



TONGARIRO TIMES

The newsletter for the Tongariro Natural History Society
March 2009

Prepared by Sarah Gibb

viaduct for the princely sum of \$1.00. Paul Green, conservator, agreed to the purchase and the viaduct became part of the national park.

OPENING OF THE HISTORIC HAPUAWHNEUA VIADUCT

This is a copy of the press release Tongariro Natural History Society sent out to media just after the opening of the viaduct.

More than 450 people gathered at the Hapuawhenua Viaduct in Tongariro National Park on Saturday 14 February to celebrate the completion and opening of the historic viaduct for walkers and cyclists. The date also celebrated the centennial; of the first passenger train on the main trunk line.

While some of the 450 walked into the viaduct the majority travelled by a steam train brought up especially to Ohakune for the event. Another 250 travelled into the viaduct by train in the afternoon. Before any of the assembled crowd ventured onto the viaduct kaumatua from Ngati Rangi performed a karanga and blessing. John Compton, Deputy Mayor of Ruapehu District Council welcomed everyone. The restored viaduct was officially opened by Barbara Browne, the Department of Conservation's General Manager Northern Region. At the other end of the viaduct Tongariro Natural History Society (TNHS) members and Department of Conservation (DOC) staff welcomed everyone with food, drink and souvenirs of the day.

Work on the restoration of the historic viaduct, which stands 120 m above the valley floor, was undertaken as a partnership between DOC and TNHS. The restoration, which cost close to \$800,000 of community raised and departmental funding, is to be part of the Old Coach Road, at present a 5km walk into the viaduct from Marshall Road near Ohakune.

Sarah Gibb, Director of TNHS said "It's time to celebrate and consider the number of people and circumstances that got us to this day -- the original workers in 1908 who built the viaduct and then its successful use as part of the North Island Main Trunk Line until 1987."

Ms Gibb added that, following the realignment of the railway line through Tongariro National Park, when the steel viaduct was replaced with a sweeping concrete structure, New Zealand Railways offered the Lands and Survey Department (now DOC) the

It was here Ms Gibb said that, "in the late 1980s AJ Hackett used the bridge to set up his first bungee jumping company. Now, a wonderful team of DOC track staff and Tongariro Natural History Society volunteers have worked tirelessly to re-deck the viaduct and make it safe for walkers and cyclists."

The viaduct will form part of the Old Coach Road (OCR), a historic road in itself, formed as a vital link between the northern and southern sections of the main trunk line while the last rail section through the national park was being completed. Local community groups are working to complete the 14km road as a walking track from Ohakune to Horopito in the north.



Before restoration and after!



Photo: Paul Mahoney

LANDROVER TUSSOCK TRAVERSE January 24, 2009

Kerry Suter surprised event crew when he arrived on at the start of the Land Rover Tussock Traverse on Saturday. He had just run the course in reverse to get there, still looking fresh to do it again in the event proper. He finished the event second in a time of 2:19:13, behind Corey Hinde in a time of 2:10:07. Other entrants were in awe of these fast athletes, for some just pleased to be finished.

We had just over 220 entries this year although only 207 runners and walkers participated on the day. This is up 10% on last year. As usual we also had the fantastic support from members – 34 volunteers and 3 DOC staff made the event such a success again (and maybe a bit of credit to the weather!)

Comments at the finish were all about the heat, the park recording temperatures well in to the 30's, as well as the beauty of the landscape and relief provided by the three streams people were able to get water from.

Finishing beside the Bayview Chateau Tongariro at Whakapapa meant a marquee village could be set up to offer shade as soon as people crossed the line and this was greatly appreciated.

Our thanks to the following sponsors:
LandRover, The Park Traveller's Lodge, The Bayview Chateau Tongariro, Tongariro River Rafting, Dole, Mills Reef Winery, GU and Turangi New World.



The start at Tukino Rd



Coming in to the finish beside the Chateau

KITE FLYING – January 1st 2009

We didn't quite get the weather right but still people came and we had a great day.

The Bayview Chateau Tongariro gave us all the supplies to put on a very popular sausage sizzle and so with that and donations from kite making we raised over \$500 on the day.

