

Goldfields Railway Newsletter September 2023

Welcome back to our Spring Edition of the Goldfields Railway newsletter. Once the weather warms up and we all dry off after a wet winter, what would be better than a ride on the train – All Aboard!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2023 Annual General Meeting of **GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY INC** is being held at the Waihi Station, 38 Wrigley Street, Waihi, on **SATURDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2023** commencing at 2:30pm.

The Management Committee have decided to (a) change the day and time to allow more members to attend and (b) change the venue to the Waihi Station. The A.G.M. will take place in one of the carriages at the station platform.

If you wish to stand for the Management Committee of Goldfields Railway Inc., nomination forms can be obtained from the Station Office between 9:00am to 3:00pm weekdays or alternatively, you can contact the Secretary by email at secretary@goldfieldsrailway.co.nz .

Please come and hear what has been happening behind the scenes and hear of future plans for the railway.

At the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting, light refreshments will be served in the Station building.

Looking forward to seeing you all there.

Greg Stilwell
Secretary, Goldfields Railway Inc.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TRAIN SHED

After being muted for a number of years, Goldfields Railway has now finally had some shelving installed along the side of the Train Shed. Many thanks to 'Tim the Builder' (no cousin to Bob the Builder), who did an excellent job in erecting them.



Thanks also must go to Ben Thompson, a new member of the R & M Team, who installed lighting under the top level of the shelving so that no one will be working in the dark looking for items stored on these shelves (as per the photo below).

The plan is to start sorting the various bits and pieces stored around the Train Shed, Goods Shed and other places, clean them and place them on the shelving in some semblance of order so that people can find things and hopefully they will be labelled on the front so that future team members know what the gear is.

It is hoped to make a start on clearing out the gear stored on and below the remains of the loading dock in the Goods Shed, so that builders can then see what is required to bring the Goods Shed back to its former glory. A lot of

this gear will be cleaned then stored in a more efficient manner, so Goldfields Railway knows what it has. There may well be some surprises when we start to clear out the Goods Shed.

As part of the upgrade of the Train Shed, new lighting has been installed above Lines 1 & 2, as per the photo.

With this section of the Train Shed receiving new roofing later on this year (hopefully the weather will be kind to the installers), clearlite roofing will be installed so that as much natural light as possible will allow the operational train staff to navigate their way around the train when parked in the Train Shed.



Even with the many dull days that Waihi has been experiencing lately, the new lighting clearly illuminates the walkways between the rolling stock parked in the shed.

Once again, many thanks to Ben Thompson, Goldfields Railway 'resident' electrician for the installation and making it all happen.

The Management Committee have approved the proposal for plans for the extension of the carriage shed and are currently seeking formal plans and quotes for building permits.



**NOMINATION FORM FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY INC
2023 – 2024 YEAR**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss _____

Address _____

Contact Ph: _____

Email Address: _____

I wish to stand for election for the following positions:

(Please circle position(s) that you wish to be nominated for).

Chairperson; Secretary; Treasurer; Management Committee

Signed: _____

(Person being nominated)

Nominated by: _____

(Print name)

Signed: _____

(Person nominating)

Seconded by: _____

(Print name)

Signed: _____

(Person seconding nomination).

PLEASE NOTE: You will need to be a current financial member, Life Member or Honorary Life Member of Goldfields Railway Inc. to be nominated and to second a nomination.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

SATURDAY
7 OCTOBER 2023



ROBBERIES WILL TAKE PLACE ON
9:45AM TRIP WAIHI TO WAIKINO &
11:30AM TRIP WAIHI TO WAIKINO

OBITUARY 1: **URSULA “TINY” PURCHASE PASSES**

Early day members of our society will be saddened to learn of Ursula Lucy May Purchase’s passing in Hamilton on August 19. To many of us she was just known as “Tiny”. Although tiny in stature she had a big helping heart. Tiny’s death came just a week after celebrating her 97th birthday.



Tiny first took a keen interest in our railway, along with her husband Bernie, in May 1980 when they attended a community working bee to upgrade and re-paint the station. This was shortly after the society took possession of the heritage building. Up on the roof was Bernie and inside was Tiny. Several present asked who the couple were, as both impressed with their enthusiasm and energy.

