

The Goldfields Express

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From the Secretary/Treasurer's Desk

Goldfields Railway - On Track for a Bright Future.

Goldfields Railway has been operating at various levels for over 30 years and during that time has provided many families and interested people with glimpses of the old railway era that many still remember.

The Railway has been around since 1905 when it was part of the main line from Auckland through Tauranga to the rail head at Taneatua. That's over 109 years. It was in 1978 when the Govt closed the line and the new Kaimai tunnel opened that local and interested out of district railway people banded together to save the Waihi-Waikino section of the historic line. The investigation committee formed was fortunately successful in purchasing the Waihi-Waikino link and in July 1980 Goldfields Steam Train Society was formed and incorporated.

The track and the bridges and the buildings are all old but over the years great work has been done to maintain this historic asset and keep the heritage value alive and chugging.

Today visitors can see a complete operating railway precinct that provides a good picture of "The Way We Were".

The volunteers at Goldfields are continually working on the buildings, rolling stock, track and bridges together with operating a daily train service for locals and visitors to our community.

Recently we have renewed our Committee, prepared a Business Plan with maintenance schedules for the track and rolling stock and set about some major track and bridge upgrades. This costs a lot of money. Over the past 10 years we have spent;

- Engine and Rolling stock shed \$140,000
- Bridge work \$95,000
- Waihi Station repiling \$38,000
- Track work to date - Ongoing \$210,000
- Rolling stock upgrades \$48,000
- Trains \$50,000
- And more

While this has all been seen as necessary at the time, it was not always well planned and was best considered as "fire fighting" to keep Goldfields operational.

Now we are about to undertake some further serious planned upgrade work that includes

- The Waitete Bridge substructure \$320,000 to be done in Nov
- The Waitekauri Bridge substructure \$200,000 next year
- Track work which involves the eventual replacement of 4000 sleepers at \$42 ea

Our income from ticket sales is now growing and any operational surplus is going into the track and bridges. NZ Lotteries Heritage have been major supporters for our track and bridge work and other funding organisations incl The Lion Foundation, Waikato Community Trust, The Valder Trust, The James Say Trust and Sky City have all assisted in keeping rolling stock and buildings looking smart.

Goldfields Railway has a bright future and your support is always appreciated.

Chris Hale

Meet some of the team

Dennis Blake was born in Paeroa in 1942 and was schooled in Ngatea. He went into Dairy Farming for 34 years as well as agricultural contracting with two of his brothers, while along the way building 6 dairy sheds, 4 houses and a number of commercial buildings.



In 1981 he purchased Hauraki Engineering and opened a tractor service company. He was also a member of the Ngatea Volunteer Fire Brigade for 20 years before retiring to Waihi in 2000 with wife Sandra.

Dennis is still building and has been an active member of Goldfields Railway since 1999. Dennis and Sandra have 3 adult children and four grandchildren. He has been the general manager for several years and spends many voluntary hours on railway business. He hopes to be around for many more to come.

The Waitete Bridge

This bridge was built circa 1904 and was the usual structure of the day with large wooden beams supported by wooden trusses and sitting on wooden piles that went into the ground on the edges of the Waitete River

Around 1993 some work was done on the bridge to replace the wooden beams with steel girders and some strapping was applied to the wooden trusses that were starting to show minor splitting.



The bridge is surveyed annually by OPUS on behalf of NZ Transport Association Rail Division and cleared for operational use.

Recently Goldfields have been advised that the wooden piers that go into the ground were showing signs of deterioration and Goldfields excavated around these piers and encased them in concrete. This was always only a temporary measure as in time these piers would need to be replaced.

Last year it was determined that this complete rebuild of the substructure should be undertaken. While the bridge could still be safely used in the meantime, work was

begun on test drilling to determine the ground stability and make up. This work was funded with support from Hauraki District Council and undertaken by Perry Drilling.

