



Goldfields Railway

Newsletter

September 2022

Welcome back to Goldfields Railway! We have a few articles for you to read about this month and are introducing you to another of our valuable volunteers. We hope you enjoy it and please contact us if you feel you have something to contribute!

Greg Stilwell - Secretary



I was born and raised in Auckland, until February, 2015 when my wife Robyn and I opted for a better lifestyle and moved to Waihi, and definitely, have not regretted the move at all. I am the eldest of identical twins (my brother still lives in Auckland - I don't know why), but he does have a place in Whangamata. Robyn is also a twin, the younger of non-identical twins, and there are no twins in Robyn's and my family. Waihi is a great town. We have two sons, one who lives in Auckland and the other in Murupara, hence Waihi is roughly equal distance between the two.

I initially worked in the finance sector, however in 2000 after 30 years in finance, and for a change in pace, opted for the public transport sector driving buses in Auckland, and have been involved ever since with public transport in Auckland and Tauranga until I decided to retire when COVID-19 first hit in 2020. I have been involved in a number of roles during my 19 years in public transport, most in an operational supervisory role, where my early days driving buses came in handy, understanding how everything operated. The last role was in Tauranga where the company that I worked for (NZ Bus) unexpectedly won the tender to operate the public transport service in Tauranga and I was tasked in getting the service up and running 2 weeks prior to Christmas 2018. Whilst there were initially some challenges, after 4 months, the service was running as scheduled and when I retired was responsible for some 150+ staff and a fleet of 120 buses, which included 5 fully electric buses, which proved a challenge due to their weight and unknown capabilities at the time. Part of my role both in Auckland and Tauranga, was liaising with various outside parties, which included local councils and Regional Councils.

Over the years, I have been involved with a number of organisations, most as an office holder at some time. I spent 7 years in my earlier years as secretary for Auckland Paraplegic and Physically Disabled Association (ParaFed Auckland) and was involved in assisting people with disabilities transitioning into playing sport, either for pleasure, or competitively to try and give them a better lifestyle. I found this aspect very rewarding, watching and helping people

develop, both mentally and physically and being more reliant on themselves, instead of others.

With a young family growing up, Robyn and I purchased our first motorhome in 1996 and travelled widely within New Zealand for the next 15 or so years. Robyn and I have been members of NZMCA (New Zealand Motor Caravan Association) since 1996 and are still members. When we joined, our membership number was under 10,000 – now the latest membership numbers are in the 120,000. Over those years, we have had a variety of motorhomes and buses converted into motorhomes. Once again, I took an active role in being involved in the running of the organisation at a local level and for 5+ years, was responsible for collating, organizing, publishing and distributing the NZMCA's flagship publication 'Motorcaravanner' until the job just got too big, and has since been taken over by a publishing company.

I have always been interested in American cars, especially from the 60's and 70's, so in 2013, much to my wife's dismay, purchased a 1972 Ford Mustang Fastback in Wanganui, which needed a little work and drove it back to Auckland with a motor that had a faint 'knock' in it. That motor lasted another 18 months, before a 351 Windsor was transplanted into it. Once Robyn got used to sitting on the right-hand side, without a steering wheel, dismay turned into pleasure. We enjoyed attending various events like the Americarna in Taranaki and of course, our own Beach Hop at Waihi and Whangamata. This year, as age started to take a firm hold of our bodies, both of us decided that we needed some creature comforts in our American car and purchased a 2010 Ford Mustang GT, with a marginally better fuel economy, smoother ride, air conditioning (no wind down windows like what was in the 1972) and comfortable seats.

I have been a member of Goldfields Railway for a few years, (Chris Hale, who is my neighbour made sure that I joined), however was not actively involved due to work commitments initially. Now that I have retired from full time work, I volunteered as a guard/driver. My inquisitive nature led from one thing to another, and offered my services to the Management Committee and found myself as Chairperson. There was a steep learning curve suddenly dealing with all sorts of issues, which wasn't really why I joined, so this year, took a backward step and assumed the role of Secretary and decided to delve more into the local history of the area, especially around the history of the railway in Waihi. Waihi is unique in that its railway station and surrounding land has heritage status, and I will be working to ensure that it remains, basically as it was created in the early 1900's – a 'time capsule' of that era.

Robyn and I recently became great grandparents to our great granddaughter Ember, who lives in Dunedin and we recently made the journey South to meet her in person, as well as our grandson's partner, as COVID-19 hasn't made travelling all that easy. All I can say that ZOOM and SKYPE are great, but nothing is better than holding your great grand-daughter, especially as Robyn had longed for a daughter, then a grand-daughter and we have now finally cracked it with a great grand-daughter.

