



# PADDLEWHEELS

Journal for The Whanganui Riverboat Restoration & Navigation Trust Inc. July – August - September 2008

We apologise for the lateness of this newsletter and so we have made it a three-month issue. This has been brought about because everyone was busy with the annual survey for P/S Waimarie and then your scribe took annual leave to get M.V. Wairua surveyed. This was Wairua's first out of water survey since re-entering service in October 2006. The winter months have been slower than usual as far as passenger numbers are concerned and of course cold wet weather has not helped either. In early July we had a large flood in the river. The first time the river rose above the 8-metre mark at Pipiriki for sometime. During this fresh the Union Rowing Club Pontoon broke free and became lodged in P/S Waimarie's forward mooring lines. Luckily these lines held fast otherwise Waimarie may have come adrift. As the fresh went down the rowing club were able to recover their pontoon. During the week that followed the flood a large log got caught in our starboard paddle. It was about 40ft long and sticking out into the current. This caused so much pressure to be transferred back through the machinery that when the crew finally got rid of the log it was found that our starboard engine connecting rod was bent. This had to be dismantled and straightened by Steve McClune. Luckily there was no permanent damage. The Trusts AGM was held at the Riverboat Centre on August the 13<sup>th</sup>. This was a good meeting with a better attendance than last year. Mock Gardner and Martin Emerson were re-elected as members representatives on the Trust. At the conclusion of the meeting Martin gave an interesting update on the restoration of Wanganui's Boon Tram No.12. Tram Trust members are hoping to have the tram moving under its own power by the end of the year. Also during August the Model Engineering Club visited our museum as part of their monthly meeting. They were most impressed by the improvements that we have made to the museum. Once again a big thank you to all our Sponsors, Trustees, Staff, Members and

Volunteers who have worked so hard over the winter months to get P/S Waimarie surveyed and back into service.

## P/S Waimarie



P/S Waimarie stopped all services after her scheduled cruise on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Throughout August, survey works were carried out with the boiler being stripped down for inspection. Throughout the vessel painting and scraping and varnishing was carried out. A major refurbishment of the upper deck area around the engine room opening was completed. There was little maintenance needed on the boiler this year apart from the overhaul of the valves and the replacement of some blow down pipe work. Everyone worked exceptionally hard to get everything ready for the Waimarie's return to service as planned on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September. With all the extra effort a great number of refurbishment jobs have been carried out that we put aside in previous years and the vessel is really looking tidy for the new season. A very big thank you to the crew and volunteers who got this work done to a very high standard.



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## Museum News

During late August we received Harry Duncan's preliminary drawings for the restoration and refurbishment of the M.V. Ongarue. Harry has done an excellent job of producing these drawings. They now await some minor reviewing and amendment before they can be finally completed. John Gray and Geoff Lawson have been busy setting up a display of our best old original images on the wall behind the paddle wheel display. This is now completed and gives a good representation of life on the river in the early part of last century.

## M.V. Waireka



The former Hatrick & Co vessel 'Waireka' now plying the waters of the Waikato will celebrate her centenary this coming summer. Built in Yarrow & Co's yard at Scotstoun on the River Clyde near Glasgow in 1908 Waireka entered service on the Whanganui River in February 1909 and was used extensively on the upper reaches in the early days of the River Service. Her current owners Shane and Ngarie Jones are hoping to have a 100 year celebration this summer and we will keep you up to date when we hear more about this.

## Slip Project

Work continues on this project and we have received Archeological Consent for our site works from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Richard Emmett and Gil Bycroft are busy working on final project costings and

documentation. It is hoped to begin funding applications in the New Year.

## M.V. Wairua

In early September M.V. Wairua was lifted out of the water onto the wharf at Port Castlecliff for her first underwater Survey since re-entering service in 2006. This was duly carried out. The hull was painted and various maintenance tasks were undertaken. Wairua is now back on the water, the survey and audit have been completed and the vessel is now ready for summer excursions to Hipango Park and other destinations.



## Billy Webb Centennial Challenge

It has been announced that on Sunday December 7 a rowing challenge will be held on the Whanganui River between Mahe Drysdale and Olaf Tufta to celebrate the century of the famous race between William Webb and Dick Arnst, which took place in December 1908. John Gray has upgraded the museum display on this famous race including further information and historical material. Both P/S Waimarie & M.V. Wairua will be following up the race as they did back in 1908.

