

July 2023

Greetings.. As is usual, in July we have our meetings in the St John Ambulance rooms in Reefton away from potentially hazardous Waiuta winter weather conditions.

There were 18 of us in attendance and 10 sent their apologies. New attendees were Margaret Mort, our new Minutes Secretary, Matt Mengel, Mining Engineer at Federation Mining and Michael Veale, newly appointed General Manager for the Snowy River development at Hukawai. It's pleasing and bodes well to see such new faces at our meetings.

General Business and DOC News

- Tom Baker (DOC) reported on progress on the Jos Divis cottage restoration project (planning for March 2024 event to mark completion). Tom referred also to the general work that has been completed around Waiuta. Vandalism is still a problem.

- Mike Veale, gave the meeting an update on progress with the mine. Mike was welcomed and was presented with some books on Waiuta by FoW.

Police Cottage Restoration

FoW will be applying to Lottery Heritage for funds to the restoration of the Police Station. If we are successful we will know in November and work will commence early in February 2024

Snowy River - Federation Mining: Decline Development - July

Tas Hogg is recorded as ruefully saying in the closing stages of the mine in 1951 *'that there is as much gold left in there as we ever took out'*. That statement is in the process of becoming true.

Great news at last - after all those millions of dollars spent and detailed planning done they report that pleasing progress has been reported with a total of 2,886.8m of drilling have now been completed. As the historic Blackwater workings were flooded and needed dewatering a way of releasing this was needed. This has been solved with the successful completion of the first dewatering hole from underground. This was the culmination of months of careful planning and engineering design work. A gently upward inclined, 260.1m

deep, diamond drill hole was drilled across from the 17 Crosscut, intersecting the historic working near the base of the 14 Level.

The hole intersected high pressure water as was expected. This has been contained at the hole collar by a specially designed standpipe. Water samples have been taken and submitted for laboratory analysis and planning is underway to begin pumping of the water and treatment through the site water treatment system.

This achieved they have now intersected the Birthday reef and 'small specks of visible gold have observed'. Assay results are pending.

Snowy River Mine Visit



Graeme, Margaret and Alan in one of the emergency pods that line the drive in case of a crisis.

In April Federation Mining offered Margaret a trip down the main decline to the working face a few hundred metres from the sixteenth level of the the Birthday Reef. With a little arm twisting she enabled another couple to join her, this being myself Graeme Farrant and Alan Stephens. We were met by Lincoln Smith, General Manager of Snowy River Mine who over the next couple of hours thoroughly briefed us with their exhaustive safety procedures before driving us on an extensive tour to the operation's work face. To see up close the mining operations, then very near to the original reef was a great privilege. As Margaret commented afterwards that what was so special for her was being in the same environment that her dad had laboured in all those years ago. For all of us was the realisation that we were 3.2 km down the drive

and that about 800 m above us was where the Prohibition head works once stood. In my imagination this was where the source of the Waiuta and its ever developing vivid history. On returning and handing in our safety equipment I looked down at my trousers to see they were coated with the same sticky dust seen on the Jos' photos of miners coming off shift. Aah, it suddenly became real. I didn't dust them until I arrived home next day. It was a not to be forgotten privilege - thankyou Federation Mining.

- in the main room two broken panes required weatherproofing, this being remedied by a



Volunteer Workers:

Speculation: Did you know that last year our volunteers accumulated 1220 hours of work. At NZ's minimum age of \$22.70 an hour that means we contributed \$27,694 of labour to our town. But, as the saying goes 'who's counting?'

We had two objectives; both of which were achieved.

Pending our application to Lottery Heritage for funds to fully restore the exterior of the building we continued our labours of our last meeting to get the building ready.

The first was to finish the clearing of vegetation and the removal of rubbish surrounding the

covering the wall with a large particle board.

Day 2 was somewhat more complex. Hurley's Leader we last visited 10 years ago and from memory thought it'd be an easy days work. It wasn't. The old logging track was a virtually lost. With 4 of us using 2 scrub cutters and a pole-saw we battled gumboot sucking mud and at times thickets of regrowth and detritus until some hours later we exultantly re-opened the side track to the adit.

On leaving Waiuta we felt it to be a few days well spent.

With the passing the years the valid question is frequently asked, 'What is Hurley's Leader and why the continued interest?' N.G. Hancox, author of 'Quartz Mines of the Blackwater Goldfield - 1896-1951 describes it as follows..

'A very rich quartz lode was discovered 650 metres east of the Black-water Mines south shaft in 1906. It was named Hurley's leader after its discoverer, James Hurley. The leader was driven on, but was found to be faulted a short distance below the surface and could not be relocated.'



The exterior and borders of the Police Cottage are looking much tidier

Police Cottage all in preparation for its exterior renovation. With the addition of two new very welcomed workers - Matt Mengel and Gilly ten Hov - we set to with enthusiasm and by days end had the cottage looking better than it has in many years. We also began the task of removal of many bottles that have been disposed of in a nearby gully. On leaving Alan took 6 bags away for recycling in Reefton.

Jos Divis:

Jos is much in our news lately. We have two items - first the documentary.....

1. JOS: The Forgotten Photographer who saved a Town

Our documentary is proving to be very popular. Producer, Dave Kwant, has sent us the

statistics related to the now completed cinema run. To date about 3,250 people have viewed this film. It has been well reviewed with the engagement on the Facebook ad campaign being considered superb.

With the cinema run completed it is now headed initially for the Sky Channel and eventually for Prime in 2024. For those of you who subscribe to Sky Arts Channel 20, JOS will premiere on Tuesday 8th August, 8.30pm. The film will then also be available for catch up via Sky Go service for Sky Arts subscribers.

2. Jos Divis' Cottage

Our local DOC has made great progress over the last few months using the project as a learning / teaching project for DOC rangers in other parts of NZ for historic renovation projects. From being a building that was slowly rotting and disintegrating we now have a building that has future educative uses planned and will serve us well into the future. The pictures below say it all.

Looking to the future we have a celebration day planned for DOC and Friends of Waiuta. The date has been set for **Friday 15 March 2024**.

This is going to be a big celebration with the families of many identities coming. These include six of Jos' family and members of the Jones and Dick Davis' families.

Accommodation in the district will be in great demand over this period and we'd advise you consider arranging this as soon as possible.

Meetings for the remainder 2023

- General Meeting - Saturday 18 November at the Waiuta Lodge at 2 pm. As usual a BBQ will follow. Please bring salad or dessert to complete this.

Meetings for 2024

Friday 15 March 2024

- Jos Divis Cottage opening ceremony Saturday 16 March 2024.

- AGM and General Meeting at the Waiuta Lodge Refreshments will follow.

- Christchurch Gatherings in 2023

- all at Paul's place at 9A Witty's Road, Avonhead
- Sunday 13 August at 10.30am Please bring a plate

- Sunday 3 December - Christmas lunch Remember that this is our Christmas function - Cost \$15. Bring a plate for morning tea.

As usual reminders and details will be sent out closer to the time.

And finally for a somewhat random selection of photos related to matters in this newsletter go to this link which I'll leave there for a few weeks.

<https://www.icloud.com/sharedalbum/#B0sJ058xyWjXkh>

Two photos from different angles of Jos' Cottage nearing completion

