

### **Tony's Tales**

Hi everyone, welcome to 2007 and here's hoping that it brings about continued growth and consolidation to GridHeritage. This is our third newsletter that will hopefully keep you all informed of our many happenings.

### **The ECNZ Collection**

Many of you will recall the ex-Rutherford House ECNZ collection of historic documents and artefacts that Jim McRoberts carefully stored away when ECNZ was split up into separate companies.

In 1994 the collection was put into a large shipping container and stored away 'safely' at Twizel. GridHeritage has tried in vain to secure the collection but it remained in a shed at Twizel. Last winter a snow storm collapsed the roof of the Twizel building and left the container exposed to the elements. Unfortunately the container was not waterproof and water leaked in and did significant damage to the contents.

Thanks to the generosity of Transpower the container was moved to Bunnythorpe and Les Davys and I had the unenviable task of removing the contents and storing them in our store to dry-out. The contents were an absolute mess and at first guess may not be recoverable. Some historic papers were like soggy porridge and instruments appear to be beyond repair.



AVO valve tester and papers

Now that the collection has dried out our next move is to obtain a professional evaluation of what is worth recovering. The National Library of NZ is assisting us with this process and an initial inspection will be started in the next few weeks. Our aim will be to protect and restore whatever can be salvaged.

Some of the documents are historically significant, I noted among the mess a ledger for the building of the Hora Hora-Waikino 50 kV line, the first major transmission line in New Zealand.

Valuable instruments appear to be beyond repair and may be only suitable for spare parts for other collections.

There are also some intricate water measuring instruments that have suffered superficial damage; these appear to be the instruments that were used to measure the efficiency of our hydro turbines when they were commissioned. Every endeavour will be made to restore these to their original condition.



ECNZ Container water damage

### **Bunnythorpe Collection**

We have had a number of trips to Bunnythorpe recently, some for just one day and also a 2 day visit. We are continuing to describe, photograph and store each item into boxes. The work is slow but hopefully we will never have to repeat the effort. The photographs will be used on our web-site which is now running off-line. The PastPerfect database that we use enables us to see the full details of each item and also to quickly locate them in our store. We continue to be indebted to Transpower for the use of their storage space, and we are especially grateful to Wal Samson and Janet Black for providing us access and security and a great deal of support.

### **2006 AGM and Film Screening**

Our AGM was attended by 19 members and friends and as usual was a very brief but formal occasion.

Tony Silke was re-appointed as Chairman, Richard Donaldson as Deputy Chairman,

## Heritage Happenings for January 2007

Brian Howard as Treasurer, and Stuart Nicholson as Secretary. Following on from the AGM we had the pleasure of putting on a light lunch, sponsored by Transpower and a series of historic films relating to electricity. These films were compiled by the NZ Film Archive who assisted with the presentation. Some of the films were really historic and some added a bit of laughter. The feedback from the 70 attendees was very positive and supportive. We will look to put on similar shows in the Transpower regional offices later in the year.

### Website

We have again delayed the public launching of our website, despite the fact that it is up and running on the Transpower Intranet. We want to add all of the recent photos from our Bunnythorpe visits before going public with it, hence the delay. Trust us; it will be worth the wait.

### Roxburgh 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Roxburgh Dam and Power Station turned 50 last year and Contact Energy hosted a commemorative open day to mark the event. While the formal part of the occasion was wonderful the highlight was the informal evening where Contact provided a venue with food and drinks and left all of the oldies to chatter amongst themselves.

It was interesting to see former workmates who hadn't met for many years, reliving the past and generating many verbal megawatts!

### Connecting the Country

Helen Reilly is still toiling away, with our support, on her book on the history of the NZ electricity transmission system and is making great progress. Much research has been now been done and Helen is well advanced with her writing.

### Oral History recording Award

David Young is quietly doing preliminary work on the recording of the lives of the Maori linemen who built and maintained the high voltage transmission system. The

Maori contribution was especially significant in that there were many families with a number of generations who worked on building or maintaining the transmission system.

The project is expected to be completed later this year and already there are suggestions that the material gathered in the recordings will be considered for other historic purposes.

### What is new in our collection?

Not exactly new but nevertheless very interesting is a box of goodies from Cliff Taylor. Cliff and Lynne Taylor have contributed a wealth of information and equipment that will make an interesting display in the future.



The Taylor Collection

Cliff has collected all sorts of personal papers, line equipment manuals from his life in the industry.

### Looking for a site near Wellington

We are looking to find a convenient space in or near Wellington where we can do all of the detailed processing for the collection locally and then simply shift the completed boxes to Bunnythorpe. It is expensive and very time-consuming to have to travel to Bunnythorpe for this work. Having a place to work near Wellington would also enable some of our retired friends to help us out.

### We want your feedback

We need to know what members want from us and welcome your feedback. Please phone or email us with any ideas that you have, or effort you can give us.

Tony Silke is always available on 04 494 7474.