



# newsletter

## FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

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

### December 2007

Just when you thought 2007 was done and dusted, here's our final newsletter for the year. We just hope it isn't 2008 before you read it!

#### NOVEMBER MEETING

No fewer than 24 people were at the meeting on Saturday the 24th, with former residents out-numbered 11-13. That would indicate our society has a strong future, with descendants of residents, plus others with no connections at all, taking an interest.

Familiar faces included Bill Gidley, who drove over from Christchurch, Margaret Sadler who was up from Greymouth with young Margaret, and Tim White over the saddle from Reefton.

A supposedly new face (although some could pick the family resemblance) was Robert Hempseed, son of Basil and grandson of Bob 'Honk' Hempseed of general store fame. He even brought his grandfather's pocket watch which was widely admired.

Another newcomer, but with a well known Grey Valley name, was Bill Clayton, son-in-law of Cora Crozier (née Mangan). Bill has fond memories of trips up to Waiuta as a lad, and we hope to see plenty more of him and Robert in future.

The meeting, in the Waiuta lodge, was followed by the traditional end-of-year barbecue before members wandered off in various directions to revisit old haunts. No doubt there were some interesting reminiscences so we hope someone was taking notes.

#### DEVELOPMENTS

Everyone was impressed with the appearance of the town, all credit to the Department of Conservation and some keen Friends of Waiuta volunteers. Since our gang repainted Gills Cottage, DoC have swooped in to do a big tidy-up of the section, with the result that the place is looking its best in decades - and every bit of the \$20,000 valuation recently placed upon it. With

our bright 'sparky' Bede Cordes returning from a couple of years overseas we hope to have the wiring done before long.

Also getting some attention from DoC is the old horse trough on the road to Blackwater. Looking farther down the road, we are trying to get a grant to repile the Blackwater school, first stop for many people travelling up, but no luck so far.

A further knock-back came with news that we cannot have old mine timber from Globe Hill to sell for funds, because of possible contamination. We still have supplies of the Prohibition timbers from which Lance Dean and others can produce beautiful woodware.

#### BIRTHDAYS

There were many happy returns and a card for Bill Gidley who turned 90 on 5th October. However even he and other nonogenarians in Pat Stephens and Alf Saunders have to give away the best part of a decade to the person who is surely the oldest ex-Waiuta

resident of all, Bob Welsh in Marlborough. A former trucker in the Blackwater mine and a 'lokey' driver on the sawmill tramway, Kaitangata-born Bob turned 100 on 13th November - and we add our congratulations.



*Above: Robert Hempseed, Bill Gidley and Margaret Sadler checking time on 'Honk' Hempseed's watch. Below: Who are sporting this team-set of Waiuta teeshirts? Find out over the page!*



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## BEREAVEMENTS

Sadly we have to record the passing of three people closely connected with Waiuta - Allan Brett, Bob Griffin and Dave Norton.

Allan, son of Mick and grandson of Walter Brett, spent his first six years at Waiuta and always retained an interest in the town and mines. Allan's memories of those 'free and easy years' formed a chapter of the centennial book 'Our Own Fun', for which his son Vaughan designed the cover. Bob married Ena Beckwith and the pair settled at Totara Flat where, among other things, they ran the Waiuta kennels. Together they were keen members of our committee for many years. Following Ena's death, Bob in his 80s wrote 'The Book of Mills and Men', largely based upon his sawmilling experiences, and also inspired 'Our Own Fun' by typing up Ena's memoirs of her Waiuta girlhood. With care from his granddaughter Angela (also a Friends of Waiuta member), Bob was able to live out his grand old age at home.

Dave was the husband of Mary Norton (née Coulson) and a resident of Moana. The couple were regulars at Waiuta events, where Dave's cheery presence has already been missed.

Our sincere sympathy to the families of all three men.

## 'GHOST TOWN GLIMPSES'

Jack Chapman's memories of Waiuta go back to 1932 when he arrived as a five-year-old after his father, Jack Senior, gained the contract to screen movies. Now his son-in-law, David Grantham, has recorded Jack's reminiscences in an impressive 87-page 'booklet' called 'Ghost Town Glimpses'.



**Stan Stephens was the first wearer of a Waiuta hat, and now his son Alan, granddaughter Nicci and great grandson Madison have pioneered the teeshirts.**



**Robert Hempseed also presented Friends of Waiuta with this framed photo of a family lineup (from left): Bob, 'Honk', Agnes (later Mrs Kent), Bill, Ada (née Pothan, from Ahaura) and Basil. Sorry about the reflections from the glass that mar this camera copy.**



**Lance Dean was down from Richmond twice in November - for the meeting, and earlier for a Globe Mine tour. Behind Blacks Point Museum he was reacquainted with a Waiuta electric mule. We promised to make no reference to a pair of Waiuta old-timers, so there - we've kept our word.**

Unfortunately it's a very limited edition, but we've been lucky enough to receive a copy which has been widely enjoyed. Besides chapters on just about every topic imaginable, along with plenty of photographs and diagrams, there's an extensive appendix including an interview with Rona McDonald (née Whitehead), the first born in Waiuta hospital.

Overall, a fine example of what can be done to preserve these priceless memories - and remember, the results don't have to be as extensive as this. Words on paper or tape are the main thing.

## DOES ANYBODY REMEMBER...?

We've had inquiries for information about William Moncrieff who died at Waiuta in 1911. While that's too early for living memory, if there are any family stores regarding that name we'd like to hear.

## GLOBE MINE TOURS

They're happening, with a mix of modern and historic mining - we'll tell you more next time.

## NEXT MEETING

Reefton Visitor Centre, entry from the Strand, 27th March 2008 at 7.30pm. All members welcome. Meanwhile, compliments of the season!

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