Some concept plans were drafted to determine how the substructure could be replaced and the indicative cost of doing so.

Concepts that were developed included

- a full concrete bridge that would cost around \$800,000
- variations of that which included finding other bridges around NZ that were no longer in use
- Options using Steel piers that utilised the existing super structure that cost around \$300,000

All the concepts were sent to OPUS International Consultants to ensure that they were technically sound and would be able to meet NZTA's requirements.

The bridge rebuild was then tendered out and the successful tenderer was Bridge It NZ who are based in Katikati and have undertaken a lot of bridge building and repairing around NZ. Bridge It's proposal will see new steel piers which will support the existing steel beams and railway track. These will be placed on new concrete piles. The price for this work is \$320,000 plus GST.

Fundraising was undertaken and to date \$273,000 has been raised and this has come from

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|----------------------------------|-----------|
| • Lotteries Heritage | \$150,000 |
| • Hauraki District Council grant | \$30,000 |
| • Hauraki District Council Loan | \$30,000 |
| • Goldfields own funds | \$28,000 |
| • Waikato Community Trust | \$35,000 |

Other funding applications have yet to be confirmed.

The work on the bridge is planned for November this year and the contract will be managed by OPUS International Consultants with whom Goldfields are working closely. The expected down time when Goldfields train will be unable to operate is around 3 weeks and some of the new work can be done while the line is still in operation. We will keep you all posted on progress through this Newsletter

Goldfields Railway is the only working example in New Zealand of a heritage-listed railway precinct complete with original infrastructure - attracts about 25,000 visitors annually, including 6500 school children. Numbers are expected to rise significantly in conjunction with growing use of the parallel Hauraki Rail Trail.

Chris Hale

Toys on the track



Back in 2002-2003 it was suggested by Linda Millen at one of our committee meetings that we should put novelty stuffed animals along the line for added passenger enjoyment.

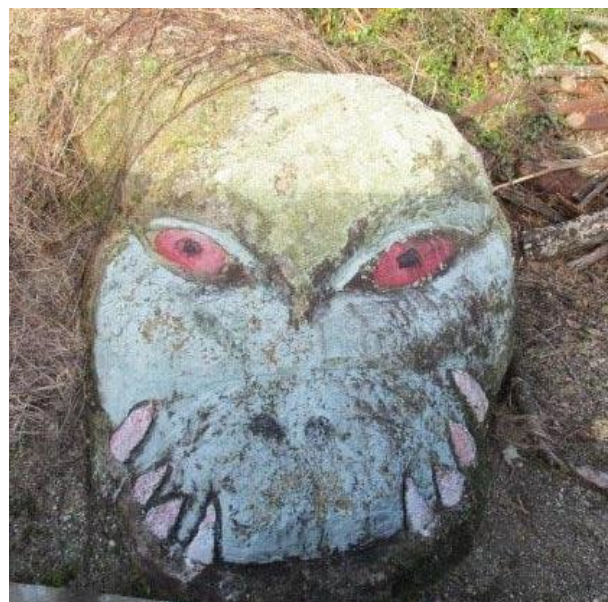
From there we started to get some stuffed toys from many different places. Then one fine day Robin Millen, Mathew Sayer (who was our track worker at that time) and I went down and started placing these animals.

Robin drove the train and I was just the overseer and suggested where we may put these animals, while Mattie was the one who did all the climbing and tied them up in many different places. We still have a monkey up a pole in a place from which it is very hard to retrieve; we need a young person that has a head for heights! This was not a quick job taking about three hours in all to carry out.

There are several places that these toys can be found - Lawrence Rd, .75K: a lamb on a pole, 1.75K: two toys looking out of the shed. Just before this we have a small teddy holding tight onto a pole, 2.5K (top of the reverse curves) there is a bunny sitting on a wooden platform. When we cross under bridge 10 we do hope to have more toys on this bridge. At 3.5K there are mushrooms on the side of the bank (these were donated by a local lady) some of these have been broken when the bulls got through the fence. Those remaining are still pretty to see.