Thank you to our expert members who are professional at putting up marquees, making paper kites with little people and turning sausages. There was a big crowd of you this year and all were needed! It was fun!



**TERRY BLUMHARDT –
2008 Memorial Award recipient**

2008 was the 75th anniversary of Mountain Rescue in the UK and Ireland, and the UK Mountain Rescue conference in Stirling, Scotland, marked that event. Terry, a Search and Rescue (SAR) volunteer from Turangi, chose this event as an opportunity to investigate the UK SAR scene. He was awarded the NZ Land SAR travel award to fly to the UK and the TNHS Memorial Award helped to support him within the UK.

“I visited 18 teams in 3 countries, attended 5 training events and a conference all within 6 weeks. Since my travels there has been renewed communication between UK and NZ SAR groups and an ongoing transfer of some exciting new developments that will help both organisations help save lives in the Tongariro National Park and the outdoors in general.”

“Thank you Tongariro Natural History Society for your support”.



Ben A'an, Loch Lomond National Park, Scotland

CHRIS IS ON HOLIDAY –

Chris Bell, our biodiversity coordinator this summer is on Codfish Island, playing Godfather to a kakapo as part of DOC's Kakapo Recovery programme. So we will ask him to update us all on our Rotopounamu Forest restoration and Waimarino wetland projects in our next newsletter.

**THROUGH THE LENS OF WILLIAM SALT
HIS PHOTOS OF TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK
IN THE EARLY 1900'S.**

An exhibition at Taupo museum, April 2009

Way back in the dark corner of a high cupboard in Whakapapa Visitor Centre, Amy and Kaye made a discovery.....



..... this wooden box containing over 50 glass lantern slides of images in Tongariro National Park.

The Dept of Conservation do not know how they got to be in that cupboard but gave us permission to remove them from there and try to find a way to share them with people. With advice from Te Papa we took the slides to NZ Micrographic Services and they were able to digitalise them for us.

Thanks to a grant from Creative Arts Taupo, Taupo District Council and support from DOC and the Taupo museum we are going to exhibit the images at the museum in April.

**The exhibition opening is to be Friday April 2nd at 5.30pm at the Taupo museum.
All TNHS members are invited to attend.**



TNHS INTERNSHIPS

This summer season saw the introduction of interns, paid students from Massey university. Andrew, Jo and Shelley brought a depth of theory with them and an eagerness to put theory into practice. They were later joined by Racheal from Auckland University who had heard about it and volunteered with us for the last month.

This was an idea developed with Lucy Roberts from DOC and Jill Rapson from Massey university. WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and Land Rover financed this first trial and we had three interns with us from November until February, fitting in with their break from university.

With them we had 2 international volunteers, Jess who came for a month in November and Susie who came for January and February, along with other volunteers/members who popped in as and when they could. Chris had the job of supervising them all and was always seen with a smile on his face so it all worked very well.

During the three months we had a number of discussions amongst our group about how this was working and how it differed from having the international long term volunteers of previous seasons who came for up to 6 months.

Positives:

- TNHS is providing opportunity for learning
- Skills will stay in NZ
- They learnt about DOC as a future employer
- Members and students shared information together
- They liked being paid and therefore controlling their spend
- The partnership with Massey University
- The diversity of projects and tasks kept them motivated

Negatives:

- They could not start until November so TNHS and DOC needed to bring in contractors and members to start pest control etc in September

- They had to finish when projects were uncompleted

There is no doubt though that we would like to do this again.

As usual it will rely on finding funding sources so anyone with ideas – please pass them on!

And thank you to ANDREW, JO and SHELLEY for their great work this season. Come back anytime.



Shelley and Jo finding their way!

.....
COMING EVENTS:

March 13 & 14

WHITE ISLAND FIELD TRIP

You are still able to book – contact Roy and Annette Dench on 07 8236816.

April 2

5.30pm at the Taupo museum.

THROUGH THE LENS OF WILLIAM SALT

Just turn up.

April 3 Executive committee meeting

April 25 – 27

IWIKAU on Ruapehu FIELD TRIP

Hosted by Bob & Margaret Stothart.

Queries to them on 04 3850240 or

stothart@ihug.co.nz

A separate registration sheet is with this newsletter, or contact the office for one.

AGM 2009

At Whakapapa.