

“It’s true that hard work never killed anyone, but I figure why take the chance?” - Ronald Reagan

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# Pukemiro Junction

T H E G L E N A F T O N L I N E



Stephanie M. cleans the station – Nov. 2021 (T. Bettison)

## GREETINGS & WELCOME TO ANOTHER BTC NEWSLETTER

I don't normally write an editorial, but clearly Covid has caused a very difficult situation over many months which has created a situation where all heritage railways are "limping along" in various ways. Whilst many of our members in Auckland have been unable to come down to the BTC, thus restricting our activities, we have had continuing support on the ground from our local members as described in this newsletter. Thus there is a considerable detail in this edition on matters which might normally occupy only a paragraph or two. Perhaps no bad thing! Ed.

## 2021 OPEN DAYS

We haven't been able to hold any Open Days since August because of Covid 19 restrictions. So no trains running and disappointed members and customers as a result, many who have also been "locked down" over the period.

## COVID DEVELOPMENTS

NZ has just moved into the new traffic light system for Covid response.

The Waikato is "orange" which gives us a lot more freedom, provided people are fully vaccinated. The committee are presently working out what we will require of all our members who form our crew for future open days, charter trips, working bees & what we will require of all our passengers and other visitors.

It is likely, at least for the next few months that everyone who comes on site will have to be checked in & show proof of being fully vaccinated.

## ACTIVITIES / DEVELOPMENTS

A summary of recent activities, performed with suitable precautions is as follows:

### 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER TREE REMOVAL & STATION CLEAN-UP WORKING BEE

We had to put off the planned Open day of 7/11 but a number of local members removed two trees blocking the line near Glen Afton whilst others had a station clean-up on the day.

CJ comments: Pine trees: Early in November Dave M told CJ that 2 large pine trees were down across the line just down from the Jenner's house at Glen Afton. We organised a working bee & Dave M, Ian B, Maarten R, Russell W, Bill R-W, Geoff B & CJ went up to deal with them. They were planted by CJ about 30 years ago so were very tall & one was much larger than the other one. The larger one came out of the eastern end of the block & pulled the smaller one in the front row down as it fell.

Russell W, Dave M & CJ had been up there the week before & had cut off & got rid of most of the branches. The smaller ones were put in a heap beside the line while the bigger ones were taken back to the Junction for cutting up into firewood sized pieces. Dave M has since cut them up.

On the main working bee, a lot of those with chain saws got stuck in & cut the trees into rings. We left the tops & bottoms of the trees largely where they were. By the end of the day, the railway was cleared & most of the rest of the larger branches & rings were transported down to the Junction.

Teresa B comments: As you will know doubt know by now, the day drew quite a collection of willing helpers!!

The men-folk had their own agenda mapped out (trees, loosening the fuel cap from the new digger and of course the preparation for sale of more old sleepers.

Stephanie M. (who insisted she would like to come out and do something useful) and I decided on cleaning up the lichen from the various signs. We note that two of the "Attention Visitors" signs have now completely faded (or well washed off.....) and I suggested to CJ that these signs are an important part of our safety system for visitors coming on site (these signs have since been replaced - Ed).

#### 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER SAFETY REFRESHER/ TRACK WORKING BEE

We had to put off the planned Safety Refresher day of 24/10 but held one instead on 28/11. Auckland was still in lockdown so only Waikato members could attend. Attendance was very good with 15 members attending. After the safety refresher course, we had lunch which was prepared & cooked by Russell W. Many thanks, Russell – the grub was certainly very much appreciated. After lunch, a variety of work was carried out. Four members went down the line to replace a rail that had a badly rusted out web. Four sleepers also needed replacing while the rail was off & before the replacement rail was put in place.

Those involved were Dave M, Dave H, Bill R-W & CJ.

Dave M & CJ had taken the old rail off its sleepers the week before & marked the sleepers that needed replacing.

Bruce McL put a piece of fascia board on the new shelter in front of the Rec. room cafe.

Trev T4 & Rob B went to fit the radio back into 401 – Ashley had the radio tested & it was OK. Trev T found that this loco radio was “positive earth” & thus incompatible when mounted on a negative earth loco so put a block of wood between the radio & the dash board to act as an insulator; problem solved!! He also found that the radio in 402 wouldn't light up & found the step down transformer that converts 24 volts into 12 volts to work the radio wasn't working. He has taken it away to get a new one. After that, they came down to help with the track work.

We left the Junction at 12.15 & got back around 3pm – the whole job done.

Many thanks to all who turned up for the day. There were two people who had their knees strapped up, the “walking wounded”.

#### 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER WORKING BEE

A 3<sup>rd</sup> pine tree was cut down by Ian B on Wednesday 8/12/21. The tree was cut into rings by Ian B, Dave M, Maarten R with CJ helping where he could. We now have a good heap of rings ready to split into firewood & there is still half a day's work cutting the remaining sections of the trunks into rings.

#### ALONG THE LINE

Dave M & CJ have been replacing fishplate bolts on the track that are either loose & won't tighten or the spring washers are broken. A lot of these bolts were in place when we purchased the line almost 50 years ago.

We have been trimming back lineside growth. The wet & mild winter & warm & wet spring has really assisted this growth, unfortunately.

#### AROUND THE JUNCTION

Russell W continues to keep the lawns & gardens under control. He normally comes down to the Junction at least one day a week.

Our new neighbours, Green Gorilla, have graded our driveway & recut a drain down most of the bankside of the drive. Russell W has re-metalled the drive &



the result is that it doesn't scour out as much during heavy rain.