From her early days Tiny took a great interest in the souvenir shop set up in the main room of the station and spent many hours welcoming and serving customers with her friendly smile and laughter. She also helped selling train tickets from the original small office and served as train guard on numerous trips. Tiny didn’t mind rolling her sleeves up to clean the windows and sweeping the floor of the operational carriage following the day’s running. She was always on the go and did whatever task asked of her without hesitation.

Her husband, Bernie was a regular train driver and spent many hours upgrading our first mode of power, the Price petrol shunter named “The Flyer”, in late 1980. He was also a great versatile handyman to have on site.

Tiny and Bernie were foundation society members and both served on the management committee from 1984 to 1987. In May 1986 they were the first members to receive honorary life memberships recognising their outstanding voluntary contributions to the organisation.

The Purchases shifted to Hamilton in the early 90s to be near family members. Bernie unfortunately passed away in 1997. In her later years Tiny was a Hamilton rest home village resident and kept a keen interest in our society despite her fading eyesight.

It was fitting that another honorary life member of our society, Ron Brown and his wife Judi in Hamilton, attended Tiny’s funeral service.

Our society is far better off by having had such a dedicated hard-working couple as Tiny and Bernie who both helped get our community-based railway firmly established and operational on firm rails.

Rob Bowater.

OBITUARY 2: GEOFF DONALDSON

Geoff Donaldson died on 24th August 2023 in Hastings. He was one of our original members and his wife Suzie was the society's Secretary during the period when we were purchasing a



major diesel locomotive which has been converted by Prices (in Thames) from a O-6-O Steam Locomotive. Geoff was involved in Guarding of the Peckett steam era but ill-health saw him leave the railway and eventually relocate to Hastings. He will be remembered as a person who did not let his physical impairment hinder his activities.

We reported in our last newsletter the removal of an "Old Man Pine" just just north of Queen's Head

bridge over SH 2. We've supplied a few more pictures of the removal debris as a result of the slips from earlier in the year.

SUMMER CLEAN-UP:

As we mentioned last newsletter, the exceptional weather we all endured earlier in the year even brought damages to our own corner of the world. Here are a few more pictures of the big clean up.





A yesteryear newspaper snippet that was supplied by one of our readers.

WAIHI TRAIN SENSATION 1906

STUCK UP IN THE TUNNEL

Driver and Fireman Asphyxiated. Both Fall off the Engine. Narrow Escape from Death.

From the time that the railway between Paeroa and Waihi was first opened, the tunnel on the eastern side of Karangahake has always been looked upon as a source of danger to the engineering staff of the train, and it has been frequently prophesied that something would happen before the line had been long in existence. Immunity from accident has, however, attended the past twelve months' running, and though occasionally a fireman has fainted owing to the intense heat from the engine, nothing of any serious moment occurred until yesterday afternoon, when two men had a miraculous escape from death, and as the engineers and firemen working on the locomotives are subject to the unpleasant conditions each time they penetrate the tunnel, it behoves the Railway Department to make immediate and searching investigation in order to prevent a recurrence, if possible, of yesterday afternoon's mishap.

HEAVY COAL SUPPLIES

As already mentioned in the Daily Telegraph, the mine companies are laying in coal reserves for the Christmas holidays, and day and night trains are running to cope with the supplies arriving at Paeroa. Scarcely a passenger train leaves Paeroa without a large number of coal trucks being attached, and yesterday, when the four o'clock train was leaving Paeroa with the Auckland passengers, a very heavy freight was included.

Two engines were provided to draw the load, both being coupled together, and all went well until after the Karangahake station was passed.

A TERRIBLE STRUGGLE

Then a terrible struggle commenced on the up-hill grade, and it was at once apparent to the passengers that a much longer time was going to be spent in the tunnel than usual. Under ordinary conditions the tunnel is negotiated in from five to seven minutes' travelling, but yesterday it took fully nine minutes to accomplish the first half of the distance.

The engines laboured on with their heavy load, and almost every second the train would give a quiver and apparently stop, but there seemed to be sufficient power still left for another spurt, and it crawled a few yards further and repeated the experiences of the previous moment, until finally there was a dead stoppage.

A RACE BACK TO KARANGAHAKE

A second passed, and the whole train began to reverse, and in a moment it was traveling back at a terrific pace - the time was taken by a passenger. Whereas the forward movement took nine minutes to accomplish from the time the tunnel was entered until the stoppage, it only took one minute to get back to the Karangahake yards.