I am keen to continue to legacy that has been created by the volunteers who initially set up Goldfields Railway back in 1980, as I believe it is a great asset to the local and wider Hauraki/Coromandel area.

Upgrading of Railway Track between Waihi and Waikino.

Over the years since The Waihi Steam Society in 1980 and later Goldfields Railway Inc took over the rail line between Waihi and Waikino, replacement of railway sleepers has been a constant task as they progressively wear out. Goldfields Railway have tried many types of sleepers over the years, with some lasting longer than others.



Recently Dean McQuoid, a member, through his contacts at KiwiRail, asked what KiwiRail was doing with the concrete sleepers that they were progressively replacing throughout their rail network. The sleepers were being replaced as they had reached 'their use by date' due to the speed and weight of trains running over them. For Goldfields Railway, the

weight, speed and frequency of our trains, meant that there was still plenty of 'life' in these sleepers. They advised that they were being sent to an outside contractor for destruction, which would be cost to KiwiRail (believed to be between \$20 - \$25 per sleeper). Dean asked whether or not KiwiRail would be prepared to 'donate' them to a Heritage Rail group, to which they were willing to do, as long as the Heritage Group paid to take the sleepers away.

Dean advised that they did need to be sorted through, to ensure that we only got serviceable sleepers, which was progressively done over a couple of weeks from the pile of sleepers dumped in KiwiRail's Otahuhu yard. Dean and his team then placed the serviceable sleepers onto pallets of 22 sleepers and brought them down to Waihi. Initially, it was thought that Goldfields Railway would get approximately 900 concrete sleepers, however the final tally appears that Goldfields Railway has received in excess of 1,400 concrete sleepers.

A start has been made in laying them out next to the track as per the photos and will be progressively, replacing many of the worn-out wooden sleepers along the track. With the concrete sleepers, hopefully track gauge faults will reduce and place the rails on a more secure footing. Any good timber sleepers that will be replaced by the concrete sleepers will be utilised in other sections of Goldfields Rail network, with those not suitable for reuse made available for sale.



BOOK REVIEW

McAra J B "*Gold Mining at Waihi; 1878 – 1952*" Published by Waihi Historical Society 1978

Description:

Gold Mining in NZ is often associated with the romance of diggers panning rich but short lived alluvial deposits. However the Waihi gold fields required long term engineering and metallurgical skills to win the gold from hard quartz reefs to create one of the richest gold and largest mines of its time in the world. This achievement did not come easily, requiring the sinking of deep shafts, driving long tunnels in hot humid conditions, breaking out the gold bearing quartz with explosives. This was hard, dangerous plus unhealthy work especially in the early life of the mine when the damaging effect of quartz dust on the lives of both the underground and above ground workers was not fully appreciated.

The glory of the Waihi goldfields has departed, and the new era of corporate mining is still being carried on around Waihi. Not a lot has been written about the 1878 – 1952 mining program, so this book is an authoritative guide for us as railway operators to enable us to confidently help people to relive the past golden era. This railway played an important part of the Waihi development from 1905 when the line opened to Waihi, and from 1928 when the line was opened down to Tauranga.

This book is very rare, and we are fortunate to have a copy signed by the author, donated to our library. All staff should take this opportunity to increase their accurate knowledge so we can pass it onto those passengers who are exploring our local past.

Remember to sign out the book in the black book and only keep it for 2 weeks; otherwise we will be chasing you up.