## Merchandise

We now have on site a new range of Tee Shirts with Waimarie Logo. These have been sponsored by Rees Engineering and Morrie Gibbons Signs to help raise funds. A big thank you to Ron Rees, Dean Emerson and Nick Gibbons for sponsoring the production of the Tee Shirts. We also have a new range of merchandise with the Waimarie pictured on it, these would make excellent Christmas presents.



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## From The Museum Part Two

Robert West Holmes 1856 – 1936  
Civil Engineer

Robert West Holmes was born in Hackney, London, England on 25 September 1856, the son of Alice west and her husband Robert Thomas Holmes, a brewer and later engraver. Little is known of Robert's early years, but it is thought that he was educated at private schools in London. He came to New Zealand in 1871 and was initially employed in the Government printing office. In March 1872 he joined the Public Works Department as a draughtsman and later became an engineering cadet. From 1879 to 1887 Holmes was resident engineer in New Plymouth, where on 18 August 1884 he married Gertrude White. During this period he investigated routes for the proposed rail line from Taranaki to Auckland. In 1890 he took charge of the Wellington district, which at the time included Marlborough. He also contributed to proposals for a tunnel to give access to Milford Sound.

In November 1891 Holmes was given charge of the partially constructed North Island main trunk railway. This project had long been proposed and construction had proceeded north from Wellington and south from Auckland, but there remained to be surveyed and constructed the most difficult section of the line, from north to Hunterville to south of Te Kuiti. This section required three major viaducts: across the Makohine and Mangateweka streams and the Makatote River. Although John Rochfort had surveyed much of the proposed route, difficult decisions about alignment remained, it was Holmes who discovered how the route traversing the upper Wanganui valley could be raised some 600ft in around 16 miles to bring the track out onto the Waimarino plateau to the south.

During Holmes time in charge of the project the Makohine viaduct was begun, but construction was adversely affected by interruption to the supply of steel from the United Kingdom.

Holmes also identified and surveyed alternative routes for the line through Tongariro National Park and northward. The line could have no gradient greater than 1 in 50 while making the steep descent from the Waimarino plateau. Holmes brilliantly dealt with this constraint by designing the Raurimu spiral. This ingenious scheme used a series of tight left and right hand curves and one complete loop incorporating two tunnels.

Holmes was recalled to Wellington in 1899. In quick succession he became inspecting engineer and engineer in chief (1907), he held the last post until his retirement in 1920. From May to July 1920 he also served as under-secretary of the Public Works Department. His period of service in these senior positions saw the completion of some notable public engineering schemes: the North Island main trunk railway finally began a regular passenger service on 15 February 1909. Many of the engineering features of this line are of international standard, and it was a project largely carried through with New Zealand personnel. Another project saw the beginnings of hydroelectric generation on a national scale with the completion of the Lake Coleridge scheme in 1914. Although Holmes's own experience was predominantly in railway design and construction he also argued strongly and consistently for adequate resources to improve and extend the New Zealand roading system. He was an advocate of the use of a code of standards for engineering works of the type then being produced by the British Engineering Standards Association.

Holmes helped to lay the foundations for [professional engineering in New Zealand. He himself lacked professional qualifications but was instrumental in obtaining the right cadets to obtain two years leave to study engineering at Canterbury College. His support helped to ensure that tertiary study progressively became established as the preferred route to professional qualification. Holmes also had a close involvement with the formation in 1914 of the New Zealand Society of Civil Engineers, and was twice elected to serve as president, the only man to have served more than one year. He contributed many papers to the society's journal; and used the annual presidential address as a platform to take stock of national priorities for the country's engineering infrastructure. He saw the need for legislative measures to define and maintain professional engineering standards although the Engineers Registration Act was not passed until 1924.

Holmes contribution to engineering was recognised in his membership of the institution of Civil Engineers, London from 1897 and in his being given the Imperial Service Order in 1918. After retirement in 1920 he continued an active involvement with professional engineering in association with his younger son, John Dudley Holmes, in a consulting practice latterly based in Hamilton. He died on 8 February 1936, in Hamilton, and was buried in Wellington. His wife predeceased him in 1926. He was survived by two sons and one daughter.