Then Mattie decided to do some carving in the rocks.

These carvings can be found at approximately 2.75k which is on one side of the track. The head of a grumpy old Man (maybe the track man). On the other side of the track going towards Waikino is a lady's head. There are also



some soft toys at this point which are sitting in the front of the shed. Then further on down the track Mattie carved a Taniwha (which has been painted by Dave Rowe and Fiona Wilson-Schedewy). Dave and I have recently been back down the track to upgrade these animals. The Taniwha is still waiting for another coat of paint as he is looking a wee bit sad.

Dave and I do hope to get down the track again soon to finish off the job that we started about a month ago. We just have to wait for the weather to improve and pick a suitable day.

Sherryl Sutherland

Waihi Model Railway Club:

Since our last newsletter, progress on the 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " railway has nearly ground to a halt. We are eagerly awaiting resource consent from the Council on a number of items, and until that is granted we are unable to continue.

Progress on building rolling stock is a tad slow, but as soon as the locomotive is finished - which is not far away, and I can find somewhere to house it I will start turning out a few bogies for a couple of flat cars.

Let's hope the next newsletter produces some more positive items for the miniature railway. In the meantime I can be contacted on (07) 863-7147 or (0273) 908-782 if anybody is interested in 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " model engineering.

Regards Dave Cole

Meanwhile, down at the station:

Hopefully winter is now well and truly past us with spring showing its face to calves and shoots from our trees. Even though we are only running the one midday scheduled run, the team are actually taking the train to Waikino more frequently. Bookings are starting to come in again much to the delight of our guards. School holidays were busy with three trips a day, most of which resulted in reasonably full carriages. It is nice to see Sherryl back again after her long illness, especially as the carriage is getting a spring clean every time she is on duty! We still need more guards and especially people to train as drivers. So if you are reasonably fit and able to work from 9am to 3.15 pm, we would love to have you on board.

Dennis has seen our annual inspection team doing the rounds and we would appear to have survived another year. However there are no doubt things are getting tougher for us to hold our operating licence. Things that were acceptable even a year ago are no longer; so it is no good blaming our General Manager; this is the way things now have to be done!

The Committee has approved the sale of some seat frames dating back to the 1800's and both Drewery locomotives TR 4 & 5. These all were sold through the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand (FRONZ) and are going to railway groups in the South Island. Unfortunately as TR4 did not actually belong to the Society, the owner will be receiving the funds for that loco. With the new funds, Dennis and his team are now looking for a larger and more powerful locomotive to take on the scheduled



passenger roster, leaving Loco 7 for the work train and Loco 6 as a spare. Loco 1 (the restored Prices Shunter) will be retained as a yard shunter for the Repairs and Maintenance Team. In assessing any new Loco not only purchase price and suitability have to be considered, but also the cost of getting it here plus certification from NZ Transport Agency Rail Division (NZTA).

We have been assured that the carriage swap with Glenbrook and Taeiri Gorge is still on, even though it is over a year overdue! This has left us with an unusual problem for our railway in that we are running short of passenger stock to carry our customers in the peak times. This problem is also being looked at by Dennis and his team.

At last progress is being made of the new Waitete Bridge substructure with the contracts let to Bridge It. Opus International Consultants will be managing the project. There is considerable off site work to be completed, and the foundations have to be poured, and then left for 25 days to cure before the removal of the existing trestles, and actual building starts. Train services will have to be suspended for around 3 weeks, so Denis is looking for staff to help out getting other essential track projects completed as well. Remember many hands make light work especially if there is a cuppa in the offering.

The track team have laid 700 sleepers in the past year, only 4,000 to go! Thanks to the workers who although they are reluctantly here, have been working hard and are a credit to their overseers.

