



Goldfields Railway

Newsletter

June 2022

Welcome to the latest Goldfields newsletter. It's been awhile since our last newsletter and we want to introduce you to our staff and volunteers. Our staff like to feel appreciated and it's always nice to put a face to the voice you hear over the phone.

The ladies in the office. Between them they multi-task to become Station Master, Booking Clerk, Administration, Ticket Sales as well as performing many other duties that are required.

Sue Brandt – Station Master

I immigrated to New Zealand 20 years ago from South Africa with my husband and son. My hobbies are cooking, baking and knitting.

I started working at Goldfields Railway in 2016 and left in 2018. Came back March 2020 and became Station Master in January 2021.

I did not know what I was letting myself in for when I applied for a position at Goldfields, I never had anything to do with trains or have any interest in trains. Now I am a train fan.



I love working at Goldfields Railway. I adore both old and young. It gives me great pleasure seeing the little ones beaming with excitement when they get on the train.

Melissa Bjerring

I have worked at Goldfields Railway for 10 years. I was born and raised here in Waihi. I am the third generation and did all my schooling here.

I am the proud mum of two sons, Daniel and Sam and I also have two young grandsons.

My father was a Train Driver and Guard for Goldfields.

My son Sam is now a host. It has certainly been a family experience.

Lynette Hardy

I come from a Railway background in many directions. My grandfather was a train driver and drove the Queen and Duke when they were in NZ in 1954. I also started work at Foreman of Works, Rifle Range Road, Frankton as a shorthand typist and then moved to Resident Engineer



in Hamilton, Claims in Traffic Department, Auckland and I am delighted to now be at Goldfields Railway in Waihi.

I have two children, 3 grandchildren, dog, cat and hobbies including gardening, music and socialising.

I love seeing the pleasure on the faces of the children and people who come along to experience what we have to offer and it is a great asset to the Waihi Community

GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY COVID-19 RESPONSE

It has now been more than 2 years when New Zealander's first learnt of COVID-19 and during this time we have all had to adapt our lives to the new normal, and no doubt for the foreseeable future, we will continue to have to adapt.

So, what does this all mean for Goldfields Railway so we can continue to operate.

Firstly, and probably most importantly, an upgraded cleaning regime. All surfaces that potentially infectious passengers could handle, needed to be cleaned on a regular daily basis. This was more important in the beginning, as no-one had been vaccinated against COVID-19. 'QR' codes were a new term, and businesses were required to display various notices, including QR codes. Goldfields Railway followed the Government Guidelines, displaying the required notices etc. We then had that spell after the first Nationwide Lockdown, when things seemed to return to normal, and all New Zealanders who would have normally travelled overseas, decided to see their own country. So, patronage suddenly was up, with New Zealanders suddenly ticking off all the local attractions off their 'bucket lists'.

By this time, vaccines were starting to become available and COVID-19 Delta strain arrived. Being more infectious than the previous COVID-19 Alpha strain, cleaning was stepped up, however with both Auckland, then Hamilton going into long lockdowns, patronage plummeted. Thank goodness for the Governments various financial assistance packages that kept Goldfields Railway operating. By this time, masks were the new norm and everyone suddenly had to wear masks when out and about. Vaccines became readily available for everyone over 12 years of age, so, if you were vaccinated, you could do most things, unless of course you lived in Auckland and Hamilton.

Over this period, the Management Committee of Goldfields Railway were kept fully aware of what controls needed to be put in place, firstly to protect the staff and volunteers of Goldfields Railway and secondly, those of our passengers. All staff and volunteers were asked to be fully vaccinated, with booster shots. Masks were made mandatory for all staff and volunteers. Checks will put in place to ensure that staff and volunteers were vaccinated as per Management Committee requests. So, when the Auckland and Hamilton borders were reopened just prior to Xmas 2021, it was all go again. Along with QR codes, there were now vaccine passes that needed to be displayed and scanned before patrons were allowed on the train. On a busy day, this took up a lot of time scanning passes as passengers bought their tickets, but it was needed to keep COVID-19 at bay.

Then COVID-19 Omicron turned up. Again, Goldfields Railway had to change – indoor seating was revamped, with social distancing, masks mandatory both indoors and outdoors on the train, with limits on the number of passengers that could be on the train. With vaccination rates increasing so that most eligible New Zealanders had been vaccinated, the Government relaxed the country's alert setting just before Easter and people have been out and about since, riding on the Goldfields Express.

Vaccine passes are for the time being, surplus to requirements, QR codes are now not mandatory for people to sign in, although they are still displayed, masks are still mandatory indoors and optional outdoors. Unfortunately for the staff and volunteers on the train, masks are still mandatory.

Over this time of COVID-19 being around, Goldfields Railway have had only one staff member/volunteer that has had to self-isolate due to being a close contact of a COVID-19 infected passenger on the train.

Many thanks to all the Goldfields Railway staff and volunteers, who adapted to the rapidly changing times and made sure that Goldfields Railway continued to operate. No doubt, there will be new challenges ahead of us all in the future, but the team at Goldfields Railway will just get on and do it.

