



PADDLEWHEELS

Journal for The Whanganui Riverboat Restoration & Navigation Trust Inc. April – May 2005

The winter months are definitely here. While May has generally been one of the mildest for many years the beginning of June has seen a real change in the weather and temperatures have changed.

This April and May have been amongst the busiest months of Trust activities for some years. Contributing largely to this was the arrival of the M.V. Ongarue in our Museum. A lot of preparatory work had to be carried out in late April to get the Centre ready for the vessel.

Work has also continued on the Riverboat Centre with the pit area in the Centre of the Museum that used to accommodate P/S Waimarie now being floored in.

May the 1st saw the end of our summer season and daily sailings finish for the winter months. On May the 2nd our winter timetable began. Sailings are now Saturdays, Sundays, Public Holidays and School Holidays at 1pm. There will be no sailings during August when the annual vessel survey will be carried out. Those members who wish to help out with the annual survey work please contact Laurie Scott, Murray Greathead or Dave McDermid at the Riverboat Centre Ph 06 3471863 to let them know you are available to help out.

During May P/S Waimarie featured on the T.V. Series “OFF THE RAILS” with Marcus Lush. This programme gave excellent exposure to P/S Waimarie and Marcus certainly recommended our trip to viewers. Hope you got to see this programme.

Don't forget our A.G.M. will take place on Thursday August 4th at 7pm. Norm Hubbard will be guest speaker.

A big thank you to all our staff, members, volunteers and sponsors who have helped out over the last couple of months. This has been a very busy time and much has been achieved with all this support and help.

M.V. Ongarue Update

Before I begin reporting on the Ongarue's arrival and installation at the Riverboat Centre I believe a correct version of the vessel's history should be recorded as many have asked about this. This has been taken from survey records in Robert Campbell's book Rapids and Riverboats on the Whanganui River.

Built 1903 by Yarrow & Co Poplar London.

Length	60.1 feet
Breadth	8.4 feet
Depth	3.5 feet
Gross Tons	13.37
Register Tons	9.09

Engines:

1. White Union oil 40 BHP (1903)
2. 35 BHP (1906)
3. Thornycroft 45 BHP (1913)
4. Thorny croft 50 BHP (1925)
5. Morris Henty & Gardner 57 BHP (1931)
6. Thornycroft 50 BHP (1937)
7. 1 Gardner 57 BHP (1938)

This engine is still on board

Note:

The vessel was never a steamer and was in fact always a motor vessel.

Began service for A Hatrick & Co for the opening of the Taumaruni Service 3-12-03.

Ongarue was the last riverboat in service for Wanganui River Services Ltd (successors to A Hatrick & Co) and was withdrawn 31-10-58.



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Since 1997 the Riverboat Trust has been offering to takeover the conservation and preservation of M.V. Ongarue from D.O.C. her then owner.

The Vessel had been closed to the Public since 1995 and had fallen into a state of dereliction and decay.

In April of this year the Trust held meetings with Pipiriki Incorporation and D.O.C. and agreement was finally reached by all parties. The Vessel was donated to the Riverboat Trust by D.O.C.. It was agreed that the Vessel should be moved as soon as possible, before winter, to the Riverboat Centre. On the 5-5-05 Ongarue was placed on a transporter and moved via the Parapara Highway to Wanganui and into the Riverboat Centre.

Prior to that momentous event taking place the Centre had to be prepared to receive the vessel. Long hours were worked by Geoff Lawson, Ross Duncan, Martin Emerson, Murray Greathead, Kevin Lane and Dave McDermid, to move the Rail Track, and build new trolleys to suit M.V. Ongarue and move her gently into the Riverboat Centre. On the afternoon of Thursday the 5th a large group of volunteers assembled and when Ongarue arrived they removed the back wall of the building and Ongarue was moved inside and was at last under cover to prevent further deterioration. Since that time the team has got stuck into carrying out initial conservation work on the vessel.

Ongarue has been water blasted and the outside of the hull has been painted to improve the vessels appearance and stop further deterioration. The inside of the hull is now being cleared out so an accurate assessment of her general condition can be made.

A big thank you is due to the following who have made the conservation of M.V. Ongarue possible. Department of Conservation, Pipiriki Incorporation, Pipiriki Community, Ohakune Engineering, Emmetts Civil Construction, Dave Hoskin Transport, Jumbo Henare, Martin Emerson, Ross Duncan, Kevin Lane, Geoff Lawson, Murray Greathead, Bryan Barkla, Andrew Shaw, Roger Weston, Alistair Laing, Manu Mete-Kingi John Munro, Cameron McNeil, Mike Hope, Friends of The Whanganui River, Peter Edmonds, Edmonds Industrial. Also a big thank you to all those who behind the scenes supported our requests for Ongarue to come to the Riverboat Centre Museum.



Riverboat Centre Museum Upgrade.

There has been great news for this project. We have received a \$1000,000 grant from Lotteries Grants Board. This means that we can now look forward to completing the project as planned. We have also received a donation of \$1000 from Friends of the Whanganui River towards improving the Museum Displays once the building project is finished. This is a great help as improvements are needed in our displays to better tell the story of the Riverboats on the Whanganui River. Meanwhile work is almost complete on the area presently being floored in, where Waimarie used to sit. This will give us a great deal more space, for museum displays, reception for Tour Groups and visitors. Special thanks to



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Trust carpenter Geoff Lawson and his assistant Joshua Rees and also Barry Holt who has been helping out with the flooring. A big thanks to Rob O'Keefe for sponsoring the re machining of the flooring timber that has been used. This was a great help and was accomplished very quickly one Saturday. Thanks also to the team of members and volunteers who shifted the material to Rob O'Keefe Joinery and helped get it through the machines, especially Ross Duncan who organised the transport of materials.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of The Whanganui Riverboat Restoration & Navigation Trust will be held at the Whanganui Riverboat Centre on Thursday the 4th of August at 7.00pm. The guest speaker will be Norm Hubbard who will continue his talk. River Ramblings. All welcome. Nominations are also called for two Members Trustees and nomination forms are available from the Riverboat Centre office.

