who lived at Picton, was one of the last surviving Waiuta miners and was back for the 2006 centennial celebration.

NEXT MEETING

Waiuta, Saturday 22nd November - meeting 4pm and a barbecue after. FoW will supply the meat - please come along and bring a salad or dessert.