The Great



Train Robbery

Waihi Rail Station

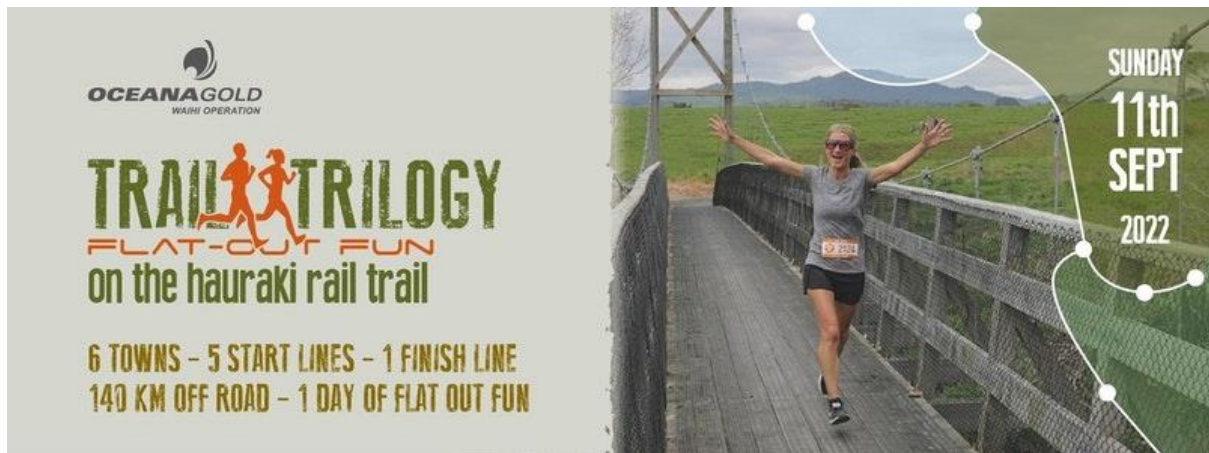
1st Departure @ 9:45am

2nd Departure @ 1:45pm

Saturday

1st October 2022





The **Trail Trilogy** is back again, after a two year break due to COVID-19 restrictions and will be based at the Goldfields Railway camping ground at Wrigley Street, Waihi.

There are 5 distances utilising the various Rail Trails within the Waihi/Te Aroha/Paeroa and Thames.

- 9km – ‘Race the Train’ from Waikino to Waihi – starts at Waikino at 9:30am
- 21.1km ‘K’hake Half’ from Paeroa to Waihi – starts at Paeroa at 9:30am
- 42.2km ‘K’hake Marathon’ from Te Aroha to Waihi – starts at Te Aroha at 9:00am
- 55km ‘Hauraki 50Five’ from Thames to Waihi – starts at Thames at 8:30am
- 100km ‘Hauraki Hundee’ from Waihi back to Waihi – starts at Waihi at 1:00am

There will be event marshals stationed along the Rail Trail course to guide participants, plus at strategic road and rail crossings to ensure that everyone makes it back to the Goldfields Railway Waihi Station and camping ground.

What’s Happening at Goldfields at the moment

After a number of years of minimal activity, we are starting to get things ‘back on track’. Whilst the R & M Team have laboured in fixing the operational rolling stock and a myriad of other tasks that seem to spring up all the time.

Rusty Fryett, together with Don Henwood are still working on the Guards Van, with the doors and windows now fitted. They are still to strip the multiple layers of paint on the interior before giving the interior a new coat of paint. Obviously, KiwiRail and its predecessors just painted over the previous layer of paint. They must have painted the interior every couple of years, judging by the number of layers!

A start is now being made on erecting some shelving along the side of line 1 in the Train Shed, so that materials can be stored off the ground, and in some semblance of order. The platforms at both Waihi and Waikino have been tidied up and it is planned to give the buildings at Waihi a bit of a freshen up, a good clean, replacing some weather boards, that are showing signs of their age. All of the above however requires manpower to undertake this work. The old saying

“many hands make light work” is applicable, however we do not have “many hands”. If you would like to spare a couple of hours to help out, it would be appreciated.

Bereavements

This year we have seen a number of the members pass away. Our thoughts are with the following families.

Barry SCOTT – passed away in April this year after a brave battle with cancer. Barry was an integral member of the R & M Team and was one who liked to get on with the task in hand. Despite his age, and no doubt suffering from the effects of his illness, Barry was helping the R & M Team until a couple of months prior to his passing.

Ewen HERBERT – passed away in April this year also. Ewen was a familiar sight on the train, imparting his stories, together with his folder of photos to passengers. Ewen also assisted the Victoria Battery team when he was able to. Always immaculately dressed, and wearing his Goldfields cap, Ewen also spent a lot of time in Charlies Hut at Waihi Station fixing the “old school” electrical components applicable to the railway.

Mike HARDING – another member who was taken too early. Mike was involved with Goldfields in its formative years, and was a person who would turn his hand to anything. Had great engineering skills, which were particularly useful when working the old machinery, where spares were hard to come by.

Tony DAWSON – together with his wife Dianne, ran the Waikino Station Café which Dianne still continues to do. Whilst not a member of Goldfields Railway, Tony, as is Dianne, are actively involved with Goldfields to ensure that the ‘Goldfields Express’ departs on time from Waikino in their role as Station Attendant, Waikino. Tony, when active took pride in the appearance of the Waikino Station building and grounds.

All these people will be sadly missed by those who knew them and worked alongside them.



Well, that’s it for this quarter, if you’re at a loss with what to do with your time, come on down to Goldfields – we’re always looking for volunteers, and we’d love to see you.

Fiona Liddell - Editor