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Memorial brings tunnellers' stories home



Above: ON PARADE: special guest Willie Apiata rides to Gilmour Lake in classic style with Mayor John Tregidga (obscured) and tunnellers' memorial project manager Sue Baker Wilson.

Left: MONUMENTAL TRIBUTE: Mayor John Tregidga addresses locals, along with New Zealand and overseas guests at the memorial dedication.

Gallipoli, the Somme, and Passchendaele are synonymous with the courage and sacrifices of our World War I soldiers. But few have heard the stories of Russell, Auckland, Wellington, Blenheim, Dunedin and Bluff – that's Russell, Auckland, Wellington, Blenheim, Dunedin and Bluff near Arras in northern France.

As the men of the New Zealand Engineers Tunnelling Company dug under enemy lines there in preparation for the 1917 Battle of Arras, they named the caverns where they worked and lived after some of their hometowns, creating familiar navigation points in the underground labyrinth.

The company included about 90 miners from Waihi and Karangahake: a number with links to other mining communities, and almost half of them overseas-born men serving their adoptive country. Last Friday, a national memorial at Waihi's Gilmour Lake was finally dedicated to the tunnellers, bringing together people from the length of New Zealand and dignitaries representing France, the Cook Islands, Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada who wanted to pay their respects.

Mayor John Tregidga said the tunnellers had "until now been largely unrecognised" in their own country, despite being the first Kiwi unit first on the Western Front and the last off it. He praised the work of Waihi Heritage Vision in establishing the memorial, and especially the passion and commitment of project manager and Tunnelling Company researcher Sue Baker Wilson. The Council has supported the project

and "is pleased to be able to help recognise the men who fought a secret underground war," said the Mayor. "Here, we have a sense of belonging to a community and a story which has its roots in the past but which has ties very much present today. This is not the end. It's a beginning."

British High Commission Defence Adviser Lieutenant Colonel Mike Treffry-Kingdom said the Arras tunnellers showed bravery, camaraderie and loyalty in the face of shelling, poisonous gas threats, cave-ins, and illness related to their appalling living conditions.

French Ambassador to New Zealand Florence Jeanblanc-Risler said France remains ever grateful to the men for their remarkable efforts. "The tunnels they created still stand as a testament. Both memorials [at Arras and Waihi] mark our common memories. Now we are making new memories."

The T-shaped 7.5 metre-high steel monument at Gilmour Lake, funded largely through a Lotteries Commission World War I Commemorations grant, was crafted by Nicolas Brumder of Waihi Metal Studio, and with an associated memorial wall constructed by Doug Yeoman is the central feature of a miners' reflective area.

It was dedicated by New Zealand Defence Force Vice Chief, Air Vice-Marshal Kevin Short, along with several first-generation tunnellers' descendants. Moira Brabazon of Auckland, 85, said she had visited the tunnels at Arras where her father Robert Ronayne had served, and it meant a lot to her to recognise the men who came back as

well as those who died in France.

The dedication was prefaced with a street parade through Waihi complete with classic military vehicles – an honour not given to the surviving diggers on their return home. Participants included tunnellers' descendants, representatives of the Cook Island and Maori members of the Pioneer Battalion attached to the Tunnelling Company, servicemen and veterans, and miners and their families.

Also part of the dedication event were musical tributes, the blessing of the memorial, the mounting of a catafalque guard, the laying of wreaths, and a concluding flyover performed by three Harvards. Commemorations in Waihi continued over the weekend with presentations by guest speakers, a showing of the film *Beneath Hill 60*, and a cemetery tour guided by local genealogist Robyn Ramsey.

What would the tunnellers have thought of their memorial? Brigadier John Howard said his paternal great grandfather Sapper George Fairweather was a West Coast gold miner who would have cared little for parading, speeches, and shining buttons; he and his mates would have found it hard to talk about their experiences.

"They were the sort of men who made things work, with equipment not issued to them, and without any orders. However he would have laughed that as a rock from Reefton was sent to Waihi as part a memorial wall, and would have been pleased. And he would have enjoyed a drink at the RSA afterwards. I think our old soldiers will now rest a little easier."

Whiritoa - get updated, and tell us what you think!

If you live or holiday at Whiritoa, don't miss our annual public meeting at the Whiritoa Emergency Management Centre next Monday, 1 February at 10.30am.

Timed for when a high proportion of out-of-town ratepayers are enjoying the Auckland Anniversary long weekend at the beach, this informal occasion is a chance to meet representatives from the Council and community organisations. We'll outline what we've been doing in the past year, like converting the Surf Club public toilets to changing rooms with two new unisex toilets, and facilitating a replacement fire truck for the Whiritoa Rural Fire Force. We'll also give an update of what's planned for the coming year,

such as installing an outside shower at the Pohutukawa Reserve toilets and resealing the floor at the Emergency Centre.

