



Waihi Ward Reflections

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Art from the heart a memorial and legacy

If a picture tells a thousand words, the Waikino memorial art wall unveiled last Saturday says volumes about the community's dramatic, colourful heritage.

The \$41,000 wall is the second stage of a project that began with building the adjacent memorial suspension bridge: replacing the original which was swept away in the 1981 Ohinemuri flood, together with the riverbank village. The new pedestrian bridge was opened in March 2014, rewarding seven years of planning and fundraising by the old Waikino Liaison Committee and a purpose-formed subcommittee of the present Waikino Liaison Society.

After cutting the ribbon at that celebration, Mayor John Tregidga was back to help uncover the wall. "It's a historic occasion for this community. I know a number of people here remember 1981, when not only the bridge and buildings were lost, but part of Waikino [itself]."



HISTORIC OCCASION: Art wall project manager Con Kiernan and Mayor John Tregidga celebrate the unveiling.

He said there was always a determination to erect another bridge, "and now we have an extra asset in the wall, and a legacy." The Mayor paid special tribute to Memorial Bridge and Art Wall Committee chairman Diane Kiernan for her perseverance and leadership in getting the project accomplished, and promised that the associated car park to be contributed by the Council was on the way.

The eight-metre long tiled double block wall was designed by Con Kiernan, Simone Warne and Rod Hawkins, with Con and Simone acting as construction project managers. It incorporates six mixed media panels depicting formative aspects of Waikino: early flora and fauna, Maori history, Victoria Battery mining days, art and an alternative era, the flood and its repercussions, and future vision. Created by respective commissioned artists Michael Coles, Trevor Heighway, Irene Wilcocks, Christine Burne, Michael O'Donnell, Shona Laing and Con (all locals or with strong links to the area), the pieces are linked by the river that runs through them.

The memorial to both bridge and village highlights the artistic creativity the community is known for, and "is our legacy for future generations", said Diane. "While it has taken a bit longer than anticipated, the wall project has been very generously supported throughout by the Hauraki District Council, Department of Conservation, Lottery Grants Board, Trust Waikato, and the Waikino Tavern, as well as many Waikino and Waihi businesses and volunteers."

The wall's central wagon wheel was donated by the Department of Conservation from the Victoria Battery site, as were two feature manhole covers and a bogey that provides a nearby seat – thanks to a new deck crafted from recycled rimu by Dave Cole. So it was fitting that DOC representatives Tawera Wilson and Des Brownlee took part in the unveiling; with Tawera's karakia answered by a specially written tribute song from Shona Laing.

Con encouraged people to add their own blessing to the wall, with a message "please do touch". And yes – it is strong enough to withstand another flood.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Community members take in the artwork.

Birds of a feather flock to the library

Fancy a chance to get right in the thick of a flock of migratory shorebirds during the school holidays – and help build up their numbers? Close encounters of the feathered kind are on the holiday programme for 5 to 12-year-olds at Waihi Library.

'The Flock' is made up of several hundred endangered birds – and counting – painted and decorated by schoolchildren and community groups to increase nationwide awareness about their species. They'll land at the library from 1pm on Wednesday July 13 and Wednesday July 20 with their minder Krystal Glen, Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre's primary school educator.

Programme participants will hear a fascinating story about the shorebirds of Miranda, find out about their amazing flights of up to 11,000km non-stop, and decorate their own bird to add to the flock as it migrates around New Zealand. In the first session the spotlight will be on the wrybill: the only bird in the world with a bill that curves to the right! Then the bar-tailed godwit, voted New Zealand's bird of the year in 2015, will star in week 2. Afterward, kids will be able to track the birds' travels via the centre's social media pages and website – and there will be some mini paper versions to decorate and take home if they wish).

Krystal, a former Waihi library volunteer who remains an active member, says The Flock is a fun way of learning about our migratory shorebirds whose populations have been declining for several years, and face the prospect of extinction within two or three generations if this trend continues. "These birds are incredible. People need to know about them because we can save them."

Other holiday activities at the library will include entertainment by an accomplished violinist, leaf art, crafts, board games, puzzles, and discovering secret codes. All materials will be provided and all sessions are free, thanks to the generosity of the community volunteers supporting the programme.

Sessions will start at 1pm each week day from July 11 to 25, and run for 60 to 90 minutes. There's no need to register, although 'The Flock' Wednesdays will have limited numbers.

The events are aimed for school-age children, with parents encouraged to come along.



The heat is on

A warm welcome to the Waihi Memorial Hall! Winter may be here, but hall users can enjoy pleasant temperatures, thanks to the installation of 10 new radiant heat panels.

The old electric heaters they've replaced were well due for retirement after several decades of service: some residents may remember when they were coin-operated.

Present users of the hall, many of them older people, range from zumba and tai chi groups to those involved in more sedentary activities such as floral art. Just as in the 'supper room' where there's an effective heat pump, we wanted to take the winter chill off in the main facility and provide a comfortable inviting venue for everyone.

Hall bookings and inquiries are welcome. These can be made through our customer services team, phone 0800 734 834 (from within the district) or 07 862 8609.