Greg Stilwell

Passenger Car A 1288

Thanks to information from the NZ Rolling Stock Register (<https://www.nzrsr.co.nz/>) retrieved on 15 May, we have the history of this car. Built in 1913, this car appeared a various places on the NZR network until 1958. With a number change to EA 3142, this car spent the next years until 1978 with the Ways & Works or NZR Track repairs. Between 1978 and 1980, it is believed to have been stored at the Newmarket Depot until shifted to Waihi that same year.

Originally the car was built with a compartment at both ends, with a toilet in the middle. It is assumed that the compartments were 1st & 2nd class. At some stage the toilet was removed and the double doors installed to achieve loading of wheel chairs and such. The community buses used to back up to the doors across the platform at Waihi, to allow for easy loading.

Originally the ramp was a steel plate, but a number of years ago this ramp was replaced with one of industrial grade aluminium with safety sides etc. It is still a problem and requires at least 2 persons to install it. At the same time several seats were removed from the forward section; allowing a more convenient space for wheel chairs.



A disastrous refurbishment many years ago left the car in an embarrassing state. However last year the R&M team (consisting of Rusty) refurbished the car with a complete repaint inside and out plus new flooring. The refurbishment work has been very impressive and all credit goes to Rusty. It is anticipated that this refurbishment has given the car a further 5 years of running before a complete rebuild is required.

Graeme Martin

Miniature Railway

Originally known as the “Waihi Small Gauge Railway” and now known as Goldfields Miniature Railway was a concept that was first conceived in August 2011. It wasn’t until 24 months later that we were finally given permission from the GFR Management Committee to design and go through the planning procedure with the Department of Conservation to get permission to start construction of the track and associated infrastructure.

Finance was initially provided by the Waihi Districts Model Railway Club, but the funds were soon depleted before we had Stage Two of the track completed. Goldfields Railway then consented to fund the rest of Stage Two of the track plan.

Soon after Stage Two was up and running we lost one of our construction members which only left one person to continue on.



Over the last few years I have managed to build bridges, and tunnels and install the necessary equipment to make the railway a going concern.

Stage Three the final track stage is ready to be constructed. I have surveyed the track route and started building the embankments to carry the track over its final route. When completed this will give us approximately 500 metres of track. Not a big railway, but enough to keep me busy 2-3 days a week.

Being a 185mm gauge track, locomotives aren't a cheap item! So I would welcome any enthusiasts that have a loco or rolling stock, or are keen to become part of the railway to contact me on (027) 390-8782 and I can organise a look around the railway. Ideally you need to be mechanically minded and have a passion for railways. I can give some training for Guard, Station Master and Driver duties and general maintenance that is required for the railway.

Maintenance days are Monday and Thursday 08:00am to 2:00pm. Public riding days are every second Sunday 10:00-12:00, 13:00-15:00hrs.

My personal projects are to rebuild a 2-6-OT steam loco in 2" scale and I have a "Climax" Logging loco in 2½" scale or 1/5th scale and 1/6 scale DA loco.

I build rollingstock and various pieces of railway equipment in my home workshop. I have a lathe, milling machine and various other pieces of equipment needed to construct model railway stock.

I also have a "G Scale" layout in my backyard that can accommodate live steam or battery remote controlled locos.

I welcome like-minded enthusiasts for a running session and a cup of tea!

Dave Cole – Dry Creek Railway, Waikino

Winter Clean Up



For all of those who think that all we do is play with trains all day long, the yard also got a bit of

a clean-up which also included felling a rather large tree. The fun never stops!

All Aboard for the Final Train.....

Barry Scott

It was sad news to hear of Barry's passing over the long weekend. Barry will be sadly missed by one and all at Goldfields Railway, especially by the R & M team. We had always noticed when Barry did not turn up to one of our working days. It was always quieter and less fun when he was not there.

Barry liked things to keep on happening at a reasonable pace, if not he would jolly us along to make it so. He was a good time keeper at smokos and the lunch breaks and would get restless if we stretched the time spent in the lunchroom too much.

Many a time when I turned up Barry would be the only other person there to help which was very much appreciated and very helpful at all times. You will be hugely missed by us all Pal, along with everyone within the whole railway organisational team.



From all the R & M team, i.e. Baillie, Kevin, Don, Vern, Dave R, Dave C, Dean, Allan, and myself Rusty, goodbye and thanks for the many years that you gave us your time and knowledge.

Ewan Herbert

Ewan came to us from the battery site and settled himself in one of the working men's huts which he restored. His previous history as a Post Office Telephone technician was invaluable fixing this from our museum. He learnt as much as he could about the area's history and loved imparting it to travellers over several years. His attitude set a high standard for the rest of us to follow.

Mike Harding

Mike joined the R&M team and his background in wrought iron work was a valuable asset along with his welding skills. Mike was an interesting character, but where would we be without such people on our railway. He was roped in to relieve me in the R&M team, and also as a relieving Operations Manager. He loved learning new skills which took him to the Battery site where he played a key role for a number of years. Mike later turned up at the seagull centre in Paeroa where he spent the last few months.

Tony Dawson

Tony will be remembered for his quirky ways and station master duties at Waikino Cafe. He loved creating signs, most of which he produced on his own. Sometimes it was a challenge to know what he meant. During his tenure at the cafe produced some fantastic meals which were enjoyed by all.

If you have anything of interest to contribute, please drop it in to the office and we'll attempt to put it into our next newsletter!

Fiona Liddell - Editor