



Heritage Happenings for November 2008

Tony's Tales

Hi again everyone. This has been a very busy time for GridHeritage.

Our recent publicity is paying off and we have been presented with some historic gems from people's private collections.

We look forward to having a Christmas break but even better the launch of 'Connecting the Country' which is planned for 3rd December. This book represents almost two years of work for the author, Helen Reilly and for GridHeritage and others in the industry.

Hopefully the book will sit proudly alongside 'People, Politics & Power Stations' as an industry reference.

The damaged ECNZ collection

We have had no luck in giving the unwanted items from the water-damaged ECNZ collection to good homes so have retained the best of the equipment and are disposing of the rest.

One treasure that our conservator is working on is the ex-Waitaki venturi water flow meter. Here are a couple of before and after photos.



Venturi water flow meter prior to restoration

This grand instrument was a rusted, rotting mess when Detlef commenced work on it. Now after months of work it is nearly restored to its former glory. The clock mechanism has been rebuilt by a professional clockmaker and Detlef has made a new wooden base and restored the rest of the mechanism and cast iron base. This leaves just the glass case to work on to complete the project.

If anyone has any recollections or photos of the flow meter in its original site we would love some feedback. We understand that it was originally sited outside the Waitaki Station control room.



The nearly restored water meter

Plan drawers from Transpower

We were fortunate to be able to put some written-off plan drawers to good use. Transpower was disposing of a number of them and we have helped in finding them good homes.



Detlef Klein in his conservation workshop.

Other sets of the drawers went to Te Manawa Museum at Palmerston North and to other local collectors.

Pukaki Island update

Some of you may recall the problem surrounding the name of the Island in Lake Pukaki that was flooded with the raising of the lake. At his send-off Mike Turner was presented with a framed Five Pound note

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showing the island and GridHeritage set out to find its name. After lengthy conflicting information we settled on Te Kohai Island. This name was queried by our readers and finally Les Davys has uncovered an official 1970 DSIR bathymetric map that confirms it is Te Kohai.

What is interesting is the fact that it is extremely difficult to find factual information on something that is only 40 years old. I would hate to be involved in real historic research.

Doug Dell remembers the Hot-wire voltmeter as featured in our Newsletter.

Doug is now a member of GridHeritage and he says "I found the GridHeritage newsletters very interesting. I recall the hot-wire voltmeter. It hung on a wall in the old Museum St Head Office. On one occasion, a very drunk very senior manager was seen standing in front of it saying 'Bloody clock - it's always been wrong'."

Some of your senior members might recall that in those days System Control, Head Office consisted of one Fred Akhurst with a junior engineer as a helper. In the late 1960's Kevin McCool became the helper and eventually developed the section into its modern form.

Early German HVDC

Did you know that Germany was trialling an HVDC scheme in the 1940's? This is just one gem from a huge collection of papers that was presented to us by Colin Adams. The 1946 Hamilton District Newsletter said, "At the time of Germany's surrender it is reported that a trial installation, designed to transmit power at 400kV DC over 100 miles of underground cable, from the Elbe power station to Berlin, was nearly completed. The installation was never operated. The Berlin terminal was destroyed in an air-raid and the equipment at the sending end has been removed and transported to Russia." The old Hamilton Newsletters contain a wealth of interesting articles and I hope to use some of them in future newsletters.

Last of the Summer Wine

Richard, Les and Tony were working at Bunnythorpe and decided to have a look at a Palmerston North computer shop. After a long and humorous discussion with

a verbally battered shop person Tony finally purchased a new laptop.

We returned the following day to be greeted by, "and here is The Last of the Summer Wine team back again".

The Estate of FM Doig

GridHeritage has been given a collection of industry treasures from the estate of Fergus (Mac) Doig who was the District Electrical Engineer in Palmerston North from 1955 to 1963. The collection contains photos and letters that detail many aspects of early line construction and maintenance. Of particular significance is a photo album of what could be the first live-line work being carried out in New Zealand. Unusually, he has written details of the photos on the back of each photo, plus has given further handwritten details.

Now here is the unusual bit, in his will he has instructed that his ashes be spread near the highest tower on the Greytown-Upper Hutt line, tower 151.

Lesson for this issue.

When you take a photo, please, please either write the details of the picture, names, place, date etc. on the back or if is a digital photo then name the file.

So often we are given wonderful photos that are no use to us because we can't identify the who, where and when.

Get off your soapbox Tony.

Christchurch ECNZ annual function

Last month I attended a wonderful social gathering of Christchurch ex-ECNZ folk. It was great to catch up on so many familiar faces and even better we added a few names to our membership list and gathered more for our collection.

End of 2008

This has been an eventful year. For our GridHeritage team and the many other contributors, 'Connecting the Country' is a fine effort and something to show off to the family. Also I want to thank all of those who have given us items for our ever-growing collection.

Finally I want to thank our members and friends who have given their time and expertise to making GridHeritage the significant collection that it now is.

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