

Thursday, 22 October 2015

Waihi Ward Reflections

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Street kids spread safety message

Why are our statues sporting lifejackets?

As part of Safer Boating Week from 16 to 22 October, we're using some of our town icons to remind boaties to wear lifejackets.

Mayor John Tregidga even helped kit them out. "I was brought up on boats myself, and my father always insisted on lifejackets for everyone. Then I raced yachts for several years. So I know from personal experience that wearing a lifejacket is important. They do save lives."

Joining the Mayor last week to get the message out on the street was Whiritoa surf club life member and frontline lifeguard of more than 30 years Billy Doyle – who's also an intensive care paramedic and internationally recognised drowning prevention researcher.

The Waihi statues chosen for the modelling assignment are the appropriately named 'Kids having fun', but adults having fun on any type and size of boat or boat-towed equipment should don lifejackets too.

"There should be enough [life jackets] for everyone," says Billy. Last year 27 people died in New Zealand recreational boating accidents, "often while trying to save someone else". Over two thirds of them could have survived simply by wearing a lifejacket.

Billy was involved in the 2013 recovery of one drowning victim, whose body was found at Whiritoa 10 days after his boat capsized near Bowentown. "Heroically, he had given his lifejacket to another person."

Whiritoa Lifeguard Service club captain Chaz Gibbons reiterates that boaties and kayakers should not only take lifejackets, but wear them. "Boats can sink very quickly,



MODEL CITIZENS: Mayor John Tregidga and senior lifeguard Billy Doyle kit out some of our Waihi statues with lifejackets.

especially ones under six metres in length. Having a lifejacket on increases your survival time in the water."

He says other key safety items are two separate waterproof communication devices.

The Safer Boating Week campaign urges people to get their boats, their gear and themselves shipshape before heading on to the water this season. So if you're a boatie – particularly if you're the skipper and therefore responsible for the safety of everyone on board – prep your vessel, check that that you have the right equipment and that it's working, and know the rules and weather/water conditions.

Meet our World War One Heartlanders



Members of the New Zealand Mounted Riflemen joyriding in Cairo. The brigade was supported by the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, of which Waihi man Alan Dale was a member.

We have special parking places for campervans, and mobility impaired motorists, and even bikes – and this Saturday, 24 October we're reserving one for Army trucks.

That's when the National Army Museum's travelling exhibition, Heartlanders: New Zealanders of the Great War, will roll in to the Council carpark next to the Waihi Salvation Army Church. Three large shipping containers converted into museum galleries will be craned off the trucks, and arranged in a U shape with the sides open.

Heartlanders aims to bring the stories of our soldiers – survivors and those who never returned – back home to the communities where they began. Highlights include original film footage sourced from New Zealand and overseas, together with period music and battle sounds; and artefacts from the museum's collection. With the World War One centenary making this year the museum's busiest ever, "It has always been [our] intention to get a large number of these artefacts on public display," says museum marketing manager Nicola Bennett.

An Online Cenotaph digitisation kiosk from the Auckland War Memorial Museum will enable people to search for information on individual soldiers, and lay a virtual poppy against a specific person's name. They'll also be able to digitise family members' war-related items such as medals, diaries or letters, and add the records to the database for others to share – all within minutes.

Beyond immediate family connections, visitors will have the chance to "get to know some locals", such as Alan Beresford Dale. Born in Croydon, Surrey, he immigrated with his family to New Zealand and settled in Waihi.

After completing Territorial service in Waihi, Alan was working as a book keeper for the Home & Colonial Stores in Auckland at the outbreak of World War One. He enlisted in November 1915 when he was 22, and was recommended for the New Zealand Ambulance Corps "on account of slightly defective vision" in his right eye.

Alan sailed from Wellington on the Tahiti at the beginning of April 1916, bound for Suez with the 11th Reinforcements. In Egypt he joined the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, and was soon at Kantara helping to guard the Suez Canal. With his unit, he supported the New Zealand Mounted Riflemen against the Turkish forces in Sinai and Palestine, and carried out medical duties throughout 1916 and 1917.

In February 1918, Alan returned home on leave, via Australia on the hospital ship Ulysses and from there aboard the Riverina. Once back in New Zealand, he felt poorly, and in November was admitted to the Awapuni Camp hospital in Palmerston North with influenza.

He recovered and was discharged in June 1919 – one of the "lucky ones" who first survived the war and then the pandemic that killed thousands of New Zealanders. Alan eventually moved to Australia, where he died at age 88. His medals are on display in the National Army Museum.

Nicola says Waihi was chosen as one of the tour's 14 North Island stops because the area contributed a significant number of men to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, including the New Zealand Tunnelling Company.

The free exhibition will be open from 9am until 5pm on Saturday 24 October. It will be staffed by civilians from the National Army Museum, supported by a small group of serving soldiers who'll be driving the big trucks.

Golden connection goes live

Waihi is known as the town with a heart of gold, so it's fitting that golden oldies make up 25% of the population. They're mentors, leaders, volunteers, nurturers, sources of knowledge and wisdom, sharers of experience and memories – people who have shaped the community.

This special demographic has been a focus for Waihi ward Councillors in 2015, in considering what services and resources are available or needed for senior residents.

To find out, the Council arranged two meetings for representatives of all the relevant known service agencies and community, church and support groups. By bringing an incredible 25 services together, strengths and gaps were identified.

One gap was not so much in the services themselves, but in seniors knowing what resources they can access and who to contact. We thought: Imagine the difference it might make if there was a collective information point for all the existing services! What if there was one number that people could call to hook into any of them?

The result is Waihi Senior Connect – a one-stop shop for older residents who need anything from a home visitor or volunteer transport around town, to a social group to join. The service was launched this month at our International Day of Older Persons celebration in the Waihi Memorial Hall, and is based at the Waihi Community Resource Centre.

An initial \$3200 grant from the Council's Waihi ward discretionary social fund has assisted toward coordinator costs. "It's great to see Senior Connect up and running, and we encourage people to use it," says Councillor Pam Keall.

Resource Centre manager Jan Smeaton says the service has got off to a quiet start, but she hopes seniors will become aware of it through publicity around the community, such as at medical centres, Work and Income, and the Council office. "We have fridge magnets that people can take home to keep our phone number handy, and we also hope district nurses and the like will help link our service with those who could benefit from it."

The friendly Senior Connect coordinator is Linley Carpenter, supported by Jan Smeaton and Resource Centre receptionist Kay Gadsden.

WAIHI SENIOR CONNECT
PHONE: 863 7555