DRIVER AND FIREMAN MISSING

Anxiety was written on the face of every passenger, for they know not what was going to happen; but the feelings of Engineer Howatson of one engine and fireman Sterling of the other, on discovering when they reached daylight again that their comrades had fallen off their respective engines in the effort to negotiate the tunnel, may be imagined. The two men had been overcome with the intense heat and smoke from the engines, and had quietly fallen over the side, though luckily clear of the track. Otherwise it would have been our painful duty to have chronicled a shocking disaster, for the train had apparently passed and re passed them without striking either.

THE SEARCH

Immediately the train was brought to a standstill Driver Howatson, who was almost overcome also, but still sensible to his responsible position, reported the matter to the guard and stationmaster, and no time was lost in a search party making an entry of the tunnel to the fate of the two missing men.

Owing to the intense darkness caused by the dense smoke in the tunnel progress was very slow, but a short distance in Driver Hatchett was found, and a little farther in Firemen Claney. Both men had regained consciousness, but were hardly able to realise what had occurred. However, they were soon conveyed out again, and after being refreshed by a little stimulant, which Mr Lawlor, who was a passenger by the train, had thoughtfully procured, they took their places on the engines again, none the worse apparently for their unpleasant experience, though Fireman Claney was suffering somewhat from a bruise he had received on the shoulder. A large crowd had by this time gathered round, and it was an intense relief to find that a serious catastrophe had by good luck been averted.

The officials had now recognised that the load was too heavy for the drawing capabilities of the engines, and as it was necessary for one locomotive to return to Paeroa again, to bring out the evening train, nearly the whole of the coal—somewhere about 180 tons—was shunted off, and the remainder of the train despatched through, after about an hours' delay.

ANOTHER UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT.

Once again, the darkness of the tunnel was pierced, and by the speed of the engine no further trouble was anticipated. The load, however, was still too great, and gradually the speed decreased until a stopping point was again reached. For the second time the train had to back out, and the load further reduced until there was nothing left but the passenger cars. For the third time the train was started off on its journey to Waihi, and, to the great relief of all, the other side of the tunnel was reached, a record run being made, and Waihi station was reached over an hour and a half behind time.

A good deal of excitement prevailed at Waikino owing to exaggerated reports, one rumour being that one of the men had been cut to pieces on the line. The arrival of the train allayed all fears, and people left the station thankful that the reports were unfounded.

AN INVESTIGATION NECESSARY

According to all accounts the fainting of the engineering staff on the Paeroa-Waihi section of railway is nothing new, for we have been informed that though men have never yet fallen from the engines, there have been cases where the men have been overcome by the heat and have fallen on the floor of engine, and revived when the surface was regained. If such is the case the Railway Department deserve to be severely handled, and it is to be hoped that something will be done in the way of placing bars at the side of the engines to prevent a recurrence of yesterday's unfortunate affair.^[1]

^[1] <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WHDT19061124.2.30>

Waihi Daily Telegraph, Volume VI, Issue 1797, 24 November 1906, Page 2

HISTORY

Following is the second instalment of our booklet called "Rail through the Karangahake", which we started last newsletter.

Compiled by John L. Stichbury

Published by the Railway Enthusiasts Society Incorporated March 14th 1963. Reprinted 2014 by Goldfields Railway Society using original publication.

Part 2

Waihi to Tauranga

In his statement for 1907, the Minister of Public Works reported that a survey to connect the Bay of Plenty to the railway system via Mamaku and Te Puke was being undertaken. Strong representations were also made to the Government regarding an alternative line to Tauranga from Waihi, and it was decided to make a trial survey so that a comparison could be made with the route via Mamaku and Te Puke.

It was decided to construct the East Coast Main Trunk Railway via the Waihi saddle and construction work on the nine miles to Athenree was authorized in 1911, and construction commenced in March 1912, but work was suspended in November of the same year, by which time much of the formation for the first 4 miles had been completed.

Work on this section was resumed in May 1914 and in spite of the onslaught of the First World War, work progressed steadily until March 1917 when the engineer in local charge joined the Expeditionary Forces and work had to be again closed down. Work was resumed in January 1918 and by 1920 the formation work had been continued, the Athenree station yard formed and the concrete piers for the Waimata stream bridges erected. A commencement with the Katikati section beyond Athenree was made in September 1919.