Despite much reduced numbers over the winter, the Restoration & Maintenance Team have been busy after receiving several loads of timber and assorted hardware from a closing joinery factory. I think that the picture of Jenny Scott sitting in the "coal"

shed carefully sorting screws etc will remain with me for many years. Without people like Jenny, this railway would have problems surviving. The stack of timber is getting smaller after some steel shelving has been erected. Luckily we even got about 6 new fire extinguishers that have been installed in critical areas by Allan Carter.

The team have been busy replacing timber on house 6 after the tenant's dog got hungry, and replacing a dining room window. Fitting painting in between showers was entertaining for us watch John Elin, Allan Carter & Barry Scott at work. Rusty Fryett has joined the team completing some unusually for us, accurate joinery in the Information Services office and then onto the louvre windows for the old toilets. The finger which had an argument with a chisel is now healed and Rusty is back at work. Don Martin is making two new doors for the carriage which actually match. All this is really painstaking work as everything has to be made from scratch due to the poor condition of the original stuff.

Now Fiona and her assistant (me!) are cosily installed in the Information Services office, she has been slaving away at the safety case review which is now urgent, plus building distribution lists, plus customer data bases. Every time we get the review to a draft stage, it goes under the scrutiny of the people involved which is how it should be. Once we have got the safety case to a draft stage everyone is happy with, it will go to the Committee and then off to NZTA. Once they have approved it, the Railway can adopt it. All operational staff will be trained in the safety case. Some old hardy chestnuts will be changed with more emphasis being placed on our Health & Safety procedures and paper trails. Unfortunately what was good enough back in the good old days is no longer acceptable to NZTA. Therefore we all have to change!



Finally, the Society has its Annual General Meeting coming up on 19 September as our financial year ended June 30. This is a time for all members to look at what has happened in the past year, but more importantly look ahead to what is going to happen this coming year. If you want to be part of the action, stand for a position on the Executive or Committee. The Society just cannot afford "Grandstanders" but we really need people who are going to be positive plus able to cope with the demands of pushing this railway ahead into the future.

Graeme Martin

New Members:

Welcome our new members to the Railway:

- John Osborn

We look forward to seeing you around and thank you for all your efforts.

Information on the Society's Activities:

Let us know if we are providing the information you would like to see in your newsletter.

Email: info@waihirail.co.nz

Subject line: Newsletter

From the Pages of Our History:

Ever wondered about the deep gutters around Seddon Street and the attached side streets? Although detrimental to ankles and car doors alike, these gutters once had a purpose.

"Huge pumps were installed to drain the underground water from the mine to enable the mining to be carried on. The two pumps, formerly housed in the old pumphouse relic seen on Martha Hill today, were the largest of their type in the world and the pride of the NZ mining industry. Together they shifted 1500 gallons of water per minute from the depth of 1500 feet. On the surface this warm water flowed down the deep gutters and finally into the river."

That would have really shifted all the fallen winter leaves along!!

Taken from Waihi Goldfields Centennial 1878-1978, a brief history compiled by J.M.R.A October 1978, along with the following interesting item.

"Mining was dirty, dangerous and unhealthy work. The risk of death or mutilation by underground accident being overshadowed by comparison with the with the prospect of extended misery and shortened life caused by the miners' phthisis, a dreaded disease due to the inhalation of the dust raised by underground drilling and blasting, and by dry

stamping and extraction methods. There was no cure or palliative, the only relief being death and Martha Mine in its peak year 1909 employed 1500 men.

In about 1920 a scheme was set foot to take over property at Waihi Beach to provide sites for seaside cottages where worn out miners could end their days in peaceful surroundings. The road was impassable in wet weather and few of the miners took advantage of the scheme, but over the years as the road improved, it became a popular holiday resort and surfing beach."

Bet they would have taken the offer up if they knew how real estate prices would rocket!!

If you have any interesting snippets regarding Waihi or the Railways past send them to us and we'll let everyone know!

The Editor