



Wairoa In Focus

Your Community, Your Future

Slice of history preserved for future generations

A legacy of paperwork covering over 130 years of administration and decision-making is being organised in a long-term project to streamline and preserve the Wairoa District Council archives. The recent push to bring the archives out of the dark and into order came about due to legislative changes requiring a higher standard of local government record-keeping. Fortunately, this requirement coincided with professional archivist Ross Harrison Snow's decision to move to Wairoa. Bringing with him an impressive resume including experience with the Queensland State Archives and those of Melbourne's Victoria University and Museum Victoria, Ross is dedicated to his chosen career.

"The Council archives are not the largest collection I've worked with, but the job is not without its challenges. Over the decades different methods of record-keeping have been used, and it's now my job to arrange and describe the collection to the point where it's organised and readily accessible to council staff and researchers," he said.

Housed in an old council building, records begin with the formation of the Wairoa County Council in 1877 and include the addition of the Wairoa Borough Council in 1909. The two combined in 1986 to form the current Wairoa District Council. Wairoa Fire Board and Whakaki Drainage Board papers also feature. Wairoa District Council has a legislative obligation

to keep certain records, such as minute books and rate books, for historical and legal reasons. Volumes include the first cash book and outward letter book from the Wairoa County Council, dated 1877. The tissue-thin pages of the letter book are creased and worn, but it is still possible to make out the details, written in perfectly-formed cursive script, outlining the correspondence of the day.

When Ross commenced work he found piles of rates records filling shelves, providing a welcome home for silverfish. He has since worked his way through these books, shelving

them in the appropriate manner in order to safeguard their longevity. He keeps a constant watch on the temperature and humidity in the place, which fluctuates more than he would like.

"It is a cause for concern, as the environment is an important factor in preserving archives, but by using acid-free boxes and folders, I can ensure they are in a much better state than they were when I came here," he said. Thousands of maps must also be sorted, catalogued and stored. "I see these as an interesting

diversion from sorting correspondence and registers, although one has to be careful not to become too distracted by the actual history of it all."

Among the more fascinating items is a paper from 1907, listing the first seven by-laws requiring belated approval from the Governor of New Zealand. One of these by-laws includes regulations regarding the lighting of vehicles and bicycles between sunrise and sunset.

The rate books preserve a history of all ratepayers who owned property in Wairoa from 1877.

Ross also discovered three ledgers from a local General Store, covering a period of time from 1880 to 1901. While these books have nothing to do with council, the connection lies in that the store manager, William Moloney, was chairman of the County Council during that time. Looking through one volume, familiar names of the district pop up, along with lists of all their purchases, from mutton chops to handkerchiefs.

"Exactly how the ledgers came to be here is not clear, but they do provide a personal glimpse into late-nineteenth century life in Wairoa."

Ross assures that no dark secrets have appeared from the vast sea of paperwork – rather, the collection is largely a record of the development of a district through the day-to-day work of public servants.

To find out more about the archives, the person to contact is WDC Administration Manager James Baty at (06) 838 7309 or james@wairoadc.govt.nz



Wairoa District Council Archivist Ross Harrison Snow carries out preservation work on an historic map of Lake Waikaremoana - one of many documents in the collection.

Sign up for summer reading

Myths, legends and tales from the past are the central theme of this year's Wairoa Public Library Summer Reading Programme, which is set to run from December 12 through to January 20.

A new innovation for this year is that the programme has been divided into three groups. 'Be a Legend – Read' is for children from preschool age up to Year 6, while Year 7 and 8 children will be part of the 'SR Plus' group. Teens up to Year 13 are catered for by 'Read+'. As with past years, readers will be asked to check in on a regular basis to talk about their books and receive rewards. Fun activities and events will also take place throughout, culminating in a finale party for those who complete the programme.

There are 140 places available for the 'Be a Legend – Read' programme. Demand is always high, so those wishing to take part are asked to fill out a registration form and put it in the jar at the library before Thursday, December 1. Names will be drawn out and

successful readers contacted before the official launch date of Tuesday, December 6.

Those wanting to take part in 'SR Plus' and 'Read+' do not have to fill out a registration form before the launch, and can simply come along on December 6 to sign up between 3pm-5.30pm.

For more information about the programme, call into the library, or phone (06) 838 8450.



Erepeti Road repair update

Re-instatement of a 200m section of Erepeti Road closed by a landslide during August is now underway.

Movement monitoring surveys were carried out for two months after the landslide occurred to determine what ground within the landslide area was most stable. Once stability in the landslide mid-section was confirmed, a new road alignment was designed across it. Now that a road alignment has been designed, QRS (Wairoa) Limited is commencing construction of the new road section.

All going well, the road construction is expected to be completed prior to Christmas and Erepeti Road will be reopened to traffic.

Register to read - Abby Morunga (4) adds her registration form to the growing number signing up for the Summer Reading Programme at the Wairoa Public Library. Forms must be in by Thursday, December 1.



Several Council staff have put away the razors for this month, but it's all for a good cause. Russell McCracken, Tim Allan, Michael Walker and Ropata Ainsley are growing moustaches as participants in this year's Movember Challenge to raise money for prostate cancer research and depression initiatives. Visit www.nz.movember.com to find out more and donate.

For the diary:

Council meetings:
December 13

Dates for 2012 will be set at the December meeting.

Meetings are held in the Council Chambers in the Queen Street offices and are open to the public, unless otherwise specified.

For more information phone 838 7309 or visit www.wairoadc.govt.nz