The Minister of Public Works in 1921 warned that owing to the financial position it may be necessary to call a temporary halt to the construction of the line before it reached Katikati, but fortunately work was not stopped. In 1922 the Government reported that the Public Works Department were pushing ahead with the preparation of plans for work, to enable the

isolated 40 miles from Tauranga Eastwards to be connected with the Working Railways system. To have the work completed, and through communication established with the least possible delay it was intended to invite tenders for the construction of this twenty-five section. The Minister drew attention to the history of big constructional contracts in New Zealand which up to that time had not been a satisfactory one, and that in future, before letting a contract, the Government would have to be thoroughly satisfied that to do so would be in the best interests of the country.

The calling of tenders for this section was a radical departure from the usual method of co-operative contract system then in operation for the construction of railways. The reason for this step was two-fold; first it was desirable that a constructional Department such as the Public Works should have the opportunity from time to time of proving that its own methods of construction and its costs of carrying out work were satisfactory. Secondly the purchase of equipment and plant to enable every work to be taken in hand under construction methods of construction, would involve the purchase of an amount of equipment which could not be continuously used.

By 1923 all the rails and sleepers for the first 8½ miles of plate-laying were stacked in the Waihi station yard in readiness for laying. This work was undertaken by the Public Works Department, the rails being laid to Athenree the following year and work to the 14-mile peg from Waihi was progressing steadily.

Tenders for the construction of the railway from this point to Te Puna a distance of 18 miles 18 chains were called from within New Zealand and overseas, and on the 17th March 1924 the contract was let to Sir WG Armstrong, Whitworth and Co Ltd, of England. The turning of the first sod on the company's section was carried out by the Minister of Public Works Hon. JG Coates at Te Puna on 8th November 1924.

Meanwhile the Public Works Department had completed the line to Athenree and commenced running goods trains from December 1924 and to Tahawai from 1st March 1925. This section was taken over by Working Railways as from 1st May 1927.

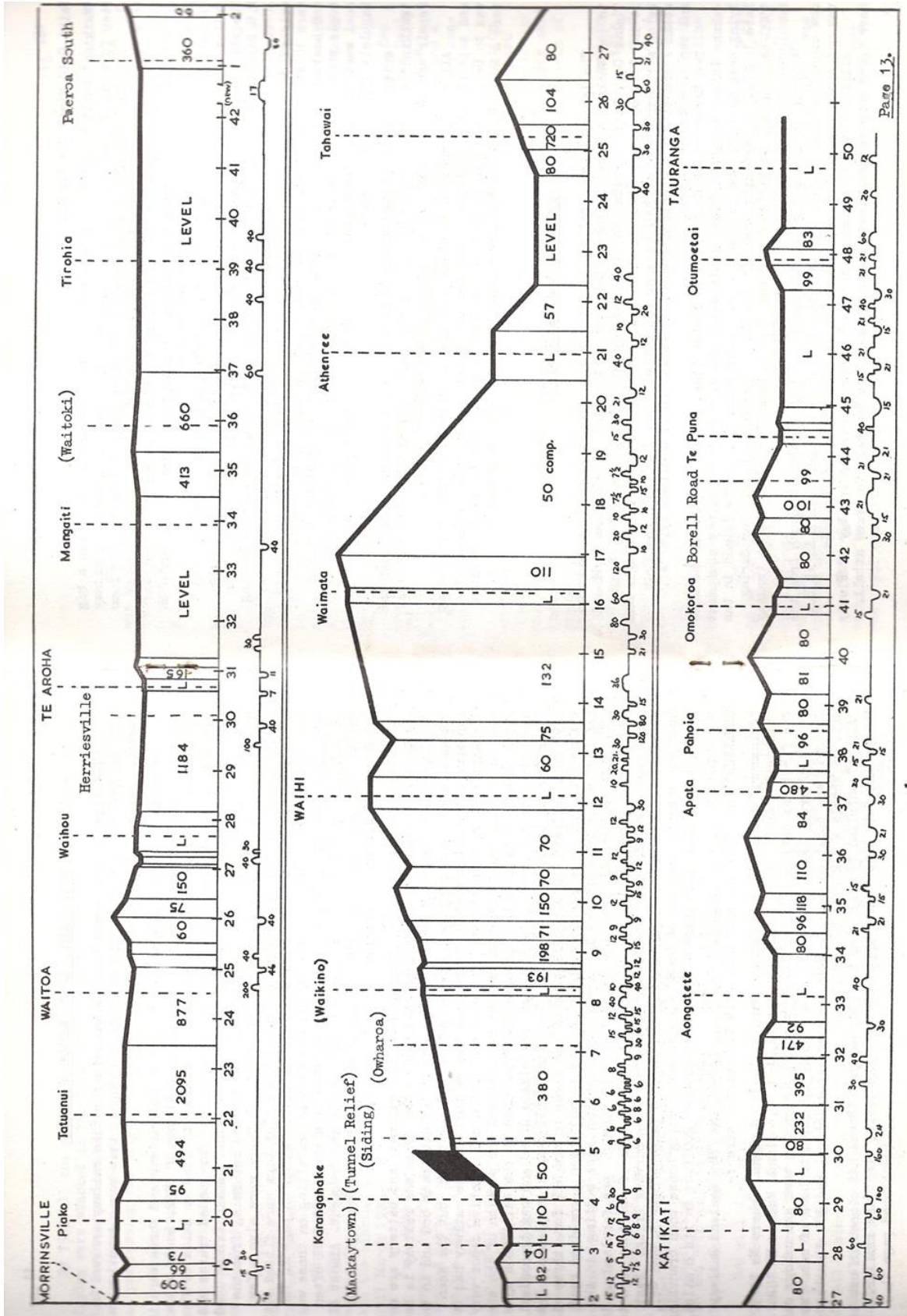
Messrs. Armstrong Whitworth Co made an early start of their contract and before long nearly 500 men were engaged on this work. Their contract was due for completion on 27th March 1927 but owing to considerable trouble with the sinking of the formation the work was not satisfactorily complete until March 1928.

