

Tony's Tales

Hi again. A workmate of mine has a watch that was faithfully wound each morning for around 2 ½ years and then suddenly it stopped. No amount of winding would coax it back into life. It was only when another workmate was asked to have a look at it that it was found that the battery was flat. Bring back the old historic stuff I say.

Akaroa Book Launch

Tony attended the launch of “All our volts, electrifying Akaroa” which documents the history of the electricity supply in the region. The launch was opened by the Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker. The date also celebrated 100 years of electricity in Akaroa.



The Akaroa book and lapel badge

John Dodgshun then spoke on the restoration of the Akaroa hydro generator which has been fully restored but is unable to run due to earthquake damage in the building. It is planned to celebrate the re-commissioning of the generator a year for now.



John Dodgshun and Tony at Akaroa

Another trip to Bunnythorpe.

Kent, Brian, Richard, Les and Tony all travelled to Bunnythorpe this month for more cataloguing on the GridHeritage collection. This work is time-consuming and requires a lot of accuracy. We add details of each new item of our collection into our museum software and photograph the item. The software enables us to search for any item and thanks to Les' patience we can now locate the item from the shelf where it is stored.

A treat for GridHeritage was the loaning of our model tower to the Training Centre at Bunnythorpe.



Tony Ross, McCorkindale and Richard admiring the tower

Derek Olsen collection

We were recently donated a huge collection of books and papers from the Olsen family. After many hours of sorting and sifting we have retained some extremely valuable historic information. Among the collection were a number of books and papers that Derek had collected on nuclear energy, these are not of interest to GridHeritage but we hoped that they may be of interest to someone else.

In our sorting Les and I put them aside as I had remembered contacting Rebecca Priestley many years ago on the subject of nuclear power. Rebecca was then researching for a PhD on the history of Nuclear Energy in New Zealand. She is now still working in this area and is a writer for various



Heritage Happenings for October 2011

organisations. The books were donated to her and to say she was thrilled with receiving them would be the understatement of the year. Here is Rebecca's interesting profile.

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/rebecca-priestley/1a/177/b46>

Gracie Fields' Concert, August 1945

Bob Jenkins is a retired engineer whose father, Stanley Walter Jenkins was an Operator at Hangitiki in 1945. Bob sent us this delightful story of his Dad.

"In 1945 Gracie Fields put on a series of concerts and the Wellington concert was broadcast live on National Radio.

The night of the concert was cold and wet throughout the Country and midway through the recital my Father, the operator at the Hangitiki electrical Substation, received a phone call from System Control at Claudelands asking him to check on the loading at his Substation.

Other stations were also asked to check and all reported unusually high demand. They then realised that this was due to the high number of listeners tuned in to the concert throughout the country and with their electric radiators on so when the broadcast finished about 10.30pm the power load almost instantly dropped as radios and heaters were switched off, HoraHora and Arapuni Hydro-electric generating stations began to shut down surplus water turbines and the steam driven power stations at King's Wharf and Evan's Bay started banking their fires to settle down for the rest of the night on a low demand load but suddenly, over a period of a few minutes the power load rocketed back up again and the whole North Island was blacked out as the remaining generators still in service tripped off due to overload.

It turned out that most of the population enjoyed the broadcast so much that they started discussing it before bed and

then en-mass they all became very 'English' and said "what a lovely concert, let's have a cup of tea" so perhaps several hundred thousand or so 1000 watt kettles and radiators went on and caught the Electricity department napping.

It took well into the small hours to restore power as most people just sat and talked in the dark with kettles still switched on waiting for what they thought was a local power outage to be restored and every attempt to reconnect was met with a huge waiting load which caused surge problems and continued load tripping. Eventually all the Substation Operators conferred over the party line and gradually restored each region one at a time. It made headlines the next day and it was claimed that Gracie Fields had bought the country to its knees single-handed which was more than the Japanese or Germans had been able to do!"

Interestingly when researching this story Tony casually turned over the pages to see the headlines that stated a nuclear bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima; that is quite a contrast to a Gracie Field concert!

So far we haven't been able to authenticate the blackout mentioned in the story and would appreciate any help.

GridHeritage AGM

Our Annual General Meeting is to be in Transpower House at 12pm on 30 November. Members and friends are very welcome.

Interesting Live-line video

This very short BBC video clip is interesting. Sorry about the commercial at the beginning.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15344791>

Tony...