

# Newsletter

Friends Of  
**WAIUTA** Inc.

P.O. Box 493  
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[www.waiuta.org.nz](http://www.waiuta.org.nz)

## December 2020

We went into the meeting expecting to elect a new President and Treasurer. However at the last moment there was a quick decision by those two office holders that they would continue in their respective positions until March of next year. This would mean we will resume our AGM at the usual time of year.

Meanwhile despite the Corvid pandemic the last three months have been very busy as shown by the need to go to three pages with this newsletter.

### DOC Developments - Sam Symonds

Sam supplied us with a list of ongoing developments related to Waiuta...

- The first lot of interpretation signs are being installed prior to the Tohu Whenua launch. The logistics involved have caused delays but these have been overcome. There are another lot of signs going to be installed in the next financial year when funding is available again.
- The Tohu Whenua launch is set for December 15<sup>th</sup>. The main activities will be at the lodge as we require power and toilets. The Tohu Whenua marker post will be placed near the South Shaft green area.
- He is waiting for a reply from a prominent Conservation Architect on the cost of conservation plans on Waiuta buildings. These are Jos Divis' Cottage, Rimu Cottage, Police station and the Jail, the Boiler/ shower house and, potentially the entire site. This is to be funded by the \$100,000 historic Opex fund he secured this financial year. Any funds left will be returned to the pool so we have a chance to bid for more next year to undertake further planned work. Sam understands our frustration but points out the importance of doing due diligence and having a clear plan of attack, for further future restoration work will be of great significance when the site becomes a Category 1 Historic place.
- HNZPT (Heritage NZ) are progressing with the inclusion of Waiuta in their suite of Category 1 sites. This is very exciting and long overdue.

### Documentary - 'Whispers of Gold'

This had been an unqualified success.

It has spawned renewed interest in our town with a number of new 'discoveries' being made as during the research process and after the showing of the documentary, people came up to us with photos and snippets of information about their families. A couple of these was the unearthing of a Waiuta Band that predated the Beatles. Aply called 'The Golden Hill Orchestra' they played gigs around the area. Stan Purton played the piano accordion, Mike Inwood the

violin, another on the clarinet and with Heck Lines comparing. What a diverse lot these miners were.



**The Golden Hill Orchestra**

Another was the existence in 1925 of an elocutionary committee. A photo of them in Blacks Point Museum shows the following now prominent names listed:- Len Ching, H A Ord, G B McInroe, A Doig, T Rea.

And yet another was the prominence of the Rose family, who lived in Waiuta for a many years. They were instrumental in having St John's established there and on the West Coast generally.



**Which makes sense of this Jos Divis photo of St Johns Ambulance men and District Superintendent Rose - being presented with an award. - C.1936**

Clearly, Waiuta was always more than a 'boom and bust' town. Early on it developed and continued to create a variety of interest groups and activities that spoke of a society that nurtured and catered for a wide range of interests befitting a town of substance and strong self identity.

## Federation Mining - reopening Blackwater Mine - Nigel Slonker - Project Manager

Nigel reported that much has and is happening. Using many local businesses the site works are progressing well with the installation of the Bridge over the Snowy River now complete, roads formed, building foundations installed, water treatment ponds well advanced and box cut benches installed.

Diamond drilling has commenced with preparations for commencement of tunnelling later in December

The high voltage equipment for site is currently in transit to site ahead of power connection later in the year. The early works program is expected to be completed this month and will involve over 50 specialist contractors.

Over the next 12 months planned or committed investment on the West Coast is \$5.6 million.



**Down on the Snowy River the Main Tunnel Sheet piling is in progress. This is the entrance to one of the two 3.2 km drives to intersect the Birthday Reef under Waitua**

## Working Bee -

On the Thursday and Friday before the meeting Alan Stephens, Paul Elwell-Sutton and I put in two long days working on Gill's Cottage, relocating and then starting to re-clear the school area which has been 'lost' in the regenerating bush - and doing other small jobs. The exterior of Gill's is looking superb; it's our 'jewel in our crown'. Make sure that you make time to look and appreciate it when you're next in Waitua.

## General News

1. Our website has recently had a thorough upgrading. Kelly Perrazollo, computer programmer, has recently given our rather dated site a thorough upgrade with many new and better quality photos and the ability to advertise our books / DVD's and to show recent newsletters. Here you will also be able to purchase via Pay Pal any of the above.

Of special interest here is that Kelly is the great great grandson of William Meates, one of the party of four initial discoverers of the Birthday Reef on 9 November 1905.

2. Diana Calvert, nee Hogg, who sadly passed away recently was a devoted custodian of her grandfather, Tas Hogg's papers. She spent countless hours



**Cory Aitken, curator of Blacks Point Museum receiving Diana's papers from Pauline Barnett**

sorting, and collating these into files that will make family history searches much easier. Those files are now at Blacks Point Museum. What a gift she has left us. Certainly I shall be making time to peruse these when I'm next there.

## Tohu Whenua - Waitua gets History Honours

What is Tohu Whenua and why were we awarded this honour were the first questions I asked when I first heard of this? DOC announced it this way:

*"Waitua was chosen to be a Tohu Whenua because it was once the third biggest goldmine in New Zealand and the largest producer of gold on the West Coast, making it an industrial gold mining site of national significance. Waitua's mines produced nearly 750,000 ounces of gold, worth \$1.6 billion in today's currency! Often referred to as the West Coast's best ghost town, several historic buildings and impressive mining relics remain to tell the stories of the 600 people who once lived and worked here. Walking tracks and world-class interpretation ensure a great visitor experience. Tohu Whenua are places that have shaped Aotearoa New Zealand. Located in stunning landscapes and rich with stories, they offer some of our best heritage experiences."*

For more information and to see who we share our status with visit <[www.tohuwhenua.nz](http://www.tohuwhenua.nz)>

The day was a wonderful success with the town looking in great shape and with the new signage



### Unveiling of the Tohu Whenua pou

Mark Davies, Jamie Cliene, Damien O'Connor, Ned Tauwhare, Margaret Sadler, Andrew Coleman

apparent. I checked the QR code on one and it worked! It showed a map and information of the area.

I couldn't help but think of Frances and Les at this time. They would have been soo proud.

### Waiuta Meetings for 2021 - Mark these on your calendar

#### Very Long Term Planning

1. **AGM** - Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March at Waiuta starting at 2pm ( and at this stage in the morning a visit to new mine site to be arranged and confirmed with Nigel )
2. **70<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of Mine Closing**  
- to be held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July at Waiuta – This day marks 70 years since the mine closed. Note that this is a Friday. We will probably have a remembrance activity on the Friday with other activities moving onto the weekend. Details will follow
3. **July General Meeting** - to be held Waiuta / Reefton on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July
4. **November General Meeting** – to be held at Waiuta on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm.

Reminders will be send out some weeks beforehand.

Gatherings in Christchurch at Paul's place – proposed dates below:

1. Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am
2. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 10.30am
3. Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am for a cuppa and then Christmas Dinner at 12.30ish ( \$15 ).

Mark these in your diary.

#### Subscriptions are now due - see attached form

for the 2021 year: It remains at \$15.

Payment details are on the form.

#### *And finally it is Christmas.*

*We wish you, your family and loved ones all the best over this period and trust the New Year brings love and happiness. Our Best Wishes to you all.*



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