House Flag

Some of you will have noticed that P/S Waimarie now has a new house flag flying on her jack staff. We have been wanting to get a house flag of our own to fly for sometime. Recently Mo Jordans from Levin took a trip on board and noticing that we did not have a house flag offered to make one for us. The result of all her efforts is now flying proudly at the bow of the boat. Many thanks to Mo for sponsoring materials and providing this flag for us.

Incinerators

Incinerators and Tree protectors are still available from the Riverboat Centre.

Prices

Incinerators with lid	\$25
Without lid	\$20
Tree protectors	\$10

Merchandise

We now have in stock the new book
The Church by the River
St Mary's Upokongaro

**The price of this book is
\$20.00**

Volunteers

Volunteers are urgently needed during the July School Holidays to help out on P/S Waimarie. Please contact Murray Greathead, Laurie Scott or Dave McDermid at the Riverboat Centre Ph 34 71863 if you can help.

From The Museum

The Great Fire in the Waimarino in 1918 : By Harold P. White

Final Installment

The Government of the day came to their assistance and helped them through the hard time to become re-habitated, and by providing grass seed to re-sow their burnt out properties. I helped Mr. Ashmore get his mob of sheep settled down on their new pastures and remarked to him "you yourself look as though a good hot bath and a good meal would do you good, what about coming along with me?" He couldn't say "yes" quick enough as he would have had to go to an empty house etc. as his manager was in hospital. I rang Mrs. White from his house and told her I was bringing one of the burnt out settlers with me and she said he would be most welcome so that was quite good for him as he had had a few very hard days. Other Settlers in his



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district had had some very hard experiences too but theirs was nothing to those who had not only lost their homes but lost their lives as well. It was so sudden people had no chance to do anything but flee before the holocaust. The people in the town of Raetihi were badly hit. The owner of the cinema told me he came out of his building and sensing fire somewhere, saw away to the north a glare of a big fire and realizing it would not be long before it was in Raetihi, decided to stay where he was. This was at 10.45pm. At midnight it was in the streets of Raetihi and to give some idea of its fierceness, it would take all the houses on one side of a street and leave those on the opposite side untouched. This happened in the street where the maternity home was situated. The patients were removed from the home and wrapped up in blankets and placed on the footpaths until aid could be got to remove them elsewhere, but no lives were lost here. It was in the valley of the Mangaetoroa that several homes were burned out and the occupants could only flee before it, hoping to be safe in the bush but sad to relate the standing bush offered no shelter and several lives were lost. The lady schoolteacher who lived with a family near the school took two of the children, a boy and a girl and jumped into a creek, but in doing so dropped the little boy and when they reached the little water that was in the creek, she discovered that she and the little girl were on one side of a burning tree and the little boy on the other. However by some means she reached the little boy and they were all rescued some hours afterwards. A little farther along the road two ladies who lived in a house near the road could see they were right

in the track of the fire and phoned for a taxi. It arrived but during the time they were loading up, a burning tree had fallen across the road so they were cut off again but decided to sit it out in the taxi and were rescued some hours later. The fire was now in country that had been burned many years previously but all unburned logs were once again burning furiously.

The fire burned on and took a turn to the east and ran along the Ohau Valley until it reached the Wanganui River, which it jumped and in the early morning of Sunday had burned itself out near the Kai Iwi beach, having traveled down the Waitotara Valley after it had crossed the Wanganui River. By this time it had traveled over 100 miles. While traveling down the Ohau Valley it became somewhat sheltered and started to burn back against the wind but as soon as it reached the tops of the valley it would be blown back onto its course and soon burned out. What a scene of desolation it had left behind it. Pastures burned out completely, sheep and cattle roaming aimlessly about looking for a little fern or anything that was left, large numbers of dead sheep that could not get to a place of safety before being overtaken by the oncoming flames and altogether a heart-breaking sight for the owners who had worked hard and spent years trying to make their farms prosperous, and the majority of them, greatly to their credit, were not going to be denied as they clubbed together each helping his neighbor to get things ship-shape and later when the rains came and new pastures flourished and were restocked with sheep and cattle on clean country that a few months previously was only



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half burned and going back quite rapidly to second growth.

I asked Mr.Ashmore exactly how it had affected the settlers of Ruatiti where it did most damage and he said it really was a blessing in disguise for it had cleaned up some of the farms that had been left in a dreadful state from the previous years bad burn and from the second growth that followed.

And just how did you fare Mr. Ashmore? Well he said “ I have lost quite a lot of sheep but I have now the cleanest farm in the district and I think I will be about 1000 in pocket when all is settled.” He laughed when talking about his garage that caught fire but did not burn down.

He saw it was on fire and ran to get his car out. When he opened the front he said there was a big whole burning in the back of the garage and the great wind blowing in the front when he opened the door blew the fire out.

Mr. Ashmore died very suddenly a few months ago on his farm in Kawhia.