Russell W has cleaned & painted the 2 gates- one at the bottom of the drive & the other behind the station.



The team take a break from chopping up a tree near the ex- Jenner residence on 7<sup>th</sup> November (R. Webb)



## HEISLER 1082 FUND

Chris Mann comments: Work on the Heisler boiler progresses at Paekakariki with the new smokebox now fitted to the barrel. Alastair has used round headed bolts so they have retained the rivet look on the outside. Alastair has the smokebox fittings including the smokebox door and surround, the ash hopper and ash poke hole to fit to the smokebox.

The smokebox door surround has been broken for many years and there is strapping where it was repaired at Ongarue in the 1950's or 60's. Alastair intends to repair it with some combination of welding and strapping. The surround is well bolted to the front of the smokebox so the repair will be fine.

Alastair has been assessing the condition of the handhole doors, and will decide on refurbishing or replacing these doors.

Stainless steel mesh for the spark arrestor has been ordered. The mesh will fit inside the smokebox and follows the design of a traditional mesh style spark arrestor.

CJ comments: Dave M is still making progress with cleaning years of gunk off the underframe, bogies & engine unit. Dave M & CJ have measured up most of the cab that needs replacing. Some of the sections of cab were well buried in long grass & timber which Dave M has now cleared off. As soon as we get time, we will need to check them out to see if any need replacing.

Editor's Note: It would be wrong not to mention the continuing donations by our member Kerry B, coming largely from his pension. Many thanks Kerry for your regular support, it is a great example of generous & significant funding from a long standing member. Every dollar makes a difference!

See our website for details as to how to make a donation....

## LOCOMOTIVES

Tr 105: The train brake system is almost at the test stage. A duplex gauge has arrived from Australia & is yet to be installed in the cab. Repairs to a hydraulic hose are completed which returns the loco to a "serviceable" condition.

Goodman: Trevor T is in the process of fitting a new master switch.

## ROLLING STOCK

#3 car: Dave H has continued working on the interior of this car as Covid lockdowns have permitted. He has fitted stops to the windows so passengers can't get their heads out of them. Russell W has continued painting the new lining that Dave H has completed.

Large flat wagon: Ian B has made 2 ramps so our digger can drive itself onto the wagon. Genesis Energy of Huntly Power Station donated the steel for this job. Many thanks to them.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The start of a new year also means for BTC members that subscriptions are now due!! Renewal notices will be sent out shortly. We hope all members will renew their subs. The last 2 years have really interrupted BTC activities because of Covid 19 lockdowns but hopefully better times are ahead.

## MEDICAL FORMS

Some months ago, all our drivers were sent a notice of new medical requirements. This was the result of NZTA's annual assessment of BTC for 2020. If you haven't yet sent CJ a response with the required information, please do so by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

## GLEN AFTON & PUKEMIRO REMINISCENCES

By:-Russell Webb

Pukemiro Collieries started in 1915 and closed in September 1967. It ran for 52 years and produced 5,294,046 tonnes of coal. The Pukemiro Collieries open cast mine began in 1952 and ran for 3 years and put out 20,334 tonnes. Pukemiro Junction Colliery Mine worked for 12 years producing 113,261 tonnes of coal.

Glen Afton Mine started in 1920, & officially opened 25 July 1925. It closed in March 1969, producing 3,242,434 tonnes of coal. Glen Afton Mine, in its heyday employed 350 men.

The McDonald Mine (owned by Glen Afton Collieries) opened in 1931 and closed in November 1971, producing 4,903,041 tonnes of coal. In 1961, in the McDonald mine a pair of miners set a record of 56 tonnes of coal per day for 5 days with a banjo shovel and pick.

### Other Mines:

Graham's Mine started in 1923 and closed in 1942, producing 147, 855 tonnes of coal. This mine was at the back of where Beryl W. used to live in Gully Road in Glen Afton.

Glen Afton Potteries had a mine on their site from 1936 to 1950, producing 7,983 tonnes of coal.

There was another open cast mine at Glen Afton from 1950 to 1951, producing 15,184 tonnes of coal.

The McDonald Number 1 open cast mine from 1951 to 1969 produced 985,263 tonnes of coal.

The Glen Afton open cast mine from 1962 to 1966 produced 25,854 tonnes of coal.

Boyd's open cast mine in Glen Afton from 1957 to 1973 produced 25,726 tonnes of coal.

So, as you can see, a lot of coal has come out of this place.

### PHOTO GALLERY



Weedkiller wagon on standby and the station sign and foliage looking good in December 2021 (I. Bettison)



New steel ramps to load our digger onto the large flat wagon plus a photo of our never-ending tree clearance (I. Bettison)





Stephanie M washes a sign at the bottom of the drive (T. Bettison)



A Meremere diesel in early November moves away from the station towards the shanty (T. Bettison)





Tree over the line near Glen Afton in early November (R. Webb)



The gardens at PJ currently look very healthy (I. Bettison)





At an early December mid-week working bee CJ and Dave M were about to set off down the line whilst Ian B examines a boot for spiders! (R. Webb)



Tr105 has a new hydraulic hose on the torque converter (R. Webb)



Maarten & Lesley are stalwart members of the Club (R. Webb)

This newsletter was produced by Richard Ellis, with much of the text from Colin Jenner, and contributions from several other members. Photos & text to add variety are needed and much appreciated. Send your contributions to [secretary@bushtramwayclub.com](mailto:secretary@bushtramwayclub.com).