

Thursday, 25 February 2016

# Waihi Ward Reflections

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## PEDAL POWER for fun and funds

Seventy-four-year-old Jill Davenport has a special reason to bike 25km from Waihi to Paeroa on Sunday, 13 March in support of cancer patients receiving treatment in Hamilton. She already has her event t-shirt, emblazoned "In Remission".

Jill and her husband Paul, with fellow members of the Waihi 50+ Cycle Group they founded in mid 2013, are joining the Hauraki Rail Trail Charity Fun Cycle Ride organised by the Lions Clubs of Waihi, Paeroa, Te Aroha and Thames. Participants will also have a choice of three other routes finishing at Paeroa's Railway Reserve – from Kopu (26km), Te Aroha (21km), or Karangahake (7km).

The proceeds will go to the Cancer Society's Lions Lodge in Hamilton, which provides free accommodation and meals for people undergoing treatment at the nearby Waikato Regional Cancer Centre. It's a facility that helps a lot of Hauraki residents, and Jill "can't praise it highly enough".

Following a 2015 lymphoma diagnosis, she initially had qualms about staying there "because I didn't want to be with a lot of miserable people. However the atmosphere at the lodge was the exact opposite – it's such a positive place. And for the staff and volunteers, nothing was ever a bother."

The Lodge quickly became her home away from home during a month of chemotherapy and radiotherapy last September. "My husband Paul was able to stay with me too, in our own room complete with ensuite and a view over the lake. The meals were amazing, and patients had free shuttle transport to treatment sessions and a free delivery service for prescriptions." Regular social times helped spark some ongoing and treasured friendships.

So Jill is keen to give something back through the Lions' Cycle Ride, for which she and Paul will be decking themselves and their bikes in yellow. "Our cycling group has been incredibly supportive, and keeping physically active by getting out on the bike has helped me get through," she says.

Waihi Lions president Gael Dunstall says members are very pleased to be joining forces with neighbouring clubs for the first time to host "a combination family day out and fundraiser for a very good cause". Mayor John Tregidga will be among the participants cycling from Waihi, "and we'd love to see the young and not so young take on the Rail Trail ride from either Waihi Railway Station or Karangahake."



ON A ROLL: Jill and Paul Davenport on the Hauraki Rail Trail at Karangahake, with some of their fellow Waihi 50+ Cycling Group members.

Event planning has been in progress for over a year, to cover everything from safety marshals at each road crossing to food, drinks and entertainment at the Council reserve finish venue. Thanks to generous sponsorship from local businesses, all cyclists who are present at the 1pm draw will be in to win some great spot prizes, says Gael.

As an extra service to Waihi starters, allowing for whole families to participate, drivers can get a lift back to their vehicles for a \$5 donation; or there's a family return option.

The ride will take place rain or shine, with registrations taken at the start points. It's not a race, and lycra definitely isn't required – but riders must wear helmets, and those aged 12 or under should be accompanied by an adult.

### Start points:

- ➔ Goldfields Railway Station, Waihi – 10am
- ➔ Old Karangahake Hall site – 11am
- ➔ Placemakers Kopu – 10am
- ➔ Old Te Aroha Railway Station – 10am

## Pair awarded French medals

The 22 January dedication of the World War I New Zealand Tunnelling Company memorial at Gilmour Lake finally recognises soldiers "forgotten" in their own country. It was the result of years of research by Sue Baker Wilson and planning by Waihi Heritage Vision, but what the group's chairman Kit Wilson and project manager Sue Baker Wilson *didn't* plan for was being awarded French medals for their efforts.

The tunnellers, many of them miners from the Waihi area, constructed a network of underground tunnels in northern France, extending beneath enemy lines in preparation for the 1917 Battle of Arras. Some of the tunnels are now part of the Carrière Wellington memorial museum; and the couple's work has included establishing relationships between community leaders in Arras and New Zealand. Sue, who last year received a Queen's Service Medal for services to historical research and war commemoration, has played a major role in arranging visits of Arras representatives to Waihi as well as New Zealand visits to Arras.

