



## Heritage Happenings for September 2009

### Tony's Tales

Hi again everyone. Our little world of collecting continues to be as busy with an ever increasing number of new additions to the collection. Keep up the good work folks, it is much appreciated.

Sadly Jim McRoberts, our good friend and toiler on GridHeritage work has had to stand back from his activities on our Executive for a while. Jim has recently undergone surgery and we look forward to his quick recovery. Jim was the curator of the original ECNZ Museum and has a deep knowledge of the history of our industry.

### Engineering Heritage Conference

The 3rd Australasian Engineering Heritage Conference will be held in Dunedin from 22 to 25 November. GridHeritage has been invited to present a paper at this event. Richard Donaldson and Tony Silke will be attending and telling the world of the good work that we are involved in. It has been interesting researching for the paper and looking back at how much GridHeritage has achieved over the past few years.

### Box of old Insulators

We have recently been given a very large box of old high voltage insulators and line hardware. This gear is really important to us as the history of the grid is what we are all about and up until now we have managed to get very little of this type of equipment.



JD claw type insulator

If anyone has any similar gear then we would love to get our hands on it.

### Bunnythorpe storage

It had to happen, we are slowly running out of space in our storage area and are currently looking at smart ways to

rationalise our collection. In the next few months we plan a big tidy-up in our storage at Bunnythorpe and will be moving some of our gear.

### Ex-Palmerston North Library

Transpower in Palmerston North have had an office clean out and fortunately for us have presented up with a fine collection of old books, drawing folders and manufacturers' catalogues. All of the collection is in perfect order. Some of the books date back to the 1920s. One that is of special interest to us is a 1930 George Kent flowmeter catalogue that included some information on our beloved Waitaki flowmeter. And while we are on about Waitaki:-

### Waitaki Power Station 75th

Over Labour Weekend the good folks at Lake Waitaki are celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the station. The Waitaki power station was constructed during the depression years (late 1920s to early 1930s) using the "pick and shovel" method - the last time this construction method was used in New Zealand. The power station was officially opened on 27 October 1934 and commissioned in January 1935 when it began generating power. If anyone has a copy of the book "Waitaki Dammed" by G G Natusch issued for the Golden Jubilee for sale, we can find a happy recipient.

Meridian is working towards a celebration on the Sunday of October's Labour Weekend to mark its 75 years.



Waitaki Control Room 1934 South Cant. Museum

We have been given copies of about 20 early photos of the Waitaki Control Room and not one of them shows our flowmeter. The person taking the photo above must have been standing right beside it.

It is interesting to note the 'modern' up-lights hanging from the ceiling and the rather spartan looking operator's desk which is seen in more detail in the next photo. Those were the days when the operators were expected to be wrestling with the controls and not sitting at a comfortable desk. Closer inspection of the second and much later photo reveals that this desk now had two telephones and also a 'mimic diagram' to the right of the operator. We have noted a similar diagram in an early Coleridge photo and System Control records suggest that before Addington Load Dispatch (the forerunner of System Operations) commenced, the control of the generation in the South Island was shared between Coleridge and Waitaki stations on a week about basis.



Waitaki Control Room 1951 - 59

### **Dobson Diesel Station**

Brian McGlinchy has been rummaging through his old slides and came across this photo of one of the rather large Dobson Diesel engines and generators. Note the rather tiny looking gentleman standing in the middle of the photo.

It is a shame that we know so little of diesel stations as they served many cities and towns in New Zealand prior to the development of larger hydro stations and the transmission system.

We do know that the four Dobson diesels came from German U Boats as a part of Germany's First World War reparations. They were installed at Lyttelton to support Coleridge Station in the late 1920's.

In October 1938 they were moved to Dobson on the West Coast to support the Arnold Hydro Station.



Dobson Diesel Station 1961

The Diesels remained in service until 1958. Information or photos of Dobson or any other diesel station, e.g. Penrose, would be appreciated.

### **Oral Recording activities**

GridHeritage has been doing Oral Recordings of persons involved in the industry since 2003 and now has a total of around 55. Most of the recordings have been of individuals and some have included partners while others have been group recordings.

One trial recording was done using both Oral and Video recording. The use of video brings some benefits but will only be used in exceptional cases due to higher costs and more problems setting up equipment.

The richness of the oral recordings is often found in the little stories that some folk have told us. We don't just simply get a recording of the electricity industry; we also get an insight into life in early New Zealand.

### **Recent additions to our collection.**

Two of us hardy GridHeritage toilers spent 3 days at Bunnythorpe recently to record a large number of items delivered to the store from various sources through the country. Opening boxes of donations to the society is quite a thrill. It is a little like children opening up their Christmas presents. Keep up the good work!

Tony Silke...