From 28th March 1928 the conveyance of passengers, parcels, goods and livestock traffic was accepted for conveyance to or from stations on the unopened portion of the East Coast Main Trunk Railway as far as Taneatua. If you study the curve and gradient diagrams for this line on page 7 you will at once observe how the character of the line changes as the rails sweep around the 180° 10 chain curve east of that station. 1 in 50 grades and curves of 6-7½ chain radius give way to easy grades seldom as steep as 1 in 80 and curves quite infrequent and seldom as sharp as 15 chain (40mph).

However, the initial error of laying the track in the 1920's with rail as light as 55-56lbs per yard has always been a drawback to operations. At present 70lbs or latterly 75lb welded rail and new standard sleeper and track ballasting is being re-laid into this railway.

From Paeroa South where 85lb and 91lb rail at present ends, the new rails now stretch right through Athenree whilst relaying from Tauranga has also started.

You will also notice on these diagrams the summit on Waimata (about 420 feet above sea level) the long Athenree bank and the steep Karangahake Tunnel. Stations named inside brackets are closed and mileposts on this line still read from the old zero point about a mile south of Paeroa station where before the Paeroa South cut-off the twin tracks of the Thames to Frankton line and Paeroa to Taneatua line diverged. Before the Paeroa cut-off all trains to the Bay of Plenty reversed at Paeroa as you will note in the illustrations in this booklet. There are several speed limits on the railcars and passenger trains east of Waihi because of the light rails.



To be continued...

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY INC

TO BE HELD AT WAIHI RAILWAY STATION
38 WRIGLEY STREET, WAIHI

SATURDAY, 28 OCTOBER, 2023
AT 2:30PM

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

ALL WELCOME TO ATTEND

GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY INC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2022/2023

CHAIRPERSON:	Graeme Martin	graeme.martin2@gmail.com
SECRETARY:	Greg Stilwell	secretary@goldfieldsrailway.co.nz
TREASURER:	Chris Hale	chrishale@outlook.co.nz
COMMITTEE:	Andre Coppell	andrea6@xtra.co.nz
	Ashton Baird	railboy_nz@hotmail.com
	Dean McQuoid	dean.dbm@gmail.com
	Stan Foster	swfoster49@gmail.com
	Sue Brandt	susan.brandt8@gmail.com

NEXT GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY INC. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

25 September 2023

24 October 2023

NOTE: This meeting is being held on a Tuesday due to Labour weekend.

Management Committee meetings are held in the lunchroom at Waihi Rail Station on Mondays, commencing at 5:00pm.