Arras Municipal Councillor Marc Desramaut, responsible for the city's World War I centenary arrangements, was among the special guests who travelled to New Zealand for the tunnellers' memorial dedication. After the ceremony, in the Waihi RSA, he presented Sue and Kit with individually named Ville D'Arras gold medals on behalf of Mayor Frédéric Leturque – making them honorary Arras citizens.



Governor General Sir Jerry Mateparae, who visited the tunnellers' memorial and associated memorial wall this month, gets a guided tour from project manager Sue Baker Wilson.

A post on Carrière Wellington's Facebook page acknowledges that Sue and Kit have worked with the museum for many years "from the other side of the world" to preserve the memory and stories of the tunnellers.

"Being awarded this medal was totally unexpected," says Kit. "To us it is a symbol of the partnership that exists between Arras and New Zealand, and the honour is particularly significant in the centennial year of the tunnellers being the first New Zealand unit to arrive on the Western Front."

## The First Librarian... and other stories

In September 1904, there was vigorous debate in Council about the appointment of a Waihi librarian. The Mayor opposed the idea but said if there were to be one, then two women should be employed so as to get "two for the same money as we could give to one male". One councillor thought a lady librarian would encourage far greater use of the library, but another believed it would be a "backward step to saddle a lady with work that would deprive her of her home life". In the end Mr Robert Sims was chosen for the position, from the 12 women and seven men who applied.

That's just one glimpse of history featuring on new display boards at the Waihi Library's Rosemont Road entrance. Other stories and photographs relate to library premises and services over the years, and to the Academy Theatre which occupied the site of the present two-year-old library. The information for them was gleaned from the Waihi Museum, and from residents' personal memorabilia.

The stories are engaging, informative and sometimes quirky – but librarian Karen Wickliffe believes many people are still to discover them. Check them out next time you're passing!

## Second author signs up to visit Library

Accounts of family treasures looted by the Nazis inspired Julie Thomas to write her bestselling 2011 debut novel *The Keeper of Secrets*. It tracks the story of Simon Horowitz and his family's beloved violins.

The Putaruru-based author has developed the theme further in a sequel, *Rachel's Legacy*, being released next week. It focuses on another stolen Horowitz treasure, an important renaissance painting by Albrecht Durer.

In conjunction with the new novel's release, Julie will speak in the Waihi Library on Monday 14 March at 12 noon. Anyone is welcome to come and meet her and ask questions, and there'll be a chance to buy books and have them signed.

The event follows the successful visit of Hamilton writer Deborah Challinor last November, and is likewise being organised in partnership with Paper Plus Waihi.

## Number's up

Many Waihi residents will change their address from next Tuesday, without moving anywhere.

**March 1 is the date that the renumbering of 650 Waihi properties takes effect** – and a quarter of those will have a different street name too. Affected residents have been individually advised of the changes, which are needed to reduce confusion for emergency services, to make postal and delivery service more efficient, to allow for future development, and to meet Land Information New Zealand national standards.

Councillor Harry Shepherd says locals have generally accepted the need for the changes, which has helped the planned renumbering and renaming of streets go more smoothly than he expected.

Constructive feedback has been welcomed. For instance several Rosemont Road residents who were unhappy about their end of the street being renamed Nicholl Street, after original Martha Mine developer William Nicholl, came up with a consensus of Montrose Road instead (that's Rosemont with the two syllables reversed).

"People needn't be concerned about the delivery of mail," Harry says. The Council is working closely with New Zealand Post about any potential problems; and mail sent to "old" addresses will be redirected. For those who find themselves living in a different street for no apparent reason, the rule of thumb is that the location of your driveway determines what street you live in.

The Council apologises for any temporary inconvenience caused by the necessary changes, and thanks the community for its understanding.

