

FRIENDS OF WAIUTA

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Hello again from the wondrous West where we've enjoyed a better-than-usual spring and are looking forward to a typically bright summer. Nearly 30 of us enjoyed a splendid day up there last month, for a meeting and the customary barbecue. There was plenty of good news on several fronts - so let's get started.

DRILLING RECORD

It would be fair to say most interest was on what Oceana Gold's Reefton manager, Nigel Slonker, had to report about the Pro Hill drilling - and he certainly did not disappoint. Waiuta can now boast the deepest successful diamond drill hole in New Zealand (to go with the deepest mineshaft) but like so much in Waiuta's history it was not achieved without some drama.

After failing to find the Birthday Reef where expected at 1,460m they continued and found just two thin bands of poor quality quartz at 1,670m. At 1,740m they pulled back, commenced a 'daughter' hole - and there it was! A reef one metre wide with 85 grams (2.7 troy ounces) per tonne of very visible gold - about four times the lode's historic average.

Apparently at that depth the reef has twisted and become almost vertical. Together with the hole drilled in the 1990s this one proves the reef exists 680 metres below the last workings - which means more than 1,550 metres below the collar and about one kilometre below sea level. Now the last hole in the programme is being drilled from down the hill, near the junction of

Long Gully (which the Blackwater Road follows) and Blackwater Creek.

With "not much change from \$4 million" for the record hole and a further 1.5 million budgeted for the last one, the company will have to consider a much larger investment - a decline tunnel from the Snowy Valley to mine the reef again - around the middle of next year. Plenty of ex Waiuta fingers will be crossed

for them there and at the drilling sites that have been opened farther up that valley at the old Blackwater South and Millerton mines.

US PERSPECTIVES

Broad landscapes, mining minutiae and just about everything in between around Waiuta came under the focus of 17 young American photography students for three days in November. Equipped with the computing power of several Apple Macs, to go with an impressive assortment of cameras, they produced not only a stunning selection of photos, but also an eye-catching brochure we're about to have printed to attract more people to 'our town' and its history. It's sure to work a charm and we look forward to visits from more groups, as quite apart from what their massive contribution they were a pleasure to have about the place.

OTHER VISITORS

Also enjoying the town and surroundings recently were members of the Trafalgar (Nelson) Probus walking group from whom we received this message: "Thanks for the chance to stay in the lodge and be a part of Waiuta town for four days. A magical place." They're most welcome.



Ten of the US photography students snapped by an 11th up at the Prohibition Mine. Look forward to a copy of their bright new Waiuta brochure with the next newsletter.

LONG CAMPAIGN SUCCEEDS

After 70 years ex Waiuta postie Johnny Jones has seen his fellow World War Two Coastwatchers gain recognition. One of more than 20 Post and Telegraph radio operators sent to Pacific atolls to watch for German raiders, Johnny was captured by the Japanese and spent four years as a prisoner of war, but many others (including Arthur McKenna from Big River) were executed. Following a long campaign by Johnny, a memorial wall will be built in central Wellington to remember them. A short documentary about Coastwatchers, produced by New Zealand Post, is on YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-PxoJ7u45Q>



Looking still fit enough to do the Waiuta mail round, 92-year-old Johnny Jones (left) with his son Lindsey (right), over from Canada for the occasion, and PM John Key.



Margaret Sadler with the Governor-General Sir Jerry Mateparae.

ANIMAL AID HONOURS

Margaret Sadler, a Friends of Waiuta vice-president (and a niece of Johnny Jones) was among selected SPCA volunteers from throughout New Zealand who were presented with Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee emblems in recognition of their meritorious service to the organisation and animals. Margaret's first Waiuta pet, Horrie the dog, would be proud.

BEREAVEMENTS

Our sincere sympathies go to family and friends of former resident and one of the last underground miners, Reg Avery, as well as another keen friend of Waiuta, Bill Laugeson.

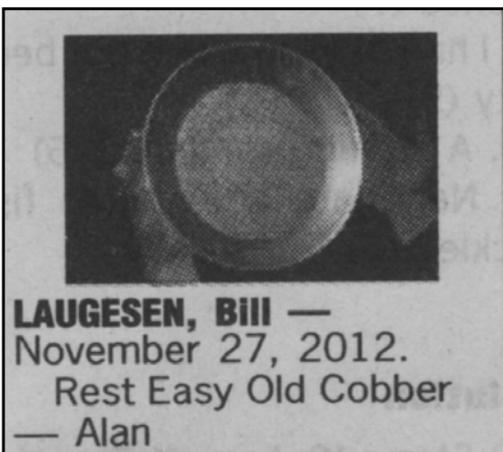
Reg grew up in the house behind the Anglican church, went to school along the road and later worked as a trucker and miner. A great storyteller, he contributed some beauts to the Waiuta book such as an earthquake down the mine, the company's attempts to catch miners pinching gold and a universal favourite: rats getting miners' phthisis. (Was he kidding? Hard to tell with Reg as he could keep a very straight face - but it was too good a story to leave out.) Bill knew a good deal about gold and spent much time seeking it - more for the enjoyment than any prospective fortune - and was a keen member of the Christchurch FoW group.

BLACKWATER BOOK

Helen Booth (née Bannan) has completed her fine little book on the town that Waiuta sprang from, and the families who lived there. For copies contact Helen via email: dhbooth@actrix.co.nz

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, 6 April 2013, 3pm at Waiuta. Barbecue provided afterwards - just bring salads, pudding etc. Meanwhile, compliments of the season!



A tribute in the 'Press' from Bill's long-time friend and fellow prospector, Alan Roberts.