As part of our scheduled review of the Dog Control Policy and Bylaw that began in September 2015, staff from the Council and the Department of Conservation will explain proposed changes to dog control at Whiritoa Beach – intended to better protect the dotterels that nest at its southern end. The draft Policy and Bylaw will be open for public consultation in March/April.

Another current project is the trial growth of redwoods at the Whiritoa effluent catchment plantation, to determine the suitability of using this species in place of the current eucalyptus trees. Redwoods

inhibit weed growth on the plantation floor; and would not require coppicing (repeated cutting and regrowing from the stumps), which is very expensive.

There'll be opportunity to give feedback to the Council on these topics and any others raised by residents and ratepayers, and we'll take your views and suggestions on board in our planning.

"For local councillors, this is one of our biggest meetings of the year, and we look forward to getting together with members of the community," says Waihi ward chairman Harry Shepherd.

"We recognise that Whiritoa has some quite specific needs and concerns related to its big increase in population for a few weeks of the year."

PUBLIC NOTICES

Council & Committee Meetings

Pursuant to Section 46 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, public notice is hereby given that the following meetings will be held in the Council Office, William Street, Paeroa during the month of February 2016.

Judicial Committee
Monday, 15 February 2016 - 9.00am
Monday, 29 February 2016 - 9.00am

Ward Committee Meetings
Tuesday, 9 February 2016
Plains Ward – 9.00am
Paeroa Ward – 12.30pm
Waihi Ward – 2.30pm

Operations Committee
Wednesday, 10 February 2016 - 9.00am

Economic Development Committee
Wednesday, 10 February 2016 - 1.00pm

Audit & Risk Committee
Tuesday, 16 February 2016 - 9.00am

Western Plains District Drainage Committee
Tuesday, 23 February 2016 - 10.30am

Eastern Plains District Drainage Committee
Tuesday, 23 February 2016 - 1.30pm

Citizen Ceremony
Wednesday, 24 February 2016, 8.30am to 9.30am

Ordinary Meeting of Council
Wednesday, 24 February 2016 - 9.30am

Whiritoa Annual Public Meeting

Monday, 1 February 2016 - 10.30am at the Whiritoa Emergency Centre

This is an opportunity for the residents and ratepayers of Whiritoa to meet with representatives of the Hauraki District Council and other community groups to hear about what has been achieved over the past 12 months and what is being planned for this coming year.

Kerbside Refuse & Recycling Collection

AUCKLAND ANNIVERSARY

Due to Monday 1 February 2016 being a statutory holiday, kerbside collections scheduled for the week of 1 - 7 February 2016 will be carried out one day later than normal. The schedule below shows the collection dates for the Hauraki District and what items to put out.

Township	Collection Day	What to put out
Whiritoa	Monday, 1 February	Bags and glass only
	Wednesday, 3 February	Bags and glass only
	Saturday, 6 February	Refuse and recycling
Kerepehi & Turua	Thursday 4 February	Refuse and recycling
Ngatea, Kaiaua & Waitakaruru	Thursday 4 February	Refuse only
Waihi & Waikino	Friday, 5 February	Refuse and recycling
Karangahake, Mackaytown & Paeroa	Friday, 5 February	Refuse only

WAITANGI DAY

Due to Monday 8 February 2016 being a statutory holiday, kerbside collections scheduled for the week of 8 - 14 February 2016 will be carried out one day later than normal. The schedule below shows the collection dates for the Hauraki District and what items to put out.

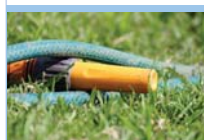
Township	Collection Day	What to put out
Whiritoa	Monday, 8 February	Bags and glass only
	Wednesday, 10 February	Bags and glass only
	Saturday, 13 February	Refuse and recycling
Kerepehi & Turua	Thursday 11 February	Refuse only
Ngatea, Kaiaua & Waitakaruru	Thursday 11 February	Refuse and recycling
Waihi & Waikino	Friday, 12 February	Refuse only
Karangahake, Mackaytown & Paeroa	Friday, 12 February	Refuse and recycling

Remember to have your items out on the kerbside by 7.30am. Collections will resume back to normal days starting from 15 February 2016.

LD Cavers
Chief Executive - Hauraki District Council



Quick Tips for Smart Water Use



Hose health

Check your garden hose regularly for leaks. Store it on a reel to prevent kinking and damage.