

December 2021

A good muster of about 30 met at the Lodge in Waiuta to cover the extensive happenings surrounding our society. In itself this an indication of the loyalty and commitment of our membership, that this number come so far to attend and have so many 'things happening'. Let's detail some of these.

DOC Report - Sam Symonds and new conservation ranger Mike Gillies

- Conservation architect Chris Cochran has been engaged to report on a programme of saving several buildings. Jos Divis' cottage is reported to be a 'challenge'. It has been cleaned out and the windows all boarded up covering damage human and natural over the years. The \$100k contributed to the work announced at the July meeting will be phased over the years that the work is undertaken.



Work is under way at Jos' Cottage seen here with the skip alongside

- Rimu Cottage too has been getting attention with the windows boarded up and the encroaching vegetation cut back. Chris has been using old photos to prepare his plan.
- The police station too has been receiving scrutiny where amongst other things the piles are in need of attention.

Security: after years of incipient vandalism DOC have decided to install a security system. While we were there a security firm arrived to scope out the buildings and report on an effective approach. Hopefully, those days of arriving at Waiuta to face wanton damage will soon be over. All three buildings above have been on the receiving end over the past year.

General News - Meeting

Ken Dalzell attended the meeting and spoke of his days in the Gem Club when they would regularly visit Waiuta in search of precious

stones. He showed some of his collection and has generously donated some of these to us for display. One of these is an unnamed gem that was made from various minerals/elements that remained after sundry gold processes had taken place. It doesn't yet have a name - he



Crystal Borax (Waiutite?) at centre with flint pebbles from Scotland or Norway surrounding it. These were used in the ball mill and were discarded when they became too small.

suggested that we might call it 'Waiutite'.

He also presented a pencil drawing by Greymouth artist Chris Webster sketched in 1977 of Dick Willan's house.

Globe Mine Book: John Taylor's book on the Mine is progressing slowly. Access to Consolidated Goldfields records in Wellington have proved unexpectedly complex mainly due to Covid regulations.

Snowy River - Federation Mining: this is going extremely well. The two 5 by 5 metre tunnels are now 2.5km long closing rapidly on their eventual 3.5 km length. Completion date is planned for April 2023. Currently the project employs 46 staff and if it proves viable this will increase to 100. Potentially this mine could treble gold production on the Coast. Tas Hogg would be shaking his head in disbelief.

Economisers: The plans for getting the economisers in position are well advanced. Graeme Richardson from Ferrymead is working with DOC on getting brick work repaired to allow the Economisers to be safely installed.

It was described as 'getting all our ducks in a row' and ensuring that we have a good safety plan ready. February / March should have this completed.

Volunteers: there were four of us who came a couple of days early. The school site which we have done significant work on already looked too daunting for us with mountains of waste material awaiting so we took to clearing Skip Road with a vengeance, completing in a day a clear track all the way to the brake bands at the top of the skip. We also had time to open out Stan Stephen's house site - later occupied by Mammy Hall and the Scofield's. With more time to spare we then cleared the side track to the explosives store. The general area now looks inviting. Walk it next time you are there.



Paul, John and Alan relax having cleared the house site Alan lived in as a baby

Memorial Cups: to mark the 70th anniversary of the closure of the town FoW donated two memorial cups to Sacred Heart and Reefton Area Schools. They are to be awarded to a student showing community spirit, with a wider vision of elevating interest in our town and its history. Margaret has recently presented these to the respective schools.

This is excellent publicity of the best kind where on one had it raises our profile and at the same time good citizenship.

Dick Willan: I have often wondered about this solitary man. Dave Grantham, local historian and expert parser of our electoral Rolls and 'Papers Past' has done some skilful sleuthing on Dick, resulting in a short but sympathetic biography of him. Find this attached.

Jos Divis Documentary

COVID restrictions have held up the documentary. When possible they will visit former living sites of his in Waihi and in Matiu / Somes Island in Wellington harbour. Jos's family in the Czech Republic have found some pertinent information relating to Jos' life and it is being translated into English.

An Observation:

Over the years of my interest and work in Waiuta I have been humbled at the generosity and openness of those I've met. In many ways literally tens of thousands of dollars have been gifted to Waiuta. Those dollars have at times been money; at other times they've been in skills or perhaps tools / equipment, or contacts (**where something would happen at no cost**) or of course, labour. FoW would not and could not work without you. It is a story that one day should be acknowledged, for like Waiuta itself it harks back to days that were less self serving and more community minded. You know who you are - thankyou.

In Memoriam

Our sympathies go to the family of Jim Sullivan who died recently aged 91. Jim was the son of winder driver Tom Sullivan. Although he left Waiuta aged 15 he retained a strong interest in the town and until recently was present at every Christchurch gathering. His ashes are to return to his birth place.

Also, Jean Reynolds reports that *'my aunt Marge (nee Jones) died on 9th October 2021. She was 89 and the only one not born in Waiuta.. she was the last of the Jones family.. So although Auntie Marge was not born in Waiuta she was most certainly made in Waiuta.'*

She was born in Auckland when Percy and Mona moved there for health reasons in 1931. This is memorialised in the striking Divis photo taken as they were leaving.

Meetings in 2022

1. Saturday 19th March – AGM at 2.00pm to be followed by the general meeting in Waiuta.
For those interested, at 11am John Taylor will take a Blackwater Mystery tour.
2. Saturday 9th July at 2.00pm at St Johns Hall, Reefton
3. Saturday 19th November at 2.00pm at Waiuta.

Christchurch Gatherings:

Sunday 27th March, Sunday 17th July and Sunday 4th December.

All at 10.30am and at Paul's place -
9A Wittys Road, Avonhead.

Reminders and details will be sent out for